

‘Camp Syndrome?’ Exploring Frontier Masculinity in Alberta’s Oil Production Culture: Oil
Worker and Sex Worker Perspectives

by

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Abstract

Research shows that the sex trade flourishes in oil rich regions and economies. However, the connection between these two industries has not been widely studied despite how studies often acknowledge that oil industry workers purchase sexual services. This thesis, therefore, explores how the oil production *culture* contributes to oil industry workers purchasing sexual services. This research project aims to explore answers to the following research questions: 1) How does the oil production culture contribute to oil industry workers purchasing sexual services; 2) What economic and social aspects of the oil production culture contribute to oil industry workers purchasing sexual services; and 3) What can we learn about the sex trade and the oil industry when using a feminist lens? In addition, this research project draws from literature on masculinity, Messerschmidt's theoretical work on masculinity, and feminist theory. I used a qualitative exploratory methodology to answer the research questions. In total, I conducted 11 semi-structured interviews, including five oil industry workers and six indoor sex workers. My major findings suggest that there is a strong economic connection between the oil industry and sex trade, as well as that negative views of women, the objectification of women, and the normalization of purchasing sex, are all pervasive aspects of the oil production culture. However, the negative treatment of women within the oil industry seems to be context specific to the oil production culture insofar as I also found there are no significant differences in sex workers' interactions with oil industry worker clients compared to non-oil industry worker clients. I conclude that the frontier masculinity found in the oil production culture is an expression of masculinity specific to the context of the oil industry. This thesis, then, offers contributions on three main topics: what it is like working in the oil industry; the lifestyle and culture of the oil industry; and the connection Alberta's oil industry has to indoor sex work.

Keywords: *sex trade, oil industry, Alberta, qualitative methodology, masculinities*

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Kassandra Landry. The research of this project received ethics approval from the University of Alberta Ethics Board, Project Name: “‘Camp Syndrome?’ Exploring Frontier Masculinity in Alberta’s Oil Production Culture: Oil Worker and Sex Worker Perspectives,” No. 56393, June 16th, 2015.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to all the people who continue to fight for gender equality.

Acknowledgements

First, I thank all of my participants who were willing to participate in this research project. I am eternally grateful for their willingness to share parts of their lives with me, and for trusting me enough to open up to me about topics not often openly talked about. Without my participants, this project would not have been possible, so it is to them I owe most of my thanks.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

--- Wow The Price of Oil Has Dropped My Prices Have Too!! Low Restrictions !!!! - 22 – backpage.com – fort mcmurray section

(Bonnyville) Wow The Price of Oil Has Dropped ¡!¡ My Prices & Clothes Have Too (Bonnyville) - 22

Asian Slim & Busty Party Friendly Real Pics 100% Outcall to Camp 780-880-2361 Ag:19 - 21 (Camps and Surrounding area)

New Asian beauty "YOYO" arrived!! COME to **CAMP** !! ——— • OUTCALL only !! - 20

Camp Calls & Outcalls. Independent Limitless Lucy At Your Will. - 22

Advertisements such as “*Wow The Price of Oil Has Dropped ¡!¡ My Prices & Clothes Have Too (Bonnyville) – 22,*” “*New Asian beauty "YOYO" arrived! I COME to CAMP!! OUTCALL only!! – 20,*” *Camp Calls & Outcalls. Independent Limitless Lucy At Your Will. - 22*” are common on websites that solicit sexual services¹. In these ads, there is a direct appeal to oil workers by the advertisers. These ads also suggest the sex trade *booms* and *busts* with the oil industry. ‘The prices of oil have dropped, so have my prices’ provides a compelling example of this. Although this connection may seem straightforward because most industries in Alberta are affected by the dominating oil industry, the relationship between the oil industry and the sex trade has not been exclusively studied.

Historian Aubrey Kerr (1978) stated that Alberta has become synonymous with oil (as cited in Miller, 2004, pg. 59). Alberta's economy relies heavily on the oil industry, and the oil industry is arguably one of the defining characteristics of what makes Alberta, Alberta. In fact, it has been advertised that the Athabaskan oil sands project in Northern Alberta is the largest

¹ These ads are from backpage.com which is one of the most well-known sites for advertising ‘adult’ services.

industrial project in the world (Dorow, 2016). Personally, I know several people who work in the oil industry, and it was the stories from people I know that initially sparked my interest in this topic of study. I heard story after story of oil workers buying sex, oil work camps having different ‘codes’ for getting sex, and at times, people being reimbursed by their employers for the money they spent on sex. I was shocked when I first heard such stories, but then rationalized it as making sense in that a lot of other industries in Alberta are linked to the oil industry, so of course, the sex trade is too.

In the fall of 2014 as a part of one of my graduate courses, I conducted an exploratory study on Edmonton’s Prostitution Offender Program (POP)². The POP is a post-court diversion program³ for men who have been charged with communicating for sexual services⁴. In conducting this study, I found out from those who run the POP that a majority of the men charged in Edmonton are oil industry workers. While this was not the focus of my exploratory study, I was intrigued by this finding and decided to pursue it further. More specifically, though, I decided to explore the oil production culture and how this contributes to oil industry workers purchasing sexual services.

While researching literature on the sex trade and the oil industry I was able to confirm that the finding in my exploratory study is not an anomaly. Research shows that the sex trade flourishes in oil-rich regions and economies (Carrington, McIntosh, & Scott, 2010; Chindo, 2011; Odoom, 2014; Pormal, David, & Jackson, 2014). Studies often acknowledge that oil industry workers purchase sexual services, but that is not usually the focus of the studies (see

² I interviewed three participants for my exploratory study on the POP

³ POP is a voluntary program that diverts offenders from the traditional court system. If the POP is completed, an offender will have no criminal record.

⁴The exploratory study was conducted when communication for prostitution was illegal, before the Canadian prostitution law reform. However, as of December 2014, it became ‘legal’ to sell sexual services and illegal to purchase sexual services.

Carrington et al., 2010, for example). Instead, studies examining oil industry workers or regions focus on other behaviours such as drug use and/or drinking alcohol, violence, or the experiences of female oil industry workers. Research also tends to overlook socio-cultural factors that play a role in oil industry workers purchasing sexual services. Instead, most research offers individualistic or simplistic explanations of why oil industry workers buy sex, like the excess of money and testosterone (Chindo, 2011; Odoom, 2014; Pormal, David, & Jackson, 2014). I wished to look beyond individualistic explanations of why people buy sex; therefore, my study explores socio-cultural factors that contribute to oil industry workers purchasing sexual services⁵.

The following research questions guided this research project:

1. How does the oil production culture contribute to oil industry workers purchasing sexual services?
2. What economic and social aspects of the oil production culture contribute to oil industry workers purchasing sexual services?
3. What can we learn about the sex trade and the oil industry when using a feminist lens?

I used a qualitative, exploratory methodology to answer the research questions. In total, I conducted 11 semi-structured interviews, including five oil industry workers and six indoor sex workers. I interviewed oil workers who were able to speak to my topic and asked them general questions about working in the oil industry, the culture, and about their knowledge of the industry's connection to the sex trade. In interviewing sex workers, I asked about their oil industry worker clients and if they differed from non-oil industry worker clients. I recruited participants primarily through snowball sampling.

⁵ I understand culture as the “beliefs, behaviors...common to the members of a particular group or society” (Zgourides, 2000, pg. 27). In this study, the group of interest is Albertan oil industry workers.

This research project draws from literature on masculinity(ies) in resource extraction industries, and Messerschmidt's theoretical work on masculinity. Such literature and theoretical work provide a framework for my research project. My major conclusions suggest that within the oil production culture, negative views of women, the objectification of women, and the normalization of purchasing sex, are all pervasive aspects of the culture as well as products of frontier masculinity. However, the negative treatment of women within the oil industry seems to be context specific to the oil production culture insofar as I also found there are no significant differences in indoor sex workers' interactions with oil industry worker clients compared to non-oil industry worker clients. Nonetheless, this project establishes there is a connection between Alberta's oil industry and the sex trade, one that goes beyond purely an economic relationship. The oil industry workers interviewed confirmed that a lot of their coworkers purchased sex and described a culture that normalizes purchasing sex. Furthermore, the indoor sex workers interviewed explained the various ways their work is connected to Alberta's oil industry. Before the recession, oil industry workers made up a large amount of sex workers' clientele, and since the recession in Alberta, the number of their oil industry workers have significantly declined. I conclude that the frontier masculinity found in the oil production culture is an expression of masculinity specific to the context of the oil industry.

In summary, this thesis offers contributions to academia on three main topics: what it is like working in the oil industry; the lifestyle and culture of the oil industry; and the connection Alberta's oil industry has to indoor sex work.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters. I introduced my topic of study by explaining what drew me to the subject matter. Chapter two will be composed of the conceptual framework

which includes a literature review and the theoretical framework for this study. I focus primarily on research about masculinity(ies) in resource extraction industries and draw on Messerschmidt's theorization about structured action, masculinity, and risky behaviours in chapter two. In chapter three, I discuss my methodology and the various methodological challenges I encountered throughout my research project. Then, I explain my analysis and findings from my interviews in chapter four. I discuss and conclude this thesis in chapter five. References and appendices follow.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

Background Literature

To my knowledge, literature on my topic of study is scarce. There is a lot of literature on the sex trade; however, its connections to other industries such as the oil industry, are not widely studied. More specifically, such literature rarely exists within a sociological context.

However, the sex trade's connection to Alberta's oil industry has received a great deal of attention in journalism. For example, the National Post wrote an article titled "Chasing the money': Sex workers lured to oil-rich Alberta." The article quotes an Edmonton Police Service (EPS) detective stating: "There is a pattern where women are coming to an oil-rich province chasing the money, and we are seeing more and more of that." This is one of many articles that discusses a connection between the sex trade and the oil industry. CBC Calgary published a news article titled, "Sex workers cashing in on Alberta's oil boom." Another article that discusses the sex trade in Fort McMurray, an infamous oil city in Alberta, states "In the city, prostitution is at an all-time high, with all the attendant problems of violence and public health" (Nadeau-Dubois, 2013, par 10). In addition, other journalists are linking the sex trade and the oil industry to larger problems, arguing, "as the cash from the oil and gas industry flowed into northwest Albertan

communities, so did the sex trade and social problems more commonly seen in larger cities.”

One of the social problems being referred to in the prior quote is missing and murdered sex workers in oil towns (*Slain prostitute part of growing sex trade in Northern Alberta*, 2008, Edmonton Journal).

Another social problem that many journalists link the oil industry to is sex trafficking. North Dakota, Alberta’s South-Eastern oil booming neighbour, has received an abundance of media attention because of the influx of prostitution and the related ‘social ills’ such as sex trafficking. A news article titled ‘North Dakota’s oil industry fuels another boom: sex trafficking,’ discusses the willingness of oil workers to pay hundreds to thousands of dollars for underage girls. The journalist writing this specific article quotes a Harvard researcher, who stated: “The influx of young, unaccompanied men working high-paying oil jobs fuels the market for trafficking in the Bakken” (Pioneer Press, 2015); however, *why* this is, is not explained. This article is just one of many news articles that link sex trafficking to resource extraction industries such as the oil industry. Another article's headline states "A few years ago, the oil boom brought jobs, workers, and money to Williston, North Dakota, but the influx of young men also brought a rise in crimes like prostitution, drug trafficking, theft, and even murder" (Hargreaves, CNN, 2015). Journalists seem to not only link the oil industry booms to such social ‘ills,’ but also link such ills to the influx of *young men*. Again, *why* they are linking an influx of young men and the oil industry to social ills is not explained. Rather the journalists rely on an assumption that readers understand why an influx of young men in oil rich regions would cause an increase in crime. The assumption journalists make about young men committing more crime has been well established by research, yet what is missing in academia is looking at whether there is anything

specific/different about oil industry workers that differentiate them from other young men of similar socioeconomic backgrounds.

Other news articles on the topic include: ‘Sex, Drugs and Alcohol Stalk the Streets of Fort McMurray,’ ‘Why Prostitutes in Alberta, Canada Are Making \$15,000/Week,’ and ‘No Country for Young Men.’ These articles range in date from 2007 to 2016, indicating this is an issue that has not declined in media interest. However, none of the news articles attempt to explain *why* the Alberta oil industry contributes to an influx of prostitution.

This relationship between the sex trade and the oil industry highlighted in the media appears not to be unique to Alberta and its oil-rich North American neighbours. Research has shown that oil-rich regions such as Nigeria and Ghana have also seen an increase in sex work with increased oil production (Chindo, 2011; Odoom, 2014; Pormal, David, Jackson, 2014). The connection between the two industries has been studied in various disciplinary contexts, such as human geography, and migration studies. These different studies confirm that a relationship exists between the sex trade and the oil industry. However, none of these studies examine this relationship sociologically. Instead, an excess of money and testosterone are offered as explanations for oil industry workers purchasing sex (Chindo, 2011; Odoom, 2014; Pormal, David, Jackson, 2014). Such explanations simplify the relationship while also relying on gender stereotypes.

Although research is lacking on the connection between Alberta’s oil industry and the sex trade, there is a body of literature on masculinity(ies) and the role it plays in resource extraction industries like the oil industry.

Literature on Masculinity(ies) in the Oil Industry

Historical Literature

Men and masculinity in resource development industries have been a topic of study for almost a century. Most of the existing research examines the working conditions for the men and the masculinity present in the industries. For example, one study dating back to 1928 examines the conditions and culture of men staying in work camps while building Canadian railways (Bradwin, 1928; as cited in Angell, 2014). These men are referred to as ‘bunkhouse workers.’ Edwin Bradwin, the author of this study, describes the work conditions as both physically and socially harsh and as a means of coping with these harsh conditions, the men engaged in ‘deviant’ behaviours, rowdiness, and corrupt behaviours (Angell, 2014; Bradwin, 1928; Lucas, 2008). Purchasing sex is a part of these ‘deviant’ behaviours described by the researchers (Angell, 2014; Lucas, 2008). Other ‘deviant’ behaviours the researchers speak to are heavy drinking and illegal drug use (Angell, 2014; Bradwin, 1928; Lucas, 2008). Similarly, another book that speaks to the culture of resource extraction industries is Rex. A. Lucas’s 1971 book: *Minetown, Milltown, Railtown: Life in Canadian communities of Single Industry*. Lucas describes typologies of the types of workers who are attracted to resource boom towns. He describes ‘bunkhouse workers’ as men who are private, isolated “loners” who “tell a story of liquor, women, and robbery” (Lucas, 1971, pg. 32). Therefore, literature suggests that men working in resource extraction industries engage in ‘deviant’ behaviour, such as purchasing sex, to cope with harsh working conditions.

An older American study identifies a specific type of masculinity present in the mining industry which has been coined *frontier masculinity*. In his study of three mining towns in the United States, American Sociologist Paul Landis writes:

The Frontier puts a premium on those with strong physical powers, who are able to survive the rigors of the natural setting, and those with elastic moral sense who can tolerate, if not condone, the non-moral order which necessarily exists when highly civilized men sink to a primitive plane (1938, pg.114).

Landis and other early scholars make it clear that the men who are working in resource development are “tough and toughened by their working and living conditions. Masculinity was not only seen as a central part of workers’ identity, but also as a necessary and celebrated trait for coping in these camp environments” (Angell, 2014, pg. 111). Each of these early studies observed that the men working in the resource development work camps engage in deviant, ‘non-moral’ behaviours. However, the researchers are not specific about these behaviours nor do they exclusively discuss the relationship between these behaviours and the resource extraction industries. Regardless, literature dating as far back as 1928 identifies resource extraction industries, which are male-dominated, as breeding grounds for unique forms of masculinity.

More Recent Literature

In addition to the historical literature, there are also several recent studies on the oil industry that have a sociological and gendered focus. For example, one study done in Australia explicitly examined socio-cultural factors in the resource industry that focused on high levels of male on male violence. Although the focus of the study was male on male violence, the researchers did note that males working in the mining camps often spent lots of money on sex workers (Carrington et al., 2010, pg. 10). Carrington et al. attribute such behaviour to socio-spatial and socio-cultural factors rather than being a product of “individualized expression of psycho-pathological deficit or social disorganization” (Carrington et al., 2010, pg.1). The socio-cultural factors that Carrington et al. (2010) discuss are described as peculiar to resource boom towns (pg. 9). Such socio-cultural factors include the hyper-masculine environment of the resource boom town studied (in Australia), and a local hierarchy of masculinities and rivalries

between the oil industry workers and non-oil industry workers in the town. As a result of these social divisions, fights over women, territory, status, and belonging regularly took place in the resource boom-town Carrington et al. researched (2010). Furthermore, the ‘culture’ that Carrington et al. (2010) refer to when discussing socio-cultural factors is defined as a culture that “valorises hard physical labour, big machines and conspicuous consumptions and normalises excessive alcohol consumption and displays of aggression as markers of masculinity” (pg. 12). When combined with the local hierarchies and rivalries in the resource boom-town, Carrington et al. contend that there are “peculiar socio-cultural dynamics of resource boom communities” (2010, pg. 13). These peculiar socio-cultural dynamics apparently unique to resource boom communities led Carrington et al. to link the high levels of male on male violence to the culture of the resource extraction industry (2010). Thus, Carrington et al.’s study demonstrates the importance of examining socio-cultural factors in resource industries and regions.

In addition, when describing the resource boom community Carrington et al. (2010) studied, they also refer to the culture of the resource extraction industry as a culture of *frontier masculinity*. Like historical literature, several recent studies identify resource-rich cultures and regions as having frontier masculinity present (Angell, 2014; Carrington et al., 2010; Dorow, 2015; Filteau; 2015; Miller, 2004; O’Shaughnessy, 2011). Frontier masculinity is defined as being "characterized by toughness, tenacity, rugged individualism, emotional self-reliance, and personal isolation" (Angell, 2015, pg. 121; Miller, 2004; O’Shaughnessy, 2011). Many recent studies rely on the historically coined term to describe the masculinity found in oil-rich regions.

One specific study that discusses frontier masculinity in the oil industry is O’Shaughnessy’s study on women working in Fort McMurray, Alberta. In her study, O’Shaughnessy explains how resource rich communities become male spaces due to the central

discourse of frontier masculinity (O'Shaughnessy, 2011). This affects the position and identities of men and women in oil communities similar to Fort McMurray because hegemonic masculinities like frontier masculinity discursively construct social and economic relations and provide cues for the ways people perform gender identities (O'Shaughnessy, 2011). Therefore, in rural and/or resource communities, hegemonic masculinities like frontier masculinity are embedded in the working-class status, and "a production-centric mentality wherein man's relationship with the environment is defined by one of domination and extraction" is reinforced (O'Shaughnessy, 2011, pg. 119). Thus, men are rewarded for performing such masculinity which leaves little room for female identities. It also promotes the notion that women are unfit for the 'frontier.' This is *how* frontier masculinity affects the positions and identities of men and women in oil communities. In addition, O'Shaughnessy explains how women's gendered identities in Fort McMurray are often reduced to their sexuality, as sexual temptations, as well as being economically dependent on men (2011). Therefore, although sex workers or the sex trade is not discussed by O'Shaughnessy, her discussion of frontier masculinity and how it affects men's and women's positions and identities in the Albertan oil town is relevant to my topic of study.

Gloria Miller (2004) also studied women working in the oil industry in Alberta. Miller (2004) argues "the oil industry is masculine, not only in the historical and contemporary, demographic composition of its employees but in its assumptions, values and everyday practices" (pg. 48). Furthermore, she states, "the oil industry is particularly powerful and influential" (pg. 48). She argues the oil production culture is unique and a part of that uniqueness stems from the presence of frontier masculinity (Miller, 2004). Miller found the masculine nature of the oil industry affected women working in the industry in various ways such as women being

excluded from everyday interactions, and women having to adapt to traditional masculine values of the male dominated industry (Miller, 2004). Although the female engineers and geologists Miller studied were "pioneers" for working in a male dominated industry, Miller explains that most of the women express feeling marginalized and the need to adapt to the masculine industry (2014). Miller (2014) explains that although this is beneficial to the women in the short-term, adaptation by the women leaves little hope for change to a culture that is inclusive of masculine *and* feminine values (pg. 9)

This unique form of hegemonic masculinity found in resource-rich regions has been confirmed in other studies as well. For example, Matthew Filteau studied the effect rapid resource development had in the shale region of Pennsylvania (2015). He found that the large influx of workers for the shale industry resulted in a shift in local masculinities and the dominant form of masculinities (Filteau, 2015, pg. 438). Those who were considered 'masculine' and performing masculine jobs prior to the shale industry boom were now viewed as being in more feminized jobs, because of the hyper-masculine resource extraction culture that swooped into the Pennsylvania area. Filteau stresses the importance of further research on the gendered nature of resource development industries and regions (2015). He states, "without thoroughly examining how development may affect men's sense of "being a man," scholars will never understand the social or economic effects from natural-resource-based development" (pg. 433). This need is especially relevant in Alberta with its heavy reliance on the oil industry.

Literature also suggests the masculine oil industry culture negatively affects the well-being of oil industry workers. Several studies that focus on resource extraction industries find that heavy alcohol use, substance abuse, and high rates of sexually transmitted diseases are common among oil industry workers (Angell, 2015). For example, Angela Angell is an Albertan

sociologist who studied oil industry masculinities and its impacts on oil workers' well-being. Angell (2015) does not exclusively look at the connection between Albertan oil industry masculinities and the treatment of women and sex work; however, such connections are briefly mentioned throughout her study. Nonetheless, her discussion of masculinity in the oil production culture and its effects on the men working in the industry applies to my study. Angell (2015) describes the oil production culture as a 'suck it up princess work culture' (pg. 118). This was found to have various negative effects on oil industry workers such as higher levels of physical illness, mental illness, and suicide. Though I will not be examining the well-being of oil industry workers, such effects of the culture Angell examined provide a further understanding of the culture my research seeks to explore.

Another study that examines Alberta's oil industry and oil industry workers through a feminist lens is Sara Dorow's study on the mobility regime found in Fort McMurray. Dorow (2015) interviewed several oil industry workers in work camps in Fort McMurray over the course of a seven-year study on employment related mobility. In general, she describes the oil industry as a gendered industry in that most of the oil workers are male, versus the support staff at camps who are mostly female. Particularly, the ergonomics of the oil industry is gendered because it means "sacrificing the gendered, racialized bodies of the women and some men who ensured the delivery of that smooth, daily reproductive work to the economics of this equation" (Dorow, 2015, pg. 5). The gendered ergonomics Dorow refers to are due to productivity of its primarily male labour force being highly valued in the industry. This results in an emphasis on keeping the oil workers happy, even if that meant having (the mostly female) support staff face more difficult working conditions (i.e., moving heavy furniture to navigate cleaning the work camp spaces). Dorow's findings on the gendered ergonomics connect to what O'Shaughnessy

found in her study: the oil industry has a culture that influences the identities and positions of women in the culture. Although Dorow does not specifically talk about sex workers, her work can be extended to sex workers by considering *how* the oil industry may ‘sacrifice’ sex workers’ bodies as a means to ensure smooth, daily reproductive work.

Thus, there is a body of literature that identifies the oil production culture as distinctly masculine, with frontier masculinity as the dominant form of masculinity found in the culture (Angell, 2015; Bradwin, 1928; Carrington et. al, 2010; Dorow, 2015; Filteau; 2014; Lucas, 2008; Miller, 2004; O’Shaughnessy, 2011). The masculine nature of the oil production culture found by other researchers in resource regions, as well as the economic and social aspects of the culture, may contribute to the high incidence of oil industry workers purchasing sexual services; this is what I wish to explore.

The Feminist Debate about the Sex Trade

This project utilizes a feminist theoretical perspective. However, in using a feminist theoretical perspective, I acknowledge the sex trade is a highly contested feminist issue⁶. I became even more aware of this throughout my thesis project. Whether I was talking about my research to colleagues, peers, friends, feminists or non-feminists, the reactions to my research topic varied, with the majority of people responding negatively to my focus on sex work, further entrenching the societal stigma about sex work. My opinion on sex work varied greatly throughout my project as well, and my thoughts about sex work were constantly challenged during my project. Conversations about my research shaped my views and reading books written by sex workers themselves informed my opinion. However, nothing compares to the impact

⁶ In saying this, I am not suggesting that prostitution is a women-only issue. I recognize that prostitution includes males and LGBTQIP2SAA people. Nonetheless, conversations on prostitution often refer to females as sex workers and males as buyers because this is what is most prevalent. Thus, in this thesis I may assert such assumptions but not for the purpose of ignoring other possibilities.

interviewing sex workers had on my thoughts about sex work. The most valuable lesson I learned throughout the course of this project is that reading books can only teach you so much about a subject. It was the conversations I had with sex workers that informed, shaped, and challenged my beliefs on sex work the greatest. But in this chapter, I will focus on the theoretical feminist debate on sex work.

The debate about the sex trade is due to feminists being unable to uniformly answer questions such as "is it sexual or economic inequality that keeps women from attaining equality? Should protecting women from male sexual subjugation entail restricting women's ability to make choices? Are women victims or entrepreneurs?" (Jolin, 1994, pg. 75). Thus, there is a division of opinion on sex work. Some argue that sex work is a form of gender inequality in which sex workers are exploited and harmed. This position, aligned with 'radical feminism,' contends that sex work is a form of violence against women. This argument is theoretically based on feminist theory that argues prostitution is "an integral part of patriarchal capitalism" (Pateman, 2006, pg. 50). Support for this argument lies in research findings that some of the women and girls involved in sex work are coerced into the sex trade. In addition, many of them have histories of physical and/or sexual abuse (Waltman, 2011). Furthermore, many studies on sex work focus on street-level sex workers, many of whom are stereotyped as 'drug addicts' and vulnerable to poverty (Huang, 2016; Lever, Kanouse, & Berry, 2005). It is findings such as these which support the idea that sex work is oppressive and/or inherently harmful to women.

These views, although perfectly valid in some instances, are problematic because "such [radical] feminists blind themselves to the fact that prostitutes, no less than any other worker, and no less than any other woman, engage in acts of negotiation, resistance, and subversion that belie their designation as passive objects" (Chapkis, 1997, pg. 20). bell hooks echoes Chapkis'

sentiment in saying that these views simplify and embrace an outmoded sexist vision of female sexual agency and pleasure (as cited in Chapkis, 1997, pg. 22).

Sexual libertarians, on the other hand, “frame sex as having multiple meanings...and see it as legitimate in multiple social settings” (Seidman, 1992, pg. 187-188 as cited in Chapkis, 1997, pg. 21). Therefore, sexual libertarians view sex, pornography, and prostitution as a reality, but rather than this reality being oppressive to women, sex is seen as the source of women’s greatest power. Therefore, sex work is not *inherently* harmful. Furthermore, supporters of this position argue that feminism is based on the principles of equality and independence, meaning women deserve the right to make decisions about their bodies and have the right to define their own moral standards. Therefore, those who view prostitution as a form of violence against women are forgetting fundamental principles of feminism (Marlowe, 2006, pg. 357). Rather than viewing sex workers as oppressed and exploited, supporters of this position argue sex workers are labourers like any other seller of services (Van Der Meulen, Durisin, & Love, 2013), implying “there is nothing wrong with prostitution that is not also wrong with other forms of work” (Pateman, 2006, pg. 52). With this perspective, those who believe sex work is harmful or degrading are adopting “outmoded” attitudes to sex (Pateman, 2006, pg. 52). It is clear that this perspective is at odds with the first position discussed which demonstrates the difficulty feminism has in reconciling differences of opinion about the sex trade.

Some scholars problematize the ongoing debate about sex work, calling for a more nuanced understanding of the topic. As Chapkis (1997) expresses “the reality of commercial sex (and the experiences of those performing erotic labor) is far more varied than either Radical or Sex Radical feminist rhetoric can express” (pg. 32). The two ‘opposing’ perspectives just discussed are often criticized as simplistic and dualistic, because female sex workers are

represented as either victims or as volitional (Maher, 1997, pg. 17). Lisa Maher (1997) in her feminist ethnographic study of sex work points out how the two common interpretations of sex work dichotomize agency, with one denying women agency, and the second over-endowing women with it (pg. 1). Maher (1997) explains that both interpretations “are guilty of over-simplification and both ignore the relationships between broader social, economic, and cultural formations, and immediate, specific, and local contexts in structuring the conditions by which women’s agency is enacted” (pg. 1). Rather than viewing sex work as either being oppressive or volitional, there is the need to view sex work and whether or not women are ‘victims or entrepreneurs’ on a spectrum. One cannot deny that oppression and exploitation occurs within sex work; however, that is certainly not the case with *all* sex work. My interviews provide support for this and I will discuss this more at length in my results chapter.

In spite of the criticism about the two most common interpretations of the sex trade being simplistic, the debate about the sex trade became extremely politicized and reliant on the two opposing interpretations. This is mostly because prostitution debates are centred on law reforms and legislative frameworks (Jolin, 1994; Van Der Meulen et al., 2013). There are two popular models of law that reflect the two opposing arguments about prostitution. Canada is the most recent country to adopt an adaptation of one of these models. Bill C-36’s ‘*Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act*,’ passed in December 2014, formulates Canada's new prostitution laws. The Act claims to criminalize buyers of sexual services, rather than the sellers. This shift to criminalizing buyers of sexual services is known as the Nordic Model. It is also often compared and contrasted to models of legalization or decriminalization (of prostitution). The Nordic Model is often called radically feminist because it is based on the idea that prostitution is harmful to women. On the other hand, models of decriminalization pride

themselves as a form of liberal feminism because they give sex workers health and labour rights. Ultimately, these debates are heavily based on differing opinions and act as a point of contention within feminism. In spite of the controversy, feminism is a suitable theoretical framework for my proposed project for reasons I will explain in the section outlining my theoretical perspective.

Messerschmidt's Theory of Masculinities & Crime

In addition to the literature discussed above, I am relying on James Messerschmidt's theoretical work on masculinities and crime. Messerschmidt considers his work to be a part of feminist theory. Feminists scrutinized traditional criminology as being gender-blind (Collier, 1998; Messerschmidt, 1993). Feminist theorists pointed out the need to recognize the bigger picture when studying crime and deviance which is the gendered nature of crime as a whole meaning looking at men and women as gendered creatures. Criminology and sociology were criticized as needing to account for how people "do" gender (Chesney-lind, 2006; Flavin, 2001). Such criticisms resulted in a body of literature theorizing about masculinity and crime/deviance. James Messerschmidt is one of the main contributors to this body of literature. The body of theoretical literature on masculinity is a part of the larger feminist movement which asserts that to have equality between the sexes it is necessary to understand the way people 'do' gender, as well as the construction of femininities and masculinities, and their relationality (Butler 1993). James Messerschmidt's theoretical work provides a framework to understand how people, specifically men, 'do' gender, which is why I argue it is the most suitable theoretical framework for my research project.

Messerschmidt's theory on masculinity and crime draws on the works of Giddens, Connell, Fenstermaker, West and Zimmerman, and Judith Butler (as cited in Messerschmidt, 1993). Although Messerschmidt theorizes about masculinity *and crime*, his theoretical work on

masculinity has made him one of the most prominent scholars in masculinity studies. Throughout this thesis, I will be referring to the relationship between masculinity and risky behaviour⁷ rather than crime. Messerschmidt uses the term crime in his theoretical work; however, because of the blurred lines about whether or not sex work and/or purchasing sex is a crime, risky behaviour is a more suitable phrase to use in my thesis. It is not critical to distinguish between crime and risky behaviour in relation to gender theory, because they exist on a continuum; crime is a more serious form of risky behaviour. Messerschmidt's theoretical work informs my discussion in three main ways: 1) his discussion of structured action allows me to understand the behaviours of oil industry workers such as purchasing sex; 2) the naming of structures that affect actions and gender relations informs my discussion of the oil production industry and the gender relations within it; 3) and hegemonic masculinity informs my discussion of frontier masculinity within the oil industry, and how all theorizations relate to understanding risky behaviours.

In social theory, there is often tension between social structures and human agency when attempting to understand human behaviour and/or social phenomena. Messerschmidt tackles this tension by incorporating social structures and human agency into his theory on masculinities and risky behaviours in what he calls *structured action*: social structures are constructed by social action, but social actions are also constrained or enabled by social structures (Messerschmidt, 1993, pg. 62). Messerschmidt asserts that social structures affect gender relations. For example, structures such as the gendered division of labour, gendered relations of power, and sexuality are constructed by people's social actions. Although structures play a role in gender relations, human agency also plays a role. This is why Messerschmidt argues we must theorize structure and

⁷ Turner et al. (2004) define risk-taking behavior as “a socially unacceptable volitional behavior with a potentially negative outcome in which precautions are not taken, such as speeding, drinking and driving, drug abuse, unprotected sex” (pg. 1)

action as one and the same. He refers to this as structured action (1993, pg. 77). Therefore, to understand masculinities and risky behaviours, social action and structures must be accounted for, especially gendered social action. Gender is in part constructed by social interaction, and this allows us to further understand risky behaviours by men (Messerschmidt, 1993). Gender is also constructed by social structures, Messerschmidt pinpoints three specific social structures which I discuss next.

The three social structures Messerschmidt identifies that affect gender relations are the gendered division of labour, gendered relations of power, and sexuality. I will briefly summarize Messerschmidt's points about these three social structures.

The gendered division of labour refers to:

the fact that the nature of labor performed for species survival is different for men and women. Historically, in Western industrialized societies labor has been divided by gender for housework, childcare, unpaid work versus paid work, and unpaid within paid labor market and individual work places (Messerschmidt, 1993, pg. 64).

With the development of capitalism, the gendered division of labour became male dominated, with men's work being valued higher than women's. This was especially apparent in the paid workforce, where women were paid less and only considered suitable for low-skilled jobs. Although this structure has evolved over time, the gendered division of labour continues to be entrenched in Western industrialized societies. Paid work continues to be connected to masculinity, and men's wages on average continue to be higher than women's⁸. Therefore, the gendered division of labour remains a structural force that affects gender relations in Western societies.

⁸ See for example: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/gender-pay-gap-still-an-issue-in-canada-statscan-datashows/article34210790/?cmpid=PM0317>

Gendered relations of power are the second structure that Messerschmidt identifies as affecting gender relations. Messerschmidt defines this as “the obvious cultural fact that men control the economic, religious, political, and military institutions of authority and coercion in society” (Messerschmidt, 1993, pg. 71). Further, Messerschmidt explains that the relations of power are not only present at institutional levels (1993). For example:

a woman may have far superior material resources than an unemployed man, yet he nevertheless may exercise interpersonal power in the form of, for example, rape. That exercise of power is more than merely an individual embodiment; it is structural by being profoundly embedded in power inequalities...Thus, authority and control become defining characteristics not only of gender relations but of the social construction of masculinities as well (Messerschmidt, 1993, pg. 73).

Messerschmidt explains how the social construction of masculinity(ies) is connected to power relations as well, where men may feel the need to exercise power, authority, and control. The gender differences in power relations provide, according to Messerschmidt, a basic understanding about why men commit more crime than women and also why men engage in different types of crime (1993, pg. 73) because Messerschmidt views men committing crime as a means to obtain power and masculinity.

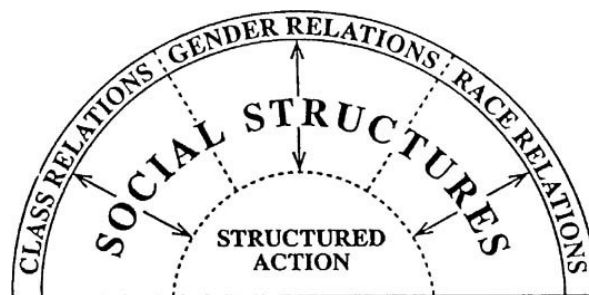
The third structure Messerschmidt integrates into his reconceptualised theory on masculinity and crime is sexuality. He argues there are three salient features of sexuality. The first is that sexuality is socially constructed according to historically specific social practices. Secondly, sexual practices are often restricted, and this is historically as well as contextually specific. The third feature refers to a hierarchical system of sexual value, where "marital reproductive heterosexuals" are at the top of this hierarchy (Messerschmidt, 1993, pg. 75). This is rooted in the Western constructed norm of heterosexuality. As a result of this heteronormativity, sexualities other than heterosexuality are deemed 'deviant.' Such 'deviant' sexualities are "ridiculed, policed, and repressed" (Messerschmidt, 1993, pg. 74). The

heterosexual ideal has the consequence of 'maleness' or masculinity being associated with heterosexuality. However, it is not just heterosexuality that indicates masculinity. Messerschmidt (1993) states that hegemonic masculinity establishes the male heterosexual ideal as "an alleged uncontrollable and insatiable sexual appetite for women, which results in a "naturally" coercive "male" sexuality" (pg. 75). As a result of this dominant ideology, heterosexual performance becomes an important characteristic of a man's identity. These features of sexuality are closely related to gender relations of power because women's sexuality can be limited by men. Normative heterosexuality shapes women as objects of heterosexual desire (Messerschmidt, 1993, pg. 75). Consequently, normative heterosexuality "defines masculinity through difference from, and desire for, women" (Messerschmidt, 1993, pg. 76). The structure of sexuality, especially normative heterosexuality, furthers our understanding of gender relations.

The three structures (the gendered division of labour, gendered relations of power, and sexuality) therefore all affect social relations. The below image illustrates Messerschmidt's theorization:

Figure 1: Social Relations, Social Structures, and Structured Action

(Source: Messerschmidt, 1997, pg.5)



Gender is in part constructed through social interaction in that gender is often recognized or attributed to people according to the binary categories of man or woman. Thus, "we configure our behaviours, so we are seen unquestionably by others in particular social situations as

expressing our "essential natures" – we do masculinity or femininity" (Messerschmidt, 1993, pg. 80). With this view, masculinity is not static, rather it is always changing, and always something that needs to be accomplished (Messerschmidt, 1993). However, there is not one kind of masculinity nor are masculinities created in a vacuum. Different types of masculinities are preferred or available depending on one's class, race, and sexual preference (Messerschmidt, 1993). Therefore, masculinity is a result of structured action – it is shaped by what men do but also by varying levels of power and structures (like class, race, and sexual preference). Masculinity, therefore, becomes institutionalized through interaction. This institutionalization of masculinity allows men to draw on patterned masculine ways of thinking and to act in particular situations – hence social relations become structured (Messerschmidt, 1993, pg. 81).

Messerschmidt refers to different types of masculinities (1993): hegemonic masculinities and subordinated masculinities. Upon its origins, hegemonic masculinity was conceptualized as “the idealized form of masculinity in a given historical setting” (Messerschmidt, 1993, pg. 82). He expands this definition in stating:

In contemporary Western industrialized societies, hegemonic masculinity is defined through work in the paid labour market, the subordination of women, heterosexism, and the driven and uncontrollable sexuality of men. Refined still further, hegemonic masculinity emphasizes practices toward authority, control, competitive individualism, independence, aggressiveness, and the capacity for violence (Connell, 1992 as cited in Messerschmidt, 1993, pg. 82).

However, hegemonic masculinity does not reflect men's personalities, but rather is associated with context-specific practices. Therefore, hegemonic masculinity is a social construction that is unique to particular circumstances (Messerschmidt, 1993).

After briefly reiterating Messerschmidt's theory on masculinity, the question of ‘how does this relate to risky behaviours’ arises. Risky behaviours, according to Messerschmidt (1993), is theorized as a suitable way to ‘do masculinity.’ Hegemonic masculinity encourages specific

kinds of gendered action, and the capacities for such action are shaped by social structures; "[risky behaviours], then, can provide a resource for doing masculinity in specific social settings as well as contributing to a gendered line of action in which future accountability may be at risk (e.g. being an adequate breadwinner)" (Messerschmidt, 1993, pg. 84). This means crime is not inherent to the male sex role but instead acts as a means to fulfill masculinity (Messerschmidt, 1993). Therefore, Messerschmidt argues that masculinity is accomplished, as well as context specific. Risky behaviour is one way to accomplish and fulfill masculinity. In summary, Messerschmidt, while drawing on many other gender theorists, asserts that gender and gender identities are performative, created by context and structures, and are created collectively (Messerschmidt, 1993; Sallee & Harris, 2011). He then applies this theory to further feminist and sociological understandings of gender *and* risky behaviour. This is what makes Messerschmidt's theory unique, and most suitable to my topic of study.

In Messerschmidt's discussion of how we do gender, there are echoes of Judith Butler's work on feminist post-structuralism. Recent feminist literature emphasizes "greater attention to the construction of femininities and masculinities, and their relationality" (Butler 1993 as cited in O'Shaughnessy, 2011, pg. 25). This emphasis comes from feminist post-structuralism, commonly associated with Judith Butler's work. Feminist post-structuralism challenges the idea of a fixed subject and instead argues that the subject is fragmented. Therefore, rather than a subject being fixed as so, such as a 'woman' being a fixed subject, gender identities are performative. Messerschmidt's theory on masculinity and crime draws on this work when he asserts people 'do gender.' Feminist post-structuralism while complementing Messerschmidt's theory on masculinity and crime, pushes the theory further in its emphasis on discourse shaping gendered identities.

Conclusion

Messerschmidt's work on masculinity and crime provides a foundational theory for this study on the sex trade within Alberta's oil industry. Messerschmidt (1993) argues that depending on the social context, there are patterned ways in which masculinity is represented and enacted, and dependent on the setting, differing conceptions of hegemonic masculinities are defined and sustained. Therefore, gender identity is embedded within certain social contexts and in practices where social relations are structured; thus, we 'do' gender (Messerschmidt, 1993). This also means different types of masculinities exist. He argues then, deviance is one avenue to 'do gender' in a way that meets the desirable form of masculinity. Messerschmidt's theoretical work combined with literature on my topic of study, as well as literature on masculinity(ies) in the resource extraction industries, form the conceptual framework for my study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

I use a qualitative, exploratory methodology and semi-structured interviews. While I anticipated several challenges at the outset of the project, the study ended up being far more difficult than I expected. These challenges are discussed in detail later in this chapter. First, I discuss the methodological framework that informs this project.

Exploratory Research

The relative lack of research on the relationship between Alberta's oil industry and the sex trade suggests that an exploratory study is appropriate. On the one hand, some argue that all research is 'exploratory' research, in that all research is exploring a topic of interest (Steppins, 2001). However, on the other hand, others suggest research is often defined as exploratory when there is a lack of prior topical research or literature. Indeed, Robert Steppins (2001, pg. 6) contends exploratory research is appropriate when researchers "have little or no scientific

knowledge about the group, process, activity, or situation they want to examine but nevertheless have reason to believe it contains elements worth discovering.” As an exploratory study, this project provides some preliminary insights into a relatively under-researched topic and may help shape future research in the area.

Qualitative Research & Semi-structured Interviewing

Qualitative interviews are conversations whereby the interviewer asks questions and listens while interviewees answer the questions (Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Warren, 2001). Oftentimes, the purpose of qualitative interviewing is not to learn ‘facts’ per se but to derive interpretations and meanings from the conversations (Warren, 2001). According to Carol Warren (2001), researchers usually choose qualitative interviews because “their concern is with establishing common patterns or themes between particular types of respondents” (pg. 6). At the outset of my project, this was also my desire. I was interested in having *conversations* with my participants. The ability to interact with participants drew me to qualitative research as well. Therefore, my project is a qualitative semi-structured interview study.

Researchers often prepare a script for the interview in qualitative interview research (Kvale, 2007). The researcher determines the script’s structure. Interviews can range from being completely unstructured, to very structured. Semi-structured interviews are interviews where there is an outline of topics and questions; however, there is flexibility to stray from the guide and remain open to new directions the interview may take once being conducted (Kvale, 2007).

My interest in feminist theory contributed to me pursuing themes in my interviews such as asking oil workers about the conversations they have with their coworkers on topics such as women, and sex. I therefore determined that semi-structured interviews were most suitable for my project. Semi-structured interviews also allowed me to remain open to new themes during

data collection and to let the data guide me. Thus, I changed my interview guides as necessary. I determined if any changes to my interview guides were needed by noticing if any new themes or topics emerged, or if any of my questions seemed irrelevant to my participants. Having flexibility in my interview guides allowed me to be guided by my data.

I did, in fact, make some minor changes to my interview guides for the oil industry workers. I added two additional questions to my original interview guide for this group. The first addition concerned if and how the sex trade in oil regions was connected to organized crime, specifically the Hells Angels⁹. This question was added because my first two oil industry worker interviewees suggested the Hells Angels played a role in the sex trade in the oil regions. Secondly, I added a question: ‘describe the oil culture to me, what comes to mind?’ This question provided me with a clearer explanation of the oil production culture from the view of my participants which is more helpful than putting together a series of their responses and formulating my own ideas about what the oil culture is like, from their perspective. However, this question was only asked if my participants believed there was in a fact, a unique oil culture.

I developed separate interview guides for non-executive oil industry workers and sex workers (Please see Appendix C for the interview guides). The interview guide for the oil industry workers focused on the interviewees’ experiences of working in the oil industry. I also asked more specific questions that focused on my feminist framework, such as ‘what are conversations like about women among you and your co-workers?’ and ‘what are conversations like about buying sex?’ My interview guide with the sex workers was brief and non-intrusive. I asked a few general questions about their work such as benefits and challenges, and then asked

⁹ The Hells Angels are a motorcycle club that are known worldwide. The Hells Angels are considered an organized crime syndicate. In regions across Alberta, it is speculated that the Hells Angels own businesses linked to the sex trade such as strip clubs.

more specific questions about their clientele. Although some of my interview questions are *personal* in that sex is not often an openly discussed topic, I did not ask any detailed questions about my participants' personal lives. My interview questions mostly concern the oil industry and oil production culture as a whole. These questions suited not only my research interest but were also a strategic attempt to remove the individual from the questions to make talking about a sensitive subject easier.

Recruitment Procedures & Ethical Considerations

Ethics

This study received ethics approval on June 11th, 2015. Although initial ethics approval was a fairly straightforward process, I made various amendments once I began recruiting participants. Most amendments were minor and involved changes such as broadening the age of my sample criteria, and being able to recruit sex workers using online forums. The amendments I made will be discussed throughout this section in discussing my recruitment procedures. I submitted ethics amendments on October 5th, 2015 and I received approval for all of my ethics amendments on October 30th, 2015.

I followed the standard ethical procedures to recruit and interview participants, such as ensuring participation was voluntary and that I received informed consent. In recruiting, I either gave my contact information to potential participants who then contacted me if they were interested, or contacted a potential participant first with their permission. Their permission was granted to me through gatekeepers¹⁰. Both of these recruitment options were in my approved ethics application.

¹⁰ Gatekeepers are people who control research access (<http://methods.sagepub.com/reference/the-sage-dictionary-of-social-research-methods/n85.xml>)

It was recommended that I narrow my project's sample after I defended my thesis proposal. I initially had planned to sample oil industry workers, sex workers, and frontline workers working with the sex worker community. But after my proposal defence, my supervisor and committee recommended that I should only recruit non-executive oil industry workers who may or may not have purchased sex, as well as indoor sex workers.

My committee suggested my employment with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) may cause some ethical problems with my respondents, particularly the sex workers. Therefore, I disclosed my employment to the sex worker participants. Fortunately, none of the sex workers I interviewed had problems with my employment background. I explained how I worked in a research capacity on projects related to women's issues such as the Missing and Murdered Indigenous women issue for the RCMP in Aboriginal Policing. Although I anticipated some participants might have a problem with my police affiliation, fortunately, the sex workers expressed positive reactions. For example, some of my participants stated they did not care that I worked for the RCMP, while others said they admired and respected me for engaging in such work. Furthermore, the consent forms I outlined that information discussed during the interview would be shared with the police unless it was necessary to protect a child or an individual at risk of future harm.

Recruitment Procedures

I recruited participants through acquaintances; this is what is referred to as snowball sampling. I have friends, family, and peers who work in the oil industry which allowed me to recruit co-workers of my friends, family, and peers. I also primarily used snowball sampling as a method of recruitment for sex workers. Through connections in the criminal justice system, I

also have peers and friends who work with sex workers who helped me with recruiting.

Nonetheless, recruiting was difficult, and recruiting each population brought unique challenges.

I mostly asked friends and peers if they knew anyone who was able to speak to my topic in order to recruit oil workers. This included using Facebook and other social media to contact old friends who work in the oil industry. In the early stages of my recruitment, I intended to interview five oil industry workers who had purchased sex. However, I was repeatedly told that although people know people (oil industry workers) who have purchased sex, these people would not be willing to talk to me, or that they were not comfortable asking the people they know who have purchased sex to talk with me. Shaghaghi, Bhopal, and Sheikh (2011) contend that it is difficult for researchers who study stigmatized behaviours to recruit interviewees. Indeed, I noticed that my participants were uncomfortable talking about my topic to other people as if they would look like a ‘rat’ for bringing it up to their friends/co-workers. People also chose not to speak with me and sometimes suggested ‘they don’t want their girlfriend or wife to find out.’ It was clear potential participants were worried about their anonymity. Other researchers who have researched ‘difficult to reach’ populations have found participants are less likely to participate if they feel their anonymity might be violated (Shaghaghi, et al., 2011). In addition, some of my friends and peers said that my female gender was a recruitment barrier (which will be further discussed in the limitations section of this chapter). Due to the difficulty in recruiting only oil industry workers who had purchased sex, I decided to open my sample criteria to include oil industry workers who may or may not have purchased sex but who were able to speak to my topic.

My first three interviews with oil industry workers were with friends of friends or family of friends. In one instance, an old acquaintance I asked to help me with recruitment volunteered

to participate. I felt I had exhausted all of my contacts in attempting to recruit after completing the first three interviews with oil industry workers. This led me to make the ethics amendment of broadening the age for my sample of oil workers. At first, I only included oil workers between the ages of 18 to 45 but changed this to those between 18 and 60 years old, due to difficulty with recruitment and the identification of possible participants over the age of 45. In addition to asking almost everyone I knew for potential participants, I also actively recruited at various networking events. Thankfully, I met some oil industry workers at an event that promoted healthy masculinity in Edmonton. Although this was not the setting in which I would have expected to meet people to assist me in recruiting potential participants, I ultimately used this avenue to secure my last two oil industry interviewees.

I also experienced difficulties with recruiting sex workers. I was repeatedly told that sex workers would not be willing to speak with me by those who work with sex workers or those who know sex workers. I suspect sex workers did want to not talk with me for several reasons. First, I am an outsider with no prior sex worker relationships. Second, sex workers do not have a positive history with researchers. There is a significant history of research on sex work that has been exploitive and problematic. I was reminded of this negative history and relationship sex workers have with academia from those who knew them, and from sex workers themselves, repeatedly while trying to recruit. For example, one of the ethics changes I made was to attempt to recruit sex workers on online forums and websites they commonly frequented. In doing so, I received messages and comments such as “[they are] not very keen to assist as they have had some mixed experiences with their words being 'twisted', etc. Without financial incentive it is like pulling teeth to get them to offer up their time” and “hi there, the community here has been burned before by researchers claiming to have our best interests at heart.” Such comments were

fair. It is not that I did not sympathize or understand where these women were coming from; however, hearing such things discouraged me. I wondered if my research would contribute to the body of literature that is exploitative to sex workers and therefore doubted whether I should be interviewing sex workers. However, I kept trying to recruit sex workers with the continuous encouragement and support of my supervisor.

I asked peers who work with sex workers to recruit sex workers and I also recruited online. I went to various networking events to connect with someone who could assist me with my research. I went to non-profit organizations in Edmonton that related to sex work and I also spoke to several frontline workers who work with sex workers. In November 2015, I met someone who said she may know a woman who would be willing to speak with me. This marked the beginning of interviews with sex workers.

I learned that having an ‘in’ was the most important part of successful recruitment. Indeed, gaining access and building relationships with gatekeepers are often essential to qualitative research (Maxwell, 2013, pg. 90). Having a participant who has spoken to me and is able to explain that the experience of an interview with me will not (hopefully) be a negative experience is what was most important. My first and third sex workers helped me to secure other participants. After speaking to me, these women asked their co-workers and other women they knew working in the field to speak to me. Thus, after months of tirelessly recruiting, I secured 11 interviews with five non-executive oil industry workers and six with indoor sex workers.

The Sample

I began my interviews in September 2015 and completed my interviews in March 2016. I first interviewed three oil industry workers, then completed all of my sex worker interviews, and then interviewed the final two oil workers. The table below outlines the timelines of my interviews:

Table 1: Interview Timeline

Interview Timeline	
September, 2015	Thesis Proposal Defense Completed Oil Industry Worker Interview #1
October, 2015	Oil Industry Worker Interview #2 Oil Industry Worker Interview #3 Ethics Amendments Submitted Ethics Amendments Approved
December, 2015	Sex Worker Interview #1 Sex Worker Interview #2
January, 2016	Sex Worker Interview #3 Sex Worker Interview #4,5,6
March, 2016	Oil Industry Worker Interview #4 Oil Industry Worker Interview #5

The Oil Industry Workers

Table 2: Oil Industry Worker Participants

Oil Industry Worker Participants				
Pseudonym	Age	Admitted to Buying Sex	Interview Length	Occupation
Parker	50	No	50 Minutes	Operations Foreman
Karl	20	No	47 Minutes	Non-Destructive Testing
Thomas	23	Yes	41 Minutes	Well Monitoring
Brett	29	No	89 Minutes	Electrician
Alex	27	Yes	72 Minutes	Camp Cook

I interviewed five male Caucasian oil workers between the ages of 20 to 50. They all identified as working in the oil industry, and each worker held different positions within the industry. The above table lists the participants in the order that I interviewed them, with Parker being my first interviewee and Alex being my last.

I excluded white collar oil industry workers from my sampling criteria because they are arguably a part of a different subset of the oil production culture and might best be studied separately.

Two out of the five industry workers admitted¹¹ to purchasing sexual services. I opened my sample criteria to include oil industry workers who were recently laid off as well (with the consultation of my supervisor) near the end of my fieldwork because I faced difficulties recruiting the final two participants. Therefore, my sample lacks homogeneity; however, all of my interviewees were able to speak to my topic.

Sex Workers

Table 3: Sex Worker Participants

Sex Worker Participants		
Pseudonym	Length of time Working in Industry	Interview Length
Brittney	6 months	25 Minutes
Tammy	4 years	45 Minutes
Julie	7 years (on and off)	43 Minutes
Group interview with Donna, Courtney, Patricia	"Decades", 15+ years, 2 years ¹² (respectively)	52 Minutes

Little demographic information is known about the sex workers I interviewed. I was weary to come off as being invasive in asking demographic information. It was more important for me to gain their trust than to learn about their demographic information. ‘How long have you worked in the sex industry’ was the only demographic-like question I asked. The women provided different answers, ranging from six months to “decades” of being in the industry. The vague answers from some of the women about how long they have worked in the industry reveals how guarded some of them were in the beginning of their interviews. This confirmed my

¹¹ I use the word ‘admitted’ because although some of my participants denied purchasing sexual services, I was not positive they were being truthful.

¹² In interviewing Donna, Courtney and Patricia, Donna and Courtney did not provide exact answers when I asked how long they worked in the industry.

concerns about asking demographic questions, so I felt it was best to not probe¹³ for any personal information they did not willingly offer me.

I, at first, limited my sample criteria for sex workers to be strictly massage parlour workers because initial gatekeepers informed me oil industry workers primarily accessed massage parlour services. However, I broadened my population criteria due to difficulty in recruiting sex workers. I opened my sample criteria and amended my ethics application to include all indoor sex workers, rather than relying strictly on massage parlour workers. All the sex workers I interviewed are indoor workers, and four out of six of them suggested they had a university education. Therefore, the women I interviewed represent a more privileged subset of the sex worker population. I excluded street level sex workers from my sample because my ‘gatekeepers’ to my research topic indicated that most of the oil industry workers they know purchase sex from indoor workers.

The Interviews

Oil industry worker interviews ranged from 41 minutes to 89 recorded minutes. Interviews with the sex workers ranged from between 25 minutes to 52 minutes. I introduced myself at the beginning of every interview, briefly explained my project, and went over the consent form with each interviewee. In going over the consent form with my interviewees prior to them signing it, I verbally highlighted the important parts of the consent forms to each interviewee, including their protected identities. Indeed, I did not report identifying characteristics, I assigned pseudonyms, I told the interviewees that they could end the interview at any time and that they could tell me ‘off the record’ information. I also gained each

¹³ Probing means asking for more depth and detail as well as to encourage the conversational partner to continue (Rubin & Rubin, 2015, pg. 13).

interviewee's consent to audio record the interview. In short, I ensured each participant provided informed consent.

There were different ethics and consent processes for the oil industry and sex worker groups. First, I provided different consent forms for each group because of divergent ethical considerations. I informed my participants of what they could and could not tell me during interviews to prevent possible criminal prosecution, specifically for the oil industry workers which was reflected in my information sheets and consent forms (please see Appendices A and B). All of my oil industry worker participants signed consent forms. Once the consent forms were signed, and the interview was complete, the consent forms were stored in a locked filing cabinet and will be destroyed five years after the date of the interviews.

The consent and interviewing process for sex workers was more complicated compared with the oil industry workers. Due to their nature of work, only one of the six sex workers agreed to sign a consent form. The other women did not see the point in signing a consent form because they use stage names in their line of work and therefore the consent form would not be a binding document. Therefore, I read the consent form to the women who did not sign them and received verbal consent for their participation in the study. Verbal consent was crucial for two of the sex workers who only agreed to phone interviews. Thankfully, the ethics application provided the options for phone interviews and receiving oral consent. This was just one of many methodological and ethical challenges I faced throughout my research project.

Each interview was unique insofar as some conversations and interviews 'flowed more naturally' compared to others. Only one oil industry worker appeared initially defensive and questioned my research intentions. He asked me if my research would be a means to 'blackmail' the oil industry. I used this concern to further probe about what he meant and why this was a

concern. However, I assured him that my intention was not to ‘blackmail’ the oil industry. Rather, I expressed how I was interested in learning more about the topic of my study, which satisfied him.

Four oil worker interviews took place in restaurant settings and one at a coffee shop. Initial encounters with the interviewees were not as awkward as I anticipated, despite the fact that I only knew one of the participants prior to interviewing. I met all of my participants at an agreed upon location. Although each of my interviews with the oil industry workers was unique, I did not have a significant experience that stood out. I met each interviewee, had a friendly conversation, and departed ways. All the men were friendly and personable towards me, which made for positive interview experiences. Notwithstanding the one incident above where a participant was worried I was ‘blackmailing’ the oil industry, all my participants were welcoming. I believe I am a pleasant person, which made conversation easier. My gender and age may have also influenced my participants’ openness, something I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter. However, I do not believe this necessarily made me a better qualitative interviewer, as the process itself is challenging (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Although interviewing is similar to ordinary conversations, interviews require skills beyond ordinary conversational skills (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, pg. 12). The interviewer must listen for and explore keywords, ideas, themes, and use follow-up questions and probes to achieve deeper understanding (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, pg. 12). As a new researcher, being an active listener and probing are useful skills. Such skills are ones I had to work on throughout the research process. For example, I wrote in my field notes after my first interview that “*Kvale’s chapter on conducting an interview mentions the importance of being an “active” listener which I think is closely related to probing (2007). As a new qualitative researcher, I need to keep*

working on my active listening skills.” I also wrote in my field notes after my second interview that: *“I also have to focus on asking more open-ended questions. This is probably my biggest weakness in interviewing. I always tend to ask close-ended questions which I do to make them more conversational, but still, it’s something I need to work on”* (field notes). I struggled with the art of listening as a new researcher. Nonetheless, my interviewees shared significant valuable information and informed me about the relationship between Alberta’s oil industry and the sex trade.

Interviewing Sex Workers

Interviewing sex workers was the greatest learning experience. For that reason, I am dedicating a subsection of my methodology chapter to discuss my interviewing experience.

I did not know the world of sex work research as a young, new, and inexperienced researcher. As discussed in my literature review, classic research that predominantly portrays sex workers as victims is now problematic in the research community and sex worker community. By deeming sex work as strictly exploitative/oppressive, agency is being taken away from sex workers (Chapkis, 1997; Maher, 1997; Pateman, 2006; Van der Meulen, et al., 2013). Some sex workers feel their work is a choice, so many feel betrayed when researchers portray them as victims. Indeed, sex worker distrust of researchers was evident throughout my research and it discouraged me as a new researcher.

I am a conscientious researcher, which contributed to my ethical struggles with researching and interviewing sex workers. I was asked by people, ‘should you be interviewing sex workers?’; ‘are you interviewing sex workers for the right reasons?’; ‘how can you know, or make sure, your research does not end up in the pile of problematic and biased research on sex work?’. These questions troubled me throughout my research and it made my research project

particularly difficult at times. Such challenges led me to doubt my own motives for interviewing sex workers. However, I realized this concern was not coming from the sex workers themselves, the people I should be most concerned about. I was pre-emptively taking agency away from the sex workers I hoped to interview. Ultimately, I realized the sex workers exercised agency by speaking with me and that I did not harm them because they all expressed having positive interview experiences.

Despite months of recruiting difficulty and internal moral debates, I gathered more sex worker interviews than initially anticipated. I learned the researcher's personality is important to qualitative research (Maxwell, 2010; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). My personality and/or persona was beneficial to interviewing sex workers. Some of the women were initially skeptical but my ability to build rapport with the women contributed to mutually beneficial positive experiences. I was friendly, warm, and tried to be open and devoid of judgment. Further, my being a young, and petite woman likely made me seem non-threatening which could have made participants keener to be open with me.

I also built rapport with the women by being as transparent as possible throughout the research process. I made sure that each woman knew that I wanted to learn about their experiences and perspectives, rather than interrogate their lives, their occupation, or their choices. The women expressed their appreciation, despite initially perceiving that I would be judgemental. For example, one of my interviewees said at the end of the interview that "she found me 'lovely' and refreshing to talk to because she thought I was going to come in and ask her if she was sexually assaulted as a child and if that's why she does this work'" (taken from transcripts and field notes). In addition, Tammy texted me "Merry Christmas" on December 25th, one month after our interview. Such comments and gestures made me feel relief, as I had so

many prior doubts about interviewing sex workers. The non-intrusive questions I asked and my ability to build rapport likely contributed to the positive experiences with the women.

Each interview was different. Two of the interviews were phone interviews. This made for a unique interview experience because I had never conducted phone interviews. Phone interviews are more difficult because I lacked face to face interaction, which meant I was unable to read body language. However, the women who opted for phone interviews suggested they felt most comfortable talking over the phone. Such phone interviews may have contributed to the women sharing much more compared to an in-person interview. I read the consent form for the phone interviews and emphasized that participation would be anonymous and confidential. I also disclosed how they did not need to share uncomfortable content with me. I then asked if I had permission to audio record the interviews. One of the women consented to an audio recording while the other did not. My first phone interview comprised 25 recorded minutes. This was my shortest interview, despite how I first anticipated that sex worker interview would typically last 30 minutes. I also think it was brief for two distinct reasons. First, it was my first interview with a sex worker and my first time conducting a phone interview. I was nervous and did not properly probe throughout the interview and the respondent provided short and brief answers. Second, I did not want pry too much because although she was willing to talk to me, she was guarded. In speaking to her, as well as all of the other sex workers, I was able to learn some of the nuances in the industry, which was what I was hoping to do in talking with these women.

My field notes reflected my feeling after conducting my first official sex worker interview:

She was super friendly and open – I felt like we could be friends, it wasn't awkward talking to her at all. Prior to the interview, I felt as if I expected her to be this mysterious person – because sex workers are an 'other' in our society, that only exist in a mystical way, as if they are not 'people' just like myself – but she was, she was a completely

normal girl, just like me. She was a university student, who read about being an escort, found it interesting and gave it a shot, and is simply just trying making some money for herself. To my surprise, I felt myself feeling absolutely no judgement, and not thinking that she is oppressed or a victim, which leads me to think that sex work in and of itself is not an 'issue,' and because she is a high paid worker, she as she said, has respectful clients. I am sad that I was shocked by her normalcy, but it's something I must reflect on; this is why being reflexive is really important.

This excerpt about Brittney shows how I was grappling with the nuances of sex work and my feelings at the early research stages. I asked Brittney if she had any advice about how I could recruit other sex workers and she offered to ask her co-workers that she worked with if they would be interested in talking to me. This demonstrated the importance of having a gatekeeper in recruiting populations that are difficult to access.

My other sex worker interviews were also enjoyable experiences. My second interview consisted of another phone interview while the remaining interviews were face to face. The three-person group sex worker interview at their employment studio was the most exciting interview. I appreciated how they trusted me and even provided me with a tour of the studio. My field notes below describe part of my experience:

The woman who had set up the interview, Donna, asked me if it was my first time ever being in a place like that, which it was, so she gave me a tour. It was small, with only 3 rooms. The rooms were nice; they were clean, each room had a bed and a shower, and some had decorations such as leopard print decorations. The women were all dressed in their underwear, which was kind of funny to me I guess because it is so normal to them, but I was there fully clothed feeling out of place. I also felt weird when I would hear clients walk in and I wondered why I felt that way. I've had to challenge myself and my instinctual responses so many times in the process of doing this research...

Being in Donna, Courtney, and Patricia's workplace gave me more in-depth knowledge into what a studio looks like and how they greet their clients. Although it was a different experience for me to have clients receive the women's services while I interviewed some of the women in the next room, it was also the most fascinating part of my research project. Overall, each conducted interview was enjoyable, and I am grateful for each woman's participation.

Coding and Analysis

My analysis was an ongoing and iterative process. I immediately wrote field notes and transcribed the interview after each interview. I coded directly after I transcribed each interview. These initial categories are usually key concepts, events, or themes (Kvale, 2007). Therefore, parts of the analysis were pushed into interview situations themselves (Kvale, 2007). This not only made analysis easier but made it also made it more easily controlled (Gibbs, 2007; Kvale, 2007).

I closely coded and analyzed each transcript according to thematic content coding directly after I completed my interviews. Then, all of the categories created when initially coding were examined and combined and/or grouped together into larger, more encompassing categories. I used a trial version of NVivo to make coding my interviews easier. I grouped my codes into electronic nodes in NVivo after I hand-coded each interview. For each node/code, I attached relevant references from my transcripts and I formed a coding scheme after I created all my electronic nodes (see Appendix D). Gibbs (2007, pg. 2) contends that coding schemes assist researchers in “thinking about the kinds of things that are being coded and what questions are being answered” (Gibbs, 2007, pg. 2). I, therefore, created a scheme by hand. I wrote out all of my codes and organized them into a scheme that made the most sense. By organizing my codes, I took my analysis a step further and looked for patterns, made comparisons, and produced explanations and building models (Gibbs, 2007). I then wrote out the main theme order once my codes were schematically analyzed.

The Research Setting

My research topic was heavily influenced by my research setting. I was born in Alberta and have always been aware of the oil industry. Shortly after I began recruiting, oil prices dropped and Alberta was thrown into a significant recession. In 2015, 19,600 jobs were lost

which made recruiting even more difficult ¹⁴. By mid-2016, this number climbed to 60,000,¹⁵ topping the 1980's recession. Therefore, while not intended, I ended up studying and trying to recruit from an industry where people were losing their jobs at a rapid rate. Recruiting oil industry workers was difficult enough, and the recession further complicated the recruiting process by decreasing the pool of potential participants for me. Thus, near the end of my project, I had to change my sample criteria to include oil workers who were laid off and integrate the changing economic climate into my research process.

Research Site

I recruited participants in Edmonton because there are several oil and gas companies in the region as well as an active sex trade. Moreover, while oil industry workers work away from the city, many live in Edmonton. Edmonton is, therefore, a 'hub' for a lot of major oil companies and where many oil workers spend their days off. Every oil worker I interviewed was based in Edmonton but worked out of town.

Fort McMurray would have been a more appropriate research site than Edmonton as it was the most referenced site for research on the oil industry. However, due to the scope and timeline of my study, a Fort McMurray based study was not feasible. Nonetheless, I recommend Fort McMurray as a future research site.

My Social Location & The Importance of Reflexivity

"The researcher is the instrument of the research" (Maxwell, 2013, pg. 91). In other words, the social location, position, and identity of the researcher influences research. I acknowledge that I cannot remove myself from the research process. Each researcher brings their

¹⁴ <http://business.financialpost.com/investing/outlook-2016/alberta-lost-the-most-jobs-in-2015-since-1980s-recession-statistics-canada>

¹⁵ <http://business.financialpost.com/news/energy/jobless-in-alberta-tens-of-thousands-of-energy-professionals-are-out-of-work-and-out-of-hope>

own biases, experiences, and cultural lenses into the research process (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, pg. 31). Therefore, reflexivity is an important part of conducting qualitative research. Reflexivity is the process of self-reflection and acknowledging “the fact that the researcher is part of the social world he or she studies, and can’t avoid either influencing this or being influenced by it” (Maxwell, 2015, pg. 90). It is important for me as researcher to be transparent about my social location, my position.

I was born in Alberta and have personal connections to the oil industry. I have family who worked in the oil industry, and the experiences of a previous partner sparked my interest in my research topic. My partner worked in the oil industry and shared several stories of the extra-curricular activities that his co-workers would engage in while away on a job. Such activities included heavy drinking, illegal drug use, and the purchasing of sexual services. These activities fit the stereotypical “work hard, play hard” culture of the oil industry. The normalization and encouragement of these practices shocked me, but I was intrigued to learn more. Therefore, my interest in my research topic was partly personal. My gender and feminist identity also affected my research. I acknowledged my role as a female researcher studying masculinity, and that I had biases and assumptions about my project related to my feminist identity. In order to remain reflexive throughout the research process about how my identity was affecting my research, I kept an electronic journal. I routinely wrote about and reflected on how my identity affected my research in my electronic journal. I will periodically share some excerpts from my journal throughout the thesis.

Methodological Limitations and Challenges

Methodologically, my research project had various challenges, most of which have been previously discussed throughout this chapter, such as difficulties refining my sample criteria, recruiting, and running into methodological challenges related to ethics. This section will further

expand on these difficulties. Specifically, I will discuss the methodological challenge of being a female researcher conducting a study on masculinity by interviewing oil industry workers and sex workers.

Being a Young, Female Researcher

One of the most thought-provoking methodological challenges I had in doing this research project was being a female researcher investigating men/masculinity (*and sex and sex work*). This required me to be hyper-aware and reflexive of my gender as well as how my gender affected interactions with my participants. In interviewing the oil industry workers, I began to think about *how* gender was performed by my participants and myself, and how this impacted the research process.

Studying the effects of cross-gender researcher interactions in qualitative research is not a new area of study – several scholars have studied the effects that being a female researcher studying masculinity has on the research process (e.g. Gill and Maclean, 2002; Gurney, 1985; Horn, 1997; Pini, 2005; Bucerius, 2013; Williams and Heikes, 1993 as cited in Sallee & Harris, 2011). What is commonly found is that participants perform gender in the way they think they are supposed to; when the study is about gender, participants tend to be hyper-aware of this, and their awareness affects the research process by influencing interview interactions and answers (Sallee & Harris, 2011). The performative nature of gender and/or masculinity, as well as the awareness of the gendered nature of my research posed various methodological challenges for me.

First, gaining access and building rapport were difficult as a female researching masculinity. When recruiting, I was repeatedly told that if I was a male, oil industry workers would be more willing to talk to me. My gatekeepers who work in the oil industry would tell me

how open discussions about women, sex, and buying sex were common among them and their co-workers when working in the oil industry. However, when it came to talking to me – a young, female researcher, who also happened to be a stranger – about such topics, participants expressed little desire and interest. Furthermore, although while recruiting I emphasized participation would be anonymous, I constantly heard through my gatekeepers that people were not willing to participate because they had partners who they did not want to find out that they had engaged in such behaviours (i.e. purchasing sex). I believe that again me being a female made such people more unwilling to talk to me (such as having their significant others wondering who they were meeting and for what reason). Knowing my gender identity was a barrier to recruiting oil industry workers was frustrating at times, but it required me to be reflexive of how my gender affected my research project. Furthermore, this barrier allowed me to expand further on my analysis and findings of my overall project.

Another challenge related to my gender being a barrier to interviewing oil industry workers was the pressure I placed upon myself to perform *my gender* in a way that would build rapport and trust with my participants, more so than traditional constructions of femininity would. Upon writing field notes/engaging in reflection on my research I wrote: “*when setting up interviews with the oil industry workers, I feel ‘pressured’ to perform masculinity in a sense – for example when setting up my interviews, I feel like a restaurant or pub is more appropriate than a coffee shop, as if a coffee shop such as Starbucks somehow represents femininity.*” I felt the need to act more like ‘one of the boys,’ in hopes this would encourage my participants to be more open and honest with me. It was difficult for me to come to terms with my own gender performance as well as reconcile my participation in constructing spaces through gendered stereotypes based upon a gender dichotomy that I as a researcher do not believe in. In treating

such spaces as though they were gendered, I was relying on stereotypes of masculinity and femininity that I was critical of throughout my own project.

My gender impacted my interviews further. Due to my positionality, I noticed the oil industry workers I interviewed would dissociate themselves when talking about women and the sexism present in the oil industry culture. In interviewing the oil industry workers, I would ask them questions such as ‘*what are the conversations about women like among you and your coworkers/in the industry?*’ and ‘*what are the conversations like about buying sex?*’ In asking these questions, I found there to be a distinct switch from use of the words ‘*we*’ or ‘*I*’ to ‘*they*’ and ‘*them*.’ This switch in language would occur even if my interviewees admitted to participating in the sexist or derogatory conversations about women. For example, one of my interviewees, Alex, talked about how women are treated poorly in camp and many of the women he worked with would not eat in the dining room with the male workers as a result. I asked him to expand on why that is and he said:

...People don’t stop staring or they make them feel uncomfortable, they think that just because it’s camp or something or that *they* make all this money that they are able to like holler at girls or whistle at them, do you know what I mean? But I think we live in a day and age where it’s like harassment [now]. (emphasis added)

Alex dissociates himself from his co-workers in talking about how *they* treat women and then uses *we* as if he is trying to connect with me, further dissociating himself from the industry he worked in. When talking to Karl, the switch from ‘*we*’ to ‘*they*’ is even more obvious:

Karl: It’s pretty negative towards women...there’s a term that we have, it’s no snatch in the patch.’

Kassandra: Oh, what does that mean?

Karl: Just, that they don’t like females up there with us, during our jobs.

In the above excerpt from my interview with Karl, he states “we” have the term ‘no snatch in the patch,’ but then says it is not because *he* does not like having females working with him, but rather ‘*they*’ do not, implying his colleagues. It is clear that Karl was dissociating himself from the negative aspects of his workplace while talking with me.

Although Alex and Karl identify as belonging to this group and culture – as well as stating that they are friends with their coworkers who have these conversations – their responses reveal a clear dissociation when telling me, a woman, about their conversations about women. However, whether or not this would be different if I was a male researcher cannot be known for sure. Although literature on the effects of cross-gender researcher interactions has found that when it comes to talking about women and sex there are discourse differences depending on whether or not the researcher is male or female (Gill and Maclean, 2002; Gurney, 1985; Horn, 1997; Pini, 2005; Williams and Heikes, 1993 as cited in Sallee & Harris, 2011).

I also believe my gender affected the oil industry workers’ willingness to talk about sex with me. Although my study is explicitly about the sex trade, some of my participants were clearly uncomfortable talking about sex, acting as if they were concerned they may offend me. For some, I had to repeatedly reassure them they could not offend me with their vulgar or ‘R-rated’ language. This is shown in the below transcript excerpt:

Kassandra: What are the conversations like about women? [among coworkers] (*pause from Brett, he hesitates to answer, I sense Brett’s discomfort*) - haha don’t be afraid to offend me.

Brett: Very R rated.

Kassandra: Yeah?

Brett: Have you ever watched a porn? That’s the kind of language...very very very vulgar, very vulgar.

Kassandra: So primarily sexual conversations?

Brett: Pretty much.

Kassandra: Well in what ways?

Brett: What do you mean?

Kassandra: Is it just talking about the things they would just do to women or...?

Brett: Everything you're thinking they are saying right now is what they would say.

It is clear Brett was uncomfortable talking to me about the sexual nature of the conversations between him and his coworkers. This was likely due to many factors, such as me being a stranger, the knowledge that our conversation was being audio recorded and then transcribed, but most significantly the fact that I was a woman. In fact, literature on cross-gender interactions and studying masculinity suggests men are less comfortable talking about sex to female researchers than male researchers (Sallee & Harris, 2011, pg. 419).

However, the 'dissociation' from the oil industry and discomfort in discussing sex clearly seen in my conversations with the oil industry workers may also be partly attributed to how most of the men I interviewed defined themselves as 'not fitting in' and/or having to adapt to the oil production culture. This implies that they are aware of the hegemonic masculinity reinforced in the oil production culture. For example:

Brett: So, I'm very well, what you would call or what they would call 'artsy fartsy' kind of guy [and] as I was saying I didn't fit in you know, I tried to adapt I was always good at adapting so I...adapted to that culture and not fully I guess I still have my ways about me I won't change because that's the way I feel right?

Karl: I don't know, I was raised different than most of them...I was raised to respect women...so I was raised not to say those things, you know what I mean?

The way these men differentiate themselves from their colleagues may have been why they were willing to talk to me, and others were not. If my participants do not necessarily feel as if they belong in the oil production culture, then it is likely easier for them to talk to me about it versus

someone who feels a strong connection to the culture. Alternatively, though, it could also be attributed to my gender and the focus of my study. Perhaps my participants felt they could open up to me about them not fitting into the hyper-masculine culture because I am a woman. Or, maybe to avoid seeming like the hyper-masculine type of ‘man’ my study was clearly interrogating, they further dissociated themselves from their work’s culture by talking about how they do not fit in. This could be understood as the social desirability bias as it is possible my participants were providing me with socially desirable answers (Grimm, 2010). The dissociation between my participants and ‘others’ could also be understood as “boundary-work” (Lamont, 2002). The participants created symbolic boundaries¹⁶ between themselves and their coworkers when speaking to me. The symbolic boundaries of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ in spite of belonging to the group they are describing to me, is oftentimes found in social science studies of ‘groups’ (also known as ‘boundary-work’). Thus, I theorize how my gender, and my study’s focus, affected interactions with my oil industry worker participants, but that the dissociation between them and their coworkers is also a product of my studying a particular ‘group.’

In addition to the gendered effects on the research process, I was close in age to all of my oil industry worker participants except Parker. I believe being young may have made my participants more open with me. In fact, Parker, who was the oldest of my participants, was the least forthcoming participant I interviewed. Rapport was therefore likely shaped by mutuality between myself and my participants (Thurnell-Read, 2016). Age, like gender, influences researcher interactions because of age-specific expectations of gender and life experience (Thurnell-Read, 2016, pg. 13). Although I cannot know for sure whether or not my age affected how forthcoming my participants were with me, the literature suggests relatability often makes

¹⁶ ““Symbolic Boundaries” are the lines that include and define some people, groups and things while excluding others” (Epstein 1992, p. 232).

participants more forthcoming with information (Thurnell-Read, 2016). Consequently, I believe the similarity in age between myself and most of my participants influenced how open my participants were with me as I could relate to their experiences, often associated with youth (i.e. as partying, drinking alcohol, etc.).

Therefore, my gender identity and age had various implications for the research process. Although in some ways it posed methodological challenges, it also made my project more methodologically interesting. In addition, my gender identity also provided advantages and/or a differing perspective. Sallee and Harris (2011) in their study of cross-gender interactions and masculinity found that “participants in the female researcher’s study understood male privilege and recognized the ways socially prescribed gender roles reinforce male privilege at the expense of women” (pg. 424). My study shows similar results as the men I interviewed were aware of the negative attitudes and treatment of women common in the oil industry culture and the unacceptable nature of this treatment. Consequently, one of my greatest methodological challenges provided me with a different level of understanding because of the cross-gender nature of the research dynamic.

Conclusion

What stood out throughout the research process was the nature and extent of my methodological challenges. I had difficulty gaining access, recruiting, and deciding on appropriate sample criteria. In addition, factors out of my control such as the economic downturn of 2015 leading to Alberta’s recession, the politics of studying sex work, and my gender identity, further complicated my methodology. Nonetheless, I was able to conduct eleven interviews (more than I had planned for) and explore my research questions by interviewing these two diverse groups. The results of my study are discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Results & Analysis

In this chapter, I discuss the results of my eleven interviews. Because I interviewed two different populations, I first discuss the results of the oil industry worker interviews, and then the results of the sex worker interviews. Then, I synthesize the findings from both groups in chapter five.

The Oil Industry Workers

Karl

Karl was 20 years old and at the time of the interview had worked in the oil industry for three years, having entered into the oil industry right after high school. His work involves conducting non-destructive testing for pipelines, which means ensuring pipelines are welded properly before they are buried. Karl was the only participant who did not have experience working in Fort McMurray, the infamous oil town of Alberta. However, he has experience working in other oil dominated towns across Alberta, such as Fox Creek and Grand Cache. Like all of the other oil field participants, Karl lives and works out of Edmonton, but travels out of town for work. Karl typically works 24 days on and four days off; however, he said he had worked as many as 45 days out of town. Like all of the other oil industry worker participants as well, Karl has experience working in a work camp. It was evident some of the participants liked working in camps more than others. In Karl's case, he did not enjoy working in camps and described camp life as being "like prison."

Karl denied purchasing sex but has worked with coworkers who have paid for sex. Karl has a negative opinion of buying sex, as well as a negative perception of sex workers, describing the purchase of sex as "nasty" when asked about it.

Thomas

Thomas was 23 years old and had worked in the oil industry for two and a half years (at the time of the interview). Thomas said there is a high turnover rate for the company that he works for and that most people do not last as long as he has in his line of work. Thomas was one of the many types of mobile workers from the east coast of Canada that flew to Alberta to find employment in the oil industry. Thomas installs temperature sensors in reservoir basins. His company is based in Edmonton, and he lives in Edmonton. Thomas has experience working in oil rich regions all over Alberta, and all over the world.

Thomas also has experience working in camps and enjoys it to an extent. He says there are good camps and bad camps suggesting the quality of the camp affects whether or not he enjoys working in a camp.

Thomas admitted to purchasing sex several times while working, particularly if he was working out of the country.

Parker

At age 49, Parker was the oldest of the oil industry workers I interviewed. He had worked in the oil industry for five and a half years. Parker claimed he had planned to go into the oil industry for only two years, but ended up staying much longer. Parker was an operations foreman for a mining company for several years, then began driving long-haul trucks in the Fort McMurray region. Parker spent all of his time when working in the oil industry in Fort McMurray. He stated he had some experience working and living in work camps and enjoyed camp life. However, for the most part, he rented an apartment in Fort McMurray.

Parker denied purchasing sexual services. However, he had coworkers who have purchased sex, and he seemed to have a good working knowledge of the sex trade existing in Fort McMurray. Like most of the oil industry worker participants, Parker had a negative opinion

of sex work. His negative opinion was evident because he referred to sex workers as 'crack-heads' repeatedly throughout my interview with him.

Brett

Brett was a 29-year-old oil industry worker. Brett, like many other oil industry workers in Alberta, moved to Alberta specifically to work in the oil industry. He is from Nova Scotia but has been in Alberta for the last eight years. Brett is an electrician that completes jobs strictly for and within the oil industry. For the first two years of working in the Albertan oil industry, Brett flew back and forth between Alberta and the east coast but then decided to move permanently to Alberta. Like all of my participants, Brett lives in Edmonton but works out of town. Brett often works 14 days on and seven days off. Brett primarily works in camp and works in various locations all over Alberta, but spends a lot of time working in the Fort McMurray region.

Brett had attended university to study film but decided to get his electrician's ticket because he wanted to follow in his father's footsteps as his father is also an electrician.

Brett also denied purchasing sexual services. Instead, he spoke about his coworkers buying sex and his knowledge of the relationship between the sex trade and the oil industry.

Alex

Alex was 27 years old. Alex had worked in the oil industry for eight years but had recently been laid off. Alex also worked in the oil industry in a much different capacity than some of the other participants, but he considered himself an oil industry worker and had spent many years living and working in work camps. Alex worked as a cook when he worked in the industry. Alex is originally from Manitoba but then moved around quite a bit as a child. Like all of the other oil worker participants, he lived in Edmonton but worked out of town. He most often worked three weeks on, one week off, and began his career at a work camp in Northern British

Columbia but then shortly after moved to a camp in the Fort McMurray area and worked at several different camps in that region.

Alex was the second participant to admit to purchasing sexual services while working in the industry. For Alex, being laid off was a blessing in disguise, as he admitted to being addicted to drugs while working in the industry. He claimed that his addiction ended once he quit working in the oil industry. Out of all of the participants, Alex described the most negative experience of working in the oil industry. Despite his negative experience working in the oil industry, Alex told me that he would continue to work as a cook in the oil industry as soon as a job became available because working in the industry pays well.

Working in the Oil Industry: Why do they do it - The Positive Aspects

I asked each of the oil industry worker participants about the positive and negative aspects of working in the oil industry. The positive and negative aspects of working in the oil industry for the oil workers I interviewed informed me about the broader oil production culture, and/or why some oil workers purchase sex.

Money, money, money

All of the men that I interviewed described money as the reason they entered into the oil industry. When I asked my interviewees what they liked about their job, I heard answers like “the money, the money is probably the biggest thing” (Karl), and “I like Money...so if I got the chance to make more, I’m gonna do it” (Alex). Other interviewees echoed this sentiment. For example, Parker entered into the oil field later in life to make more money and pay off debts. Karl went into the field straight out of high school saying “when I was in grade nine a teacher told me I could go work in the oilfield and make twice as much as he could with a master’s in education.” Therefore, money was undoubtedly the primary reason participants entered and/or

remained working in the oil industry field, with some saying it was the only thing they enjoyed about their job. For example, Brett when asked what he liked about working in the oil industry replied “not much,” then further explained, “it wasn’t an industry I uh I wanted like actually I was in film school before I went [to work in the oil industry].” Thus, there was also a subtle theme that working in the oil industry was a temporary option for each of my participants. Working in the oil industry was seen as a quick, and/or easy way to make money.

Indirectly, money was described as ‘creating,’ in a sense, other positives for my participants. Having money permits those who work in the oil industry to buy ‘things,’ and for most of the interviewees, this was a positive aspect of working in the oil industry as well. For example, Brett said, “it affords me the ability to record music like buy the gear, it’s kind of um I use it as a way of bettering my actual passions.” Alex similarly says “I liked the fact that I got a lot of my own time and I was able to afford a lot of things that I wanted.” The other oil industry worker participants did not directly say that being able to buy material ‘things’ was a positive impact of working in the oil industry. However, they did talk about having a lot of material items or ‘toys’ that they were able to afford because they made a lot of money working in the oil industry. Karl discussed how he has been able to buy a lot of “stuff” like a lifted truck, a house, and a street bike. At 20 years old, Karl’s ability to afford such things is impressive. Hence, the high incomes of participants were the primary reason they work in the industry. In addition to being able to afford material items, money also provides oil workers the ability to buy sex, which will be discussed more at length later in this chapter.

Other Positive Aspects of Working in the Oil Industry: nature of jobs - hands-on and outdoors

Other positive aspects of working in the oil industry stated by interviewees were doing hands-on work and working outdoors. When I asked Karl what he liked about his job other than

the money, he responded: “I’m very outdoorsy, I like being outside, I don’t know, it’s almost like being on a team in a way, a sports team, everyone is for the same thing.” Similarly, Thomas stated that he enjoys hands-on work and learning: “I’ve always loved hands-on work when I was younger, I never have had a job that wasn’t hands on work...but...I worked at a grocery store on the weekends...so yeah... I like learning.” These answers speak to the gendered nature of their work as well. The ideals of traditional masculinity dictate that boys and/or men are ‘good’ at hands-on work, outdoors works, and physical work, in general (Connell, 1995; 2005). Even Karl’s reference to being on a team can be understood as being stereotypically ‘manly,’ as seen in team sports. Therefore, it makes sense that the men who work in a male dominated industry also like the masculine nature of their work. Karl, in fact, recognized this himself, in bluntly saying to me “I don’t know, I just like doing manly things, too, right?” His statement confirms the masculine nature of the oil production industry and the perception that the work in the oil industry is ‘masculine’ work (Angell, 2014; Miller, 2004; O’Shaughnessy, 2011).

However, for the other participants, it was strictly the money and the lifestyle that making good money afforded them, that they enjoyed about their jobs. For example, in asking Alex what else he liked about his job, other than the money, his answer was “Um...not much hahaha...” In asking about the positive aspects versus negatives aspects of their work, it was evident that for the men I interviewed there were more negative than positive aspects to working in the oil industry.

Negative Aspects of Working in the Oil Industry

After asking the oil industry worker participants what the positives aspects of their work were, I enquired about the negative aspects of their job or working in the industry in general. There is literature that describes working in resource extraction industries as both physically and

socially harsh, and as means of coping with these harsh conditions, men engage in ‘deviant’ behaviours, rowdiness, and corrupt behaviours such as heavy alcohol consumption, illegal drug use, and purchasing sex (Angell, 2014; Bradwin, 1928; Lucas, 2008). Therefore, I asked the oil workers about negative aspects of working in the oil industry to see if the participants would describe their work as difficult, and if buying sex was a means to cope with their difficult work environment for some.

The topmost negative aspects cited by most of participants were their schedule/working out of town, the impact working out of town has on relationships and livelihood, and the harsh working environment (socially and physically). All negative aspects were also cited as reasons why some oil workers choose to purchase sex. I discuss these below.

Work Schedule & Working Out of Town

When I asked the oil industry worker participants what they disliked about their work, the most common, and often first response I heard, was that their work schedule and/or working out of town was the biggest negative aspect of their work. For example, this is the response from Karl when I asked him about the negatives of his job:

Kassandra: Are there negatives of your job?

Karl: mmm...just being away from home, I have a girlfriend, and it's hard...doing that...um...

Kassandra: How long are you usually gone for?

Karl: The shift is usually 24 to 4 but...it usually lasts longer because I get contracted out to different jobs, so I go from 24 days to 45 at a time.

The other participants echoed Karl's response. Thomas, when asked what the negatives of his work were, responded: "Negatives...definitely the work schedule...cause in the winter, I

remember working 44 straight days.” Therefore, working several weeks in a row, along with working away from home, are seen as the biggest drawbacks to working in the industry.

The oil industry workers also discussed the impacts their work schedules had on developing and maintaining romantic relationships. As described above, Karl points to how working out of town for long periods of time is ‘hard’ on his relationship. Brett also speaks to this difficulty in saying:

When you talk to people and try to explain to them how it works, ‘cause they are like, oh, I would definitely [love] that 7 days off and it is great but...you definitely don’t have any life, like relationships or stuff like that or if you ever want to start a relationship it’s really hard or really difficult.

Therefore, working out of town for long periods of time is a drawback for maintaining *and* developing relationships. This difficulty establishing relationships is also linked to oil industry workers purchasing sexual services, which I discuss later in this chapter.

Difficult working environment (socially and physically)

The oil industry worker participants implied the industry is a difficult industry to work in for both physical and social reasons. Working up to 45 days straight like some of the participants stated they have done, is physically strenuous. Also, some of them work outdoors, meaning they work in harsh weather conditions. For example, Thomas talked about having to work long periods of time in the cold weather. The difficult work environment and working conditions drew the participants I spoke to, like Thomas, to party while off work as a means to cope, which for some often involved purchasing sex.

Furthermore, when talking with the oil worker participants about what they do not like about their jobs, I heard various answers that referred to a socially difficult working environment. For example, in interviewing Brett, the conversation went as follows:

Kassandra: So, then what is it that you don’t like about working in the industry?

Brett: For one it's a very cutthroat industry. Very, very cutthroat industry where you're dealing with a lot of guys who really haven't made the kind of money they...like this in their life and they you know, are seen as a tradesman, and people kind of frown at tradesmen as being a lower kind of class right?

Brett identifies the oil industry as a 'cutthroat industry,' which he goes on to explain as meaning that he works with men who are not overly friendly and only care about themselves. Alex similarly stated he disliked the 'drama' that came with working in the oil industry:

Kassandra: What did you dislike about it [working in the oil industry]?

Alex: The drama

Kassandra: Yeah?

Alex: Yeah, it's like, you feel like everyone is watching you all the time and I feel like I still haven't really gotten away from that and I'm still just super paranoid because I always feel like someone is watching me and watching my every move because it was like that with the security all the time and so for trying to do anything without security knowing or trying to do all this sneaky stuff which is so weird if you're in the normal world.

Alex refers to this feeling of always being watched as 'drama.' Throughout the entirety of my interview with Alex, he referred to negative experiences with security while he was working in the oil industry and work camps. Out of all my interviews with oil industry workers, Alex seemed to have had the most negative experiences while working in the industry, mainly because he refers to high surveillance in camps and how this led to paranoia. However, Alex did admit to having drug addiction issues, and this may be linked to his feelings of paranoia. Regardless, this 'drama' to Alex made his work environment socially difficult. Although Alex and Brett view the oil industry as socially difficult for different reasons, both viewpoints fit under the theme of the oil industry being a socially difficult work environment.

In addition, Karl expressed another negative to working in the oil industry that fits under this same theme. Other than the negatives of working out of town for long periods of time and the effects that had on his relationship, Karl stated "Yeah...another negative is...I guess...this will

tie into your whole thesis is the...it's pretty negative towards women.¹⁷" Karl identifies his work environment as negative towards women and this to him is a negative aspect to working in the oil industry. Karl implies the negative attitudes towards women makes for a difficult social environment because he does not agree with the attitude. Therefore, he feels uncomfortable about the treatment of women in his workplace. This 'negative' attitude towards women is discussed at length later in this chapter.

The positive and negative aspects of working in the oil industry also seem to be linked to the general lifestyle and oil production culture described by the men I interviewed, which include purchasing sex.

Lifestyle in the Oil Industry & the Oil Industry 'Culture'

As discussed in my literature review, there is a body of literature that identifies the oil production culture as a distinctly masculine culture¹⁸ (Angell, 2015; Carrington et. al, 2010; Dorow, 2015; Filteau; 2014; Miller, 2004; O'Shaughnessy, 2011). In order to answer my research questions about the oil production culture and the social factors contributing to oil workers purchasing sex, I sought to find out the oil workers' thoughts on the lifestyle of the oil industry and the oil production culture.

I asked the men I interviewed various questions related to their job, the culture, and ultimately tried to understand their lifestyles while working in the oil industry. For example, some of the questions I asked were: 'What is it like working in the oil field?', 'Is working in the oil field different than other workplaces?' and 'What does it take to fit in?' I also asked

¹⁷ Karl's statement points to how cross-gender researcher interactions can affect the answers of participants. As discussed in methodological challenges, my gender, as well as my focus on gender being explicit in my study, may have made Karl hyper-aware of the gender issues present in the oil industry.

¹⁸ Again, I understand culture in its most basic form: "the behaviors and beliefs/attitudes characteristic of a particular social, ethnic, or age group" (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/culture>).

participants whether or not they believed there was a unique ‘oil culture,’ and if so, how they would describe the culture. In asking such questions, my findings aligned with the literature. According to participants, the oil production culture is distinct *and* distinctly masculine. The masculinist oil production culture seems to dominate and affect most experiences for participants. Also, I found that those who work in the oil industry do often engage in risky behaviours as a means of coping with their work environment, but also as a means of conforming to the ‘work hard, play hard’ lifestyle.

General Lifestyle – ‘Work Hard, Play Hard’

In general, when participants talked about the ‘lifestyle’ while working in the oil industry, they were describing a ‘work hard, play hard’ lifestyle. The ‘work hard, play hard’ lifestyle refers to a motto that if people work hard, they can reward themselves (play hard), often through partying. This theme emerged out of discussions about what it is like working in the oil industry. When I asked the men I interviewed about what it is like working in the oil industry, most commonly they responded by referencing the large amounts of drugs and alcohol used while away on the job, and the common tendency to party a lot. This, to them, is the *lifestyle* associated with working in the oil industry. For example, Parker refers to this lifestyle in the below excerpt from my interview with him:

Parker: When I was in Fort McMurray, there would be 35-year-old people who would look a lot older than I did, just the lifestyle.

(Our conversation quickly takes another direction, and I later bring up the above point again to probe further)

Kassandra: When you said the lifestyle of Fort McMurray and how it makes people look older, can you elaborate?

Parker: Just the partying, the hours, you know you work 12-hour shifts, but that's at minimal a 14-hour day, because you got an hour bus ride in each direction if the traffic is good.

Kassandra: Right

Parker: You spend over half of your day just yawning, and then when you do get a day off (– interruption –) but yeah...if you're not putting money away and you're there for a certain time, it's just way too easy to party.

To Parker, the lifestyle of the oil industry is one of partying. The other participants referred to partying, drinking, and doing drugs as being a part of the lifestyle as well. Karl, when talking about the purchase of sex, stated, "it just goes with the culture right, drinking, and going to strip clubs." All of the other interviewees made similar comments, admitting to their engagement with the lifestyle. For example:

Brett: Yeah and like for us we get off the plane or we get off the bus up north and for some of my buddies it would be like 7 days straight of partying like that's the thing you know like it's kinda built up after 14 days of being up there and then for 7 days you just party your ass off.

And:

Alex: [There was] a lot of drugs, like a lot... Yeah it was part of the lifestyle, when I mean a lot, it's like I see the people here partying and stuff like that and they are like okay cool, no, for us it was like, everyone has money so let's get as much as we can and get super smashed.

These types of stories are what predominantly came out of my interviews with the oil industry workers when discussing the lifestyle associated with working in the industry. However, the participants who were older tended to talk about how this lifestyle was more suited to being young.

The party lifestyle described to me arguably goes beyond what most people consider to be 'normal' partying; heavy alcohol and drug use was one of the most prominent themes that came out of my conversations with the oil workers. Above, Alex explained how people 'partying' in Edmonton was not as extreme as the partying he engaged in while working out of town in the oil field. I heard story after story about heavy drinking and drug use that the

participants were either involved in or witnessed which aligns with what Alex said. Some examples include:

Kassandra: So, it's very acceptable to just like go out and drink, go out and do drugs?

Thomas: Oh fuck...yeah

Kassandra: Is it encouraged?

Thomas: Definitely...cause I know my buddy, he was just working, he was supposed to be up at 7 o'clock but him and his 2 main bosses were out drinking until 3 in the morning and then they went to work, so you're thinking they're drunk, they go to sleep for 4 or 3 hours, and then they go operate heavy equipment, like where does that not cut in? But I can't say I haven't done it... I know in Japan...we finished the job...and we had to go back for one last day...and me and someone else I work with...we uh...really were drinking until 7 in the morning and then in the truck and went to site and we were still like...like literally drank a beer, went to site.

And

Thomas: I know one time I was on the rig site and something went wrong, and they knew I was on drugs, and I was uh...with the guy who was in charge of everything, he asked me 'would you pass a piss test?' and I was like 'no, ' and he's like okay, I was gonna say you were clear but you weren't here okay, and I was like 'okay.'

I heard similar stories from Brett:

Brett: ...When I first started up there, there was drugs everywhere like all you had to do was walk down the hall and find them, and...what surprised me or really surprised me is that a lot of the drugs were being done by people in higher positions.

Kassandra: Oh interesting.

Brett: Mostly like I remember like walking in on my superintendent snorting blow.

And:

Brett: I'm not innocent myself, I remember one time we all went actually [name] was the one that drove us in that one time, and um we basically went out and partied our asses off, we had a hotel or whatever, and five of us woke up the next morning and we all called in sick, and then [name] had driven back into camp and the safety guy was coming in to find us all and he was like don't worry you're not gonna find any of them they are all in town haha, he was like as long as I know where they are at, so it was like even with that, it was kind of like 'oh you bad boys' and we got a slap on the wrist for it.

Karl too had stories about the incidences of drug use among some of his co-workers:

(Context: Karl and I were discussing drug use in general, and he went on to say how a lot of his coworkers engage in drug use)

Kassandra: Don't they drug test?

Karl: Um...they...the policies are the only ones who get drug tested are like me and my boss because we work with radioactive materials so we get tested from the government standards but a lot of them smoke weed on breaks and stuff.

Kassandra: Really, then they just go back to work?

Karl: Yeah, they just go to work high as fuck all the time.

Kassandra: Wow...and does your boss know?

Karl: Oh yeah...

Brett and Karl described how management permits illegal drug use. These stories are just *some* of the ones I heard in my conversations with the oil industry workers. These stories cross into the realm of risky behaviour. In some instances, participants and/or their co-workers were putting themselves at risk to become hurt while working on a job site. Nonetheless, this speaks to the lifestyle and culture of the oil industry. For an industry described as physically and socially difficult (Angell, 2014), I argue that some of those engaged in extreme 'partying' or reckless behaviour as a means to cope with the difficult working environment. Others who have studied the oil industry have found heavy drinking and drug use is not only common among oil industry workers but is used as a coping mechanism to deal with working in the oil industry (Angell, 2014, pg. 145; Lyng, 2005). Heavy drinking, illicit drug use, and buying sex may be a coping mechanism for the oil workers, as well as a form of "edgework." Sociologist Stephen Lyng (2005) who developed the concept of "edgework" asserts engaging in risky behaviours can be common in stressful professions due to people chasing the feelings of a 'thrill' as a means to escape their stressful work (pg. 5-7). However, the excessive partying may also simply be (to

some) a product of young men, making a lot of money. Either way, the lifestyle described to me by the participants truly is the epitome of the ‘work hard, play hard’ expression.

Characteristics of the Oil Production Culture

Four of my five oil industry worker participants stated they believe there is a unique oil culture. Parker was the only participant who stated the oil production culture is not unique, but rather the culture that exists within the oil industry would be the same in any male-dominated industry. Although Parker did not think the oil culture was unique, he implied that working in a male-dominated industry fosters a distinct type of culture regardless of the type of work. This theme of male-domination impacting the work environment came out in all of my other interviews as well. Participants described a working culture that is not only sexist but unaccepting of diversity in general. Further, some of the participants described feeling ‘culture shock’ when they began working in the oil industry, or when they leave their job sites on days off.

Impacts of the Male Dominated Oil Industry

According to the participants, working in a male-dominated industry heavily influenced their work environment. For them, the fact that the oil industry consists of primarily men played a significant role in what made the oil production ‘culture’ distinct. For example:

Kassandra: If someone were to ask you to describe the oil culture, what would you say?

Karl: I don’t know, it’s very much like a...old boys’ club...it’s very...old school and like and to a certain degree harsh, testosterone, and like manly, those are words that come to my head when I think of the oil field, like a lot of assholes, just guys like that.

When I asked Karl about the oil culture, he lists words associated with masculinity and male domination. This, to Karl, along with the other participants, is what most heavily influences the oil culture. For example, Brett similarly stated: “Cause...like I said, we [referring to oil workers]

live in a very man's world and a man based industry, right?" and "it's [the oil industry] very masculine and egos are very rampant up there, almost like a virus." Brett describes the working environment as not only hyper-masculine but as having a toxic effect on the people working in the environment. The toxicity of the hyper-masculine environment, as Brett refers to, spreads and affects others working in the oil industry, like a "virus." Thus, participants do not consider the male domination of the oil industry they describe as a positive aspect of the culture. It is not only "manly" or "masculine," but the men working in the industry are "assholes" and the culture is virus-like.

Participants also referred to the oil production culture as being racist, sexist, homophobic, etc. They described to me a work environment dominated by conservative beliefs, where anyone deemed 'different' was made to feel so.

Conservative Work Environment

Sexism

The most prominent theme that came out of my conversations with the oil industry workers is that sexist views of women are regularly and explicitly expressed by the participants' co-workers and themselves. Although this is another instance of how my gender, as well as the focus of my study, may have made my participants hyper-aware of the sexism present in their work culture, it does not make what they told me any less true.

When I asked the others about the conversations regarding women while at work, they informed me conversations were often sexist in nature. For example:

Kassandra: What are the conversations like at work about women?

Thomas: Definitely slandering women.

Kassandra: Yeah?

Thomas: Yeah...it's not a nice place...like I've made jokes too just like anybody else...the worst is definitely when you're in camp, they call it 'camp syndrome,' you'll see a girl that goes by that's...not remotely good-looking at all but everyone is just hounding for her, and like, cat-calling her and stuff, like in camp...you see a girl walking by the lunch room and everyone just 'oh what I would do to her, blah blah blah'

Kassandra: So...why do you think they talk about women that way?

Thomas: Definitely just the culture, because, this leads back to the sex trade, guys are getting prostitutes because they think less of women, they degrade women, a lot of dudes are still good people but definitely 80 percent of the people, that's what they came up with, that's what they are thinking, fast money and to buy girls, drugs, alcohol and that...

In the above excerpt, Thomas refers to, in a broad sense, the oil production culture as a sexist culture. He states that when women are a conversation topic, women are slandered, degraded, and objectified. According to Thomas, these views of women and discussions about women are part of the culture. Thomas also refers to a slang phrase used by his co-workers and himself, which is '*camp syndrome*.' Camp syndrome, according to Thomas, refers to extreme cat-calling that occurs (while Thomas is) in camp. This is apparently due to working in a male-dominated environment where females are underrepresented.

The term *camp syndrome* is just one of the coined terms I heard from the oil industry worker participants. For example, Karl told me about a term coined by him and his co-workers as well which is '*no snatch in the patch*:'

Karl: There's a term that we have, its 'no snatch in the patch.'

Kassandra: Oh, what does that mean?

Karl: Just, that they don't like females up there with us, during our jobs.

Kassandra: Really?

Karl: They treat them pretty bad.

Kassandra: Why though?

Karl: Um...I think a lot of guys have problems at home with their own wives, so they kinda use it as an escape, so for instance, my boss, he's been married for 5 years but he's

been with the same lady since he was 18 and now he's 39 and he doesn't like his marriage or his relationship with her but he can't get out of it because of his business, its tied into it, right.

Karl associates negative views towards women as being due to his co-workers being unhappy in their marriages¹⁹. Although this may be part of it, it is arguably due to broader factors like the hyper-masculine oil production work culture.

Some of the sexist views of women were discussed in more subtle ways in my interviews with the oil industry workers. For example, in my interview with Parker, he repeatedly referred to women and/or sex workers as 'crack-heads.' When telling me about a co-worker who cheated on his wife while working in the oil field which resulted in divorce, he concludes the story by stating "He ended up with some little crack-head." In addition, Parker talked negatively about women he met while working in Northern Alberta. The stories he told me throughout our interview implied that the women in the north are manipulative, promiscuous, or gold diggers²⁰. For example:

Parker: I mean, when a guy goes to a bar in Fort McMurray, the first question she asks him, 'who do you work for?' Syncrude, Suncor, Imperial Oil, you're in. She will sit and drink with you all night and go home with you.

Kassandra: Oh, that's interesting...

Parker: My friends wouldn't believe me, so anytime I'd have a woman in a bar, I'd tell her I worked for Canadian Tire, and she would stay for one drink and be gone.

Kassandra: Really?

Parker: Yeah, cause I can't afford to support her lifestyle.

¹⁹ Karl expresses that 'no snatch in the patch' means that his co-workers do not like having women around. However, a gatekeeper suggested to me that 'no snatch in the patch' is also a phrase used to indicate how the fact that women are not around means oil workers are not 'getting women and/or sex,' hence 'no snatch in the patch.'

²⁰ A gold-digger refers to "a person who cultivates a personal relationship in order to attain wealth" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gold_digger)

In the above excerpt, Parker implies that he views some women (in Fort McMurray) as gold-diggers. Parker also told me stories of women he encountered who kept records of the men they slept with and used such records as blackmail against some of his coworkers. Although I do not believe such negative undertones when talking about women were intentional, Parker's overall discussions of women throughout our interview are negative and rely on negative stereotypes that limit women's identities to being gold-diggers or promiscuous.

Racism and homophobia

In addition to sexism, participants discussed how racism and homophobia were present in their work culture:

Kassandra: Do you think that working in the oil industry is different than working in other industries?

Thomas: Oh definitely, yeah definitely. I know myself like I'm a pretty open person like you can tell as soon as you get there there's racial tension, and there's like you know gay-bashing, even anti-Semites, like I remember working for one guy, he's from Austria, and all he would do is talk about hating Jewish people.

Thomas states racism, anti-Semitism, and homophobia were present in his workplace. The other participants indicated similar experiences. For example, Brett when talking to me about the culture of the oil industry, stated:

Brett: I don't know how to say it, their mindset is still in the 1980s maybe 1990s where they're not as accepting of other cultures, other sexes, other um...sexuality preferences, they're just not as open about it, and they are very, I don't know if they are scared or whatever but they are very defensive when those things come into play.

Kassandra: Why do you think that is?

Brett: Cause...like I said, we [referring to oil workers] live in a very man's world and a man based industry, right?

Again, my participants point to racism, sexism, homophobia, and a general intolerance that exists in the oil production culture. Brett attributes the lack of tolerance for 'others' in his work culture to the male domination of the industry. Although the fact that the oil industry is male dominated

does not *cause* or even explain why other bigoted beliefs may exist among the oil industry workers, it is nonetheless notable that my participants attributed the male domination as playing a role in these beliefs. Further, understanding the nature of the oil production culture as described by my participants allowed me to better understand what factors contribute to oil industry workers purchasing sex. My understanding of this will be discussed further in Chapter 5. For now, I will move onto the discussion of who fits into the oil industry and who does not.

Who Fits into the Oil Industry and Who Does Not

When interviewing the oil industry workers, I asked them questions about what it takes to fit into the oil industry, and if there are people who do not fit in. Asking such questions was my way of better understanding the culture and how it may contribute to oil workers purchasing sex, as well as determining whether or not purchasing sex was a means to fit in. I received diverse answers to these questions. The majority of participants felt some people fit in better than others. However, rather than being a complete outsider, and 'not fitting in', most of the oil workers talked about the need to adapt to the culture to fit in.

Some of the oil workers discussed how they found most of their colleagues as "weird." In fact, Brett uses a high school analogy, explaining how those who did not fit in in high school then go into the oil industry and overcompensate because of their high incomes and the pressures to perform masculinity in the male-dominated industry. Brett explains:

Well a lot of the guys, I've explained this to a person once, um, a lot of guys up there are, you know that person you went to high school with and they weren't really popular but they weren't really what you would call a loser but no one really knew, they kind of had their core group of friends and hung out with that small group and nobody really knew who they were? Well then, they come up here and you know they are somebody, and they like that they are somebody, it's like that whole thing, when the kid who isn't popular becomes popular you know? And they really don't how to handle it and they like the fact that people actually know who they are like it's a small group of people but in that small group of people, people know your name now you know and you've adapted and you're one of the boys now and they like that.

First, Brett implies that there is an element of male bonding that occurs while working in the oil industry, and this aligns with the idea that, to an extent, everyone ‘fits in’ in the oil industry in one way or another. However, he also relays that it is due to adaptation. According to Brett, one must *adapt* to fit in. Other participants echoed this sentiment as well:

Kassandra: What would you say it takes to fit into the oil industry? What qualities?

Alex: Um I would say like the ability to like get along with people but like also um like I said I would walk down the hallways, and people wouldn't even say hi or wave they would just look straight down, so it was kind of like, these people are weird, you know what, for an outgoing person, these people are messed up hahaha I don't know so maybe it takes you being weird or being able to adapt yourself to such an environment.

Alex implies that, for the most part, people fit in as long as you can get along with everyone.

However, he also explains the need to *adapt* to the oil culture and working environment.

When I asked the oil workers who spoke about adaptation what they meant by having to adapt, their answers reflected how the oil culture was described to me, which is a culture that is socially difficult and intolerant of difference. Socially difficult to Alex, because adaptation to him meant adjusting to camp life and the loneliness that ensues:

(Context: Alex is saying there is a need to adapt the oil industry environment)

Kassandra: So, when you say such an environment, what do you mean?

Alex: Like...the solitude – like I said you can't just go to the mall you can't just go here so you just like are confined in that space, as long as you can handle that, then you're good.

To Alex, becoming accustomed to solitude is what adaptation means. Brett, however, describes the need to adapt as becoming ‘uncultured’:

Brett: I don't know, how do I put this without making them sound rude, um...any, okay I'll put it this way, you have to become very uncultured and very um masculine, you know? Like...not really hold any opinions on certain things, you know what I mean? Not show, just not show any um, not show any real opinions about politics, and different cultural kinda things.

Brett feels that to fit in and adapt, he or anyone else cannot express opinions against the norm.

Brett is referring to more liberal, leftist opinions in that the oil culture is known as being conservative and, as discussed, intolerant of difference.

Thomas makes reference to this as well when talking about who fits in and who does not. Like the other participants, he talks about how for the most part, people get along well and states that being a hard worker is the most important factor for fitting in. However, he goes on to say that sexual and racial minorities may not 'fit in' as easily as others:

Thomas: ...you gotta have a work ethic, cause I remember working on one rig, and one guy on the rig crew was bisexual...and...he just got a bad sign of respect, one of the big things, was definitely connections...I know when I was there I made a lot of friends really quickly and all liked me so working for them was easy, we've definitely had some guys that we have worked with and they are racist, like one Muslim guy that no one really likes...and other people that work there... that just weren't fair to other people...like these people are straight, love to drink, you know, just relaxed people...

Thomas says that having a good work ethic is important but then discusses how characteristics completely separate from work ethic, like sexual orientation or religion, affect whether or not someone is liked. Also, likely without intention, Thomas implies that being straight, loving to drink, and being "relaxed," is what makes people in the industry likable as well. This reinforces the nature of the oil production culture, which is a culture intolerant to difference and one that maintains normative standards.

Also, although none of my participants explicitly stated this, through the discussions with the oil industry workers, it seems as though partying is a means to fit in as well. Engaging in risky behaviours is arguably a prominent way many oil workers *do* fit into the oil industry. In summary, the men I interviewed informed me that some people do fit in better than others in the oil industry. After discussing the lifestyle and culture of the oil industry with the oil industry

worker participants, I narrowed in on the focus of my study, which is the oil industry's connection to the sex trade. It is to this discussion that I turn to next.

The Oil Industry and the Sex Trade

Out of the five oil industry workers I interviewed, two admitted to purchasing sex while working in the oil industry. The other three who did not admit to purchasing sexual services spoke about their general knowledge of the connection between the oil industry and the sex trade, and their first-hand accounts of their co-workers buying sex.

I asked all of the oil workers to estimate how many of their co-workers engage in purchasing sex, and answers ranged from 30 to 80 percent. I also asked them if they could estimate how many of those who buy sex are in relationships, and they all stated around 50 percent of those who were purchasing sex were in relationships.²¹

Oil worker participants often referred to buying sex as being associated with other risky behaviours, such as drug use and heavy alcohol consumption. For example, this is one of the stories Thomas shared with me during our interview:

When we were down there in [location], one guy who had never done cocaine, never had a prostitute, all this stuff, and he comes up to me, and I'm loaded, and he's like hey man guess what? And I'm like I'm what? And he's like I'm having a kid? And I was like what?! That's awesome man, I will buy you drinks for the night, and so I buy him his drinks and like you know like we racked up a pretty big bill, and I'm like I got this, and then he's like want to go to the strip club? And I was like yeah, I'll go to the strip club like whatever and he's like man I've never done cocaine before, and I'm like hey let's get some coke, and so I get him some coke, and then he's like hey I've never had a prostitute before, and I was like do you have money? And he's like yeah...so I paid for all of the girls to come back to the hotel...and then I keep 2 and he keeps 1, and he comes over, and he's like man I don't have enough money for us, and I'm like you're fucking dumb, and I close the door, and I was doing coke like off the girls.

²¹ I acknowledge that these are not hard 'facts' as my data is qualitative and these are simply estimates given by my participants based on their opinions.

This story reveals how buying sex for Thomas was often not an isolated event but rather a part of the ‘work hard play hard’ lifestyle. To my participants who admitted to buying sex, they engaged in buying sex while impaired by drugs or alcohol. Similarly, Alex shared the following story:

Alex: Yeah, we would do that in town, so we would just get a bunch of drugs and then get escorts.

Kassandra: Were drugs always involved?

Alex: Yeah, it [drugs] was always on my mind, for most of my time up there, it was like, the one thing you need to have with you, it’s like your cup of coffee, and like I’m not like that anymore like my coffee is my coffee now haha.

Some additional stories about oil industry workers purchasing sex are as follows:

Thomas: We went with oil rig guys, to the strip club, and pretty much...going in there, just like any regular strip club you know...throwing bills...and it came to the point one of the girls wanted to give me a lap dance and one guy from America was like...cause we were in Midland [Texas] which is like Fort Mac there...like, you're going to the champagne room man, with the oil guys, and I was like okay...so I paid my 300 dollars and went to the champagne room, and it was like prostitutes...and they did whatever they want, and I was in the club and yeah...so that was my first exposure there...and then I did that 3 times while I was there...

Kassandra: Okay.

Thomas: And in Japan it wasn’t as much...but like...the way I look at it is...being in the oil field, you have so much money, and if you’ve done it once, it seems a lot easier to do again, especially...for me...being international, because in Canada...the U.S. not as much, prostitution is viewed as like negative and stuff, but in other countries, like in America, it’s not so bad, they don’t really care...and in Japan...it was...almost normal to do it there.

Thomas: There’s one guy we work with, but like he is...known as the ‘sex tourist’, he’s gone on a lot of international jobs and pays for sex all the time, like he goes to places where there are impoverished people and pays like 50 bucks and have like a prostitute for a whole day...yeah...there are definitely, after hearing his stories, kinda made me go like, ‘well why can't I do it?’...it's kind of greasy, but now he is known for going around and doing that stuff.

Brett: I haven't had too much connection to me other than the odd story I hear from guys, and it is in the culture, it's definitely a big part of the culture, and anything you can think of in a masculinity way is part of that culture.

Kassandra: Okay...okay, like do you think you'd be able to estimate how many of your coworkers or the guys up there do buy sex?

Brett: It's hard to say, I'd say about, 50 percent maybe on average, but there's been jobs, usually it's more like if you're with younger crews, it's usually with the younger generations, it's more like 75 percent or like 80 percent, but when you get into more like the older guys, the family guys, you're looking at like 50 percent.

Alex: When I was on days off too, the easiest thing to do was to hire an escort or whatever but...I didn't really do it on my own that much.

Kassandra: Oh okay, it was more of a group thing?

Alex: Yeah, my really close friends were really into that kind of stuff, and they would tell me all of their stories like when they got back, and I was there too, and I was like I want to have all these crazy stories to tell people.

Kassandra: the only other thing I thought about, oh, if you could estimate like how many people you know, coworkers, who buy sex, like percentage wise....?

Alex: Say if there's 10 of us I'd say at least...3, like 30 percent of us would.

Kassandra: Okay that's actually not that many.

Alex: Yeah, it's not as much as you would think but like I said, it depends...that's like....us in the kitchen right so like, if you're talking about the guys in the field I would say, it could be like...60 to 70 percent, that's a large percentage.

Parker: Sex trade with the oil guys, like one guy who used to stay in the house with us, he was married but separated, and used to go to the rub 'n' tugs...I mean...okay that's fine when your wife is living in Ontario but you moved her out here to be with you, and you're still going out to the rub 'n' tugs.

These stories highlight various elements of the relationship between the sex trade and the oil industry. Participants discuss how, in their estimation, a significant percentage of their co-workers' purchase sex, and how some of them are in relationships. There is also a subtle implication that buying sex was associated with the lifestyle of the oil industry. However, when I asked the men *why*, in their opinion, oil workers buy sex, they expressed different reasons other than it simply being a part of the 'work hard play hard' culture. I will discuss the reasons they provided me when asking why they or their co-workers purchase sex in the following section.

Why They Buy Sex

I asked each oil worker who I interviewed why, in their opinion, they or their co-workers buy sex. I also asked them if they thought oil workers bought sex for different reasons than non-oil workers. Answers to these questions varied. Most of the oil workers I talked to shared similar ideas about why men in general buy sex, but there was not a consensus on whether or not some of these reasons are unique to oil workers. The opinion on whether or not the reasons were different for oil workers seemed to depend on whether or not the interviewee had purchased sex personally. Regardless of their opinions on whether or not oil workers purchase sex for different reasons than non-oil workers, the general agreement among participants was that money, the "need" for sex, and convenience were the main reasons for buying sex.

Money and the Lifestyle

When I asked the oil workers I interviewed why they buy sex or why their coworkers do, money was first response I heard from every single interviewee. The mindset tended to be that oil workers make enough money that they *can* buy sex. Buying sex is then seen as a luxury item in a sense, but it is one that oil workers can afford. For example, Thomas when explaining to me why he buys sex said: "...being in the oil field, you have so much money." Thomas justifies purchasing sex by acknowledging that he has the financial means to do so and adopts the attitude of, 'I can afford it, so why not?' This sentiment was shared among all of my participants, whether they had purchased sex or not. Parker discusses this in the following excerpt from our interview:

Kassandra: So why do you think that is, why oil workers buy sex?

Parker: Disposable income.

Kassandra: That's it?

Parker: That's the biggest reason. I guess...they all live up there, got family back east, and when you get 5 or 10 days off in between your shift rotation, so they then say let's go to Edmonton and rent a hotel room and party for 4 or 5 days, and then go back to work. You know? It's a Friday let's say? you get paid 7000 dollars, and you only pay 2000 dollars in rent, so what are you gonna do with the 5000?

Parker articulates that having excess money is the primary reason for purchasing sex; however, he also attributes it to the party lifestyle of the oil industry. Karl's answer was similar to Parker's. He initially says money is the primary reason his coworkers buy sex but also goes on to say it is a part of the lifestyle too:

Kassandra: Okay, so then why do you think they [his coworkers] do buy sex?

Karl: Mmm...maybe because of the money, cause I don't know, it just goes with the culture, right? Drinking, and going to strip clubs...but probably the money is the biggest thing because they can buy it right?

What Karl makes clear is that money is the primary factor, but it is not an isolated factor. Money, in conjunction with the work hard, play hard culture, are primary factors contributing to oil workers purchasing sexual services.

Sex as a Need

Although money was the initial response participants all had when discussing why oil workers purchase sex, another common answer I heard was that sex is a need and buying sex is a way to meet that need. For example, Thomas, who admitted to purchasing sex regularly while he was away on the job, spoke about how he bought sex because he had not had the opportunity to have (regular) sex. In our interview, he stated: "...I was working so much like I hadn't had the opportunity to even like to have sex...so I was like fuck it I'm doing it, I might as well do it." The men who said they had not purchased sex also shared this sentiment. Karl, for example, stated that some of his coworkers bought sex because their wives were not "putting out." In talking about a co-worker who purchases sex, Karl said: "I don't know what his situation is, with

sex and things at home, like I don't know how much his wife puts out right?" Karl is implying that sex is a need and when that need is not being fulfilled buying sex is a means to meet the need.

It was also clear that to the participants relationship statuses did not matter as much as fulfilling the need for sex. Karl and Thomas reveal this in the previous paragraph. Thomas goes on to say that if he were in a relationship getting 'steady sex' then he would not purchase sex, but getting 'steady sex' seemed to be the most important factor. This is evident in the below excerpt:

Kassandra: Are a lot of the guys who do it [purchase sex] in relationships?

Thomas: Uh...right now...I'd say its 50/50 to be honest, like most of my current friends who have an oil field job but live in the city, they don't work up in camps, they have girlfriends and they are still getting prostitutes, and then like I have all my single friends who are just like this is my way of getting it.

Kassandra: Right so then why do you think they do it if they are in relationships?

Thomas: I can't put a finger on that (haha) to be honest cause like...the way I see it, like if I was in a relationship, I wouldn't do it you know, I wouldn't wanna...but like I don't know, I know my one buddy had a long-distance relationship, and that's why he did it...cause like...

Kassandra: Cause he wasn't getting any?

Thomas: Different area codes, no problem kind of.

The need for sex seems to transcend the monogamous relationships some of Thomas' coworkers are reportedly in.

Some of my participants stated they do not think oil workers buy sex for different reasons than non-oil workers. However, they discussed how it is harder for oil workers to meet their need for sex because of their work schedules which indicates that there may be, to an extent, differences in why oil workers purchase sex compared to non-oil workers. For example, when I asked Brett whether he thinks oil workers buy sex for different reasons than non-oil workers, he said no. However, he contradicts this statement in his explanation of why he believes his co-

workers buy sex in saying "you work away for long, long periods of time and you naturally have human urges..." Brett implies that working out of town in addition to the need for sex are reasons his coworkers purchase sex. Arguably working out of town for extended periods of time is not a reason all buyers of sex can relate to, so working out of town is a reason unique to oil workers (to an extent). This, compounded by viewing sex as a need, provides a better understanding of why oil workers buy sex.

Buying Sex is Convenient

The oil workers I interviewed also told me that they or their coworkers buy sex because it is convenient/easy. If sex is a need, and they have the money, buying sex is an easy way to get sex. Thomas explains this best:

...Their [referring to oil workers] perception is to see like, why would I go out and spend all this money on like a girl you know and take her on a couple dates, probably cost 500 dollars, but I can spend 140 bucks and fuck a girl, like come on...

To Thomas, buying sex is easier than dating. Dating costs money and sex is not necessarily guaranteed; therefore, if the intent is strictly to have sex then buying sex is easier and more convenient. Alex echoed Thomas' feelings about this during our interview as well by saying:

We live in a society now where everyone wants instant gratification, that instant euphoric high if you must but...if I want to go like have sex with someone and I have the money to do so, I'll pay to have it done rather than sit there and text someone and like wait for it, unless I am looking for a relationship, you know what I mean?

Like Thomas, Alex feels that buying is the easiest way to get sex. However, both Alex and Thomas make it clear that this is only the case when their primary intent is strictly getting sex, rather than building a romantic relationship. Therefore, according to these participants buying sex is the easiest way to get *sex* but not romance.

Some of the other participants also mentioned how buying sex is an easy way to experience intimacy or comfort. Brett speaks in hypothetical terms saying "[some] guys just

don't have that confidence, so he turns to the yellow pages to meet his needs and sometimes those needs aren't just sexual, like some sort of comfort." Whether the need is strictly sexual, or for intimacy and comfort, buying such services is easiest for some oil workers. When convenience is combined with viewing sex as a need and having the money to do so, buying sex is understood as logical, rather than 'deviant.'

Socio-cultural Influences on Oil Workers Purchasing Sex

Although learning the nuances of *why* men at the micro-level purchase sex are important, my project's primary focus is on socio-cultural influences contributing to oil industry workers buying sex. In my interviews with the oil industry workers, I found three main socio-cultural influences contributing to oil industry workers purchasing sexual services.

Sexist Views of Women

As highlighted in the oil production culture discussion, the most prominent theme that came out of my conversations with the oil industry workers, is that sexist views of women are regularly and explicitly expressed by my participants' co-workers and themselves. Speaking to Thomas highlighted how sexism may contribute to the sex trade in the oil industry:

Kassandra: So...why do you think they talk about women that way?

Thomas: Definitely just the culture, because, this leads back to the sex trade, guys are getting prostitutes because they think less of women, they degrade women, a lot of dudes are still good people but definitely 80 percent of the people, that's what they came up with, that's what they are thinking, fast money and to buy girls, drugs, alcohol and that...

Thomas was one of my participants who admitted to purchasing sex, and yet he explains that purchasing sex is a result of thinking less of women. He dissociates himself from that explanation, so it is not clear whether or not he purchases sex because he views women as "less than."

Objectification of women

In line with the sexist views of women, participants discussed the objectification of women while working in the oil industry. This theme was subtler than the open discussions about sexism, in that I do not believe all of the participants realized they were objectifying women while talking with me. For example, in my interview with Parker, he tended to group women into the same category of ‘things’ when talking with me. In the below excerpt of my interview with Parker, he was responding to the question of why oil industry workers may purchase sex:

Parker: I guess, like I just said, they’ve already financed all their toys, they’ve got their big 4 by 4s, they got their quads, they got their skidoos, their boats, what don’t they have? But want? Women and if I get a permanent woman I got to share all of this.

In the above quote, Parker groups women into a list of material objects that oil workers want to buy. Although this is likely unintentional, women are objectified in the above interview excerpt. Parker also stated during our interview “Well one guy, said ordering escorts is like ordering pizza, you just dial and tell them what you want, and wait for them to be delivered.” Women are articulated as *things* men can buy. I believe Parker made this connection without realizing he was doing so, while some of the other participants were more explicit when talking about the objectification of women. One of the participants linked the objectification of women directly to why his coworkers purchase sex:

Kassandra: So then why do you think they [oil workers] do buy sex?

Karl: Mmm...maybe because of the money, cause I don’t know, it just goes with the culture right, drinking, and going to strip clubs, and being around...and viewing women as...not people, lesser than, you know what I mean? Like things, as opposed to other people, they sort of view them as things instead of women. But...probably the money is the biggest thing, because they can buy it right? (emphasis added)

Karl is explicit in talking about the objectification of women, stating that some of his co-workers view women as things rather than people. Similarly, Alex described his co-workers as seeing women as ‘meat’:

Alex: We had some girls in the kitchen and stuff like that, including a chef and stuff like that but there were more girls doing housekeeping for sure and you didn’t really see a lot of like, young girls all the time, and guys were always staring at them like they were pieces of meat do you know what I mean?

Kassandra: Okay yeah, I was gonna ask about that.

Alex: Yeah, it’s pretty bad, some of the girls don’t even eat in the dining room because of that.

Kassandra: Really? Because things are said to them?

Alex: Because people, don’t stop staring or they make them feel uncomfortable, they think that just because it’s camp or something or that they make all of this money that they are able to like holler at girls or whistle at them, do you know what I mean?

Alex speaks to the objectification of women that occurred in his workplace and the consequences this had for the few women that work in the industry. According to Alex, due to explicitly expressed objectification, women are often too uncomfortable to eat with their peers/colleagues. This speaks to how the male domination of the industry does not only diminish women's identities to only sexual ones but also limits the spaces women are able to occupy. Women are indirectly pushed out of spaces meant for everyone, like a dining room, because of the way they are treated in their hyper-masculine work environment.

Similarly, Karl echoed Alex’s metaphor of women being viewed like ‘meat:’

(Context: *we are talking about how women are treated in the oil field*)

Karl: Yeah...just like...the [female] medics...they wear Lululemon pants, and you know the classic guys, you know? Like wild animals on meat sort of thing.

Kassandra: Yeah, yeah...what kind of things do they say if you don’t mind my asking?

Karl: Just like ‘nice ass’, typical like cat calling that you see on the streets right? It's very much like that.

Like Alex, Karl compares women to meat, and his coworkers to animals who have no control over their need for the ‘meat.’ Such a metaphor refers to the objectification of women; however, Karl also justifies this as being ‘classic guys.’ I also learned through my interviews that the sexism and objectification of women discussed by participants were normalized. Such normalization permeated into the normalization and institutionalization of buying sex.

Normalization and Institutionalization of Buying Sex

Many of the oil industry worker participants discussed the normalization and institutionalization of purchasing sex in the industry. They spoke about how their managers bought sex themselves, and/or encouraged them to do so. For example, Thomas informed me that his company allowed he and his co-workers to expense the money they spent on sex and/or other illegal activities:

Thomas: Like the one thing that blows my mind is called ‘[organization Thomas works for] night’, and what it is, if you do a job internationally and the job goes very well, you go out and spend as much money as you want getting drunk, high, and you expense it.

(Thomas continues)

Thomas: I went to work and my boss was like, like ‘hey Thomas I heard you spent 300 dollars [on sexual services] in [location]’ and I was like...are you kidding? So people talk. And my superiors know and have no problem with it, so it definitely goes up the ranks too...like they definitely have done it too...

Kassandra: Yeah that’s what [name] told me too, he said that you guys can write it off as a non-receipt expense?

Thomas: Yeah...I did that...I did that the first time yeah. I got a receipt and uh...it just didn’t have anything on it but it was to [adult services entertainment industry] and I expensed about 400 dollars.

Kassandra: Holy shit and they gave you your money back?

Thomas: Yeah! No problem.

Thomas tells me about how his management is aware of the times he purchased sex while away on a job, and openly accepted it. In fact, the acceptance of buying sex goes as far as reimbursing Thomas for the money he spent on sex while working. Thomas even assumes his managers engage in purchasing sex as well. Although Thomas' experience is not a universal one for oil industry companies, at Thomas' company there is a definite normalization and institutionalization of buying sex.

Thomas was the only participant I spoke to who was reimbursed for money spent on sex, but the other participants shared similar stories where there was a general acceptance among management for purchasing sexual services. For instance, Karl, spoke of a time a stripper came to an apartment he and his boss were renting in an oil community in Northern Alberta:

Karl: ...she came up to our apartment for drinks, me and my boss's apartment, and then uh...she started like stripping in front of us, and I'm just like they're eating Chinese food and drinking beer like holy fuck this is so awkward (hahaha)...and then she starts taking bananas and putting them inside of her...and then I am just sitting there and I am just like...totally awkward and stuff...and [name] gets on the couch and pulls down his pants and she starts sucking his dick in front of us, and I'm just like Jesus.

The unnamed individual that Karl refers to in the above story is the one who reportedly brought the stripper to the apartment he and his boss were staying at. Karl states his discomfort with the event and later goes on to say that his boss was uncomfortable as well. However, the fact that Karl's co-worker felt comfortable enough to bring a woman to his boss's apartment and have the woman perform sex acts on him in front of his boss shows a degree of acceptance from Karl's boss. Stories like those shared by Karl and Thomas reveal the extent to which buying sex is accepted in the oil industry.

The other interviewees talked about instances of sex workers being in oil work camps. They informed me that sex workers were sometimes brought into camp or occupied other positions like cleaning staff while also providing sexual services:

Thomas: I definitely know a lot about it cause you've heard stories of guys who were working in a remote area and they rent a hotel room versus staying in camp and they're getting prostitutes to come to their room at night...and then up in camp, I've seen a couple prostitutes there working, but that was mostly in the Fort McMurray area.

And:

Alex: I've heard that story too where people would actually leave their boots out their door and that would be code for something but that's never personally happened to me but I've heard that story.

Kassandra: Okay haha did you hear anything else, or like anyone you know?

Alex: Yeah I've heard stories of housekeepers being prostitutes and they've made a killing but...I've never seen it but I've heard rumours like 'that girl is a prostitute' you know what I mean.

Similarly, Brett shared:

Brett: Actually I've heard a lot of, there's a lot of women who get jobs as camp cleaners or whatever and that's how they get in and that's kind of how they enter the job, but there's also one story I heard once that guys will bring prostitutes up to camp and then leave them there, there's actually one of them, there was a prostitute, I'm pretty sure she was drugged out and she was walking around camp like knocking on doors looking for guys who wanted to pay for sex and security had to come up and get her out, it was kind of sad but yeah...that's uh very very common.

Kassandra: Very common?

Brett: Yeah haha.

In the above excerpts from transcripts with the oil industry workers, they refer mostly to stories they have 'heard' versus what they know to be true. Although some of them speak to some personal experiences of seeing sex workers in camps, most of them refer to only hearing rumours about it. Nonetheless, the fact that there have been some personal experiences of sex workers being in camp speaks to the institutionalization of buying sex within the oil industry.

Also, the fact that participants and their coworkers commonly talk about sex workers being in camp shows the normalization of talking about sex work/or buying prostitutes. All of the participants stated that talking about purchasing sex was normal, day to day conversation among coworkers. When I asked one of the participants why he thinks discussions about buying

sex were so 'normal;' he responded: "Um...I think you kind of like, want to earn points or um you want to fit in sometimes too, you see these other guys doing stuff like that too so maybe that's what you should do too right?" Therefore, this normalization of buying sex may be more myth than a reality; however, the culture normalizes the conversations on buying sex.

The general culture of acceptance of buying and talking about buying sex is a socio-cultural factor for oil industry workers purchasing sexual services.

Buying Sex as part of 'Work Hard Play Hard' Lifestyle & Culture

While interviewing the oil industry workers, it also became clear that to participants, buying sex was a part of the 'Work Hard Play Hard' culture of the oil industry. When this lifestyle is combined with oil workers' high incomes, perceptions of sex as a need, while also being entrenched in a culture that objectifies women, as well as institutionalizes and normalizes purchasing sex, the high incidence of oil industry workers purchasing sex is better understood. I return to a discussion of the impact of the oil industry culture on the normalization of the purchase of sex in the next chapter, but first I discuss the oil industry and sex trade through the eyes of sex workers.

Oil and Sex - through the eyes of Sex Workers

To get a more complete picture of my topic of study, I felt it was important to get sex workers' perspectives as well. I wanted to know how the oil industry affects their industry, and whether or not their oil worker clients present unique challenges to these women. I went to sex workers to find out whether or not the hyper-masculine oil production culture permeated into interactions with their clients. However, as mentioned in my methodology section, my interview questions for the sex workers were not very specific due to the desire to not be intrusive.

Therefore, the information I have about their clients is only what the women felt comfortable sharing with me. I discuss these findings next.

Characteristics of Clients

For all of the women I talked with, their clients were 99 percent male. Some of the women saw female clients; others did not. For those who did see female clients, they often only saw female clients when seeing a male-female couple. In regards to age, all of the women had seen men of all age ranges. However, most of the women I spoke with talked about how they prefer to see older men. Regarding 'difficult' clients, age was a significant determining factor as I will discuss in more depth later in this chapter.

One of my main interests in interviewing the sex workers was the occupation of their clients. First, I asked whether or not the women knew the occupation of their clients, and whether or not there was a dominant occupation in their pool of clients. One sex worker I spoke to did not ask about her clients' professions, so she was not able to provide much insight on oil industry workers specifically but was still able to provide valuable insight into the broader relationship between the oil industry and the sex trade. The rest of the women I interviewed told me that they had seen men from a variety of occupations, but oil workers made up a large percentage of their clientele before the recession. One of the women I spoke with said before the recession approximately 40 percent of her clients were oil workers (Tammy). However, the women were seeing fewer oil workers because of the recession. Brittney explained to me the diversity of her clients' occupations:

Kassandra: Do you often know like what their occupation is?

Brittney: Yeah, yeah, I definitely try and make small talk with most of them so like to make us both more comfortable, and when I first started in February, I did notice a lot of the clients were rig workers, and then um...like more and more layoffs started happening and so that's definitely decreased but like as of now...like there's...I see people like in

every single occupation like I've seen people who don't even have a job like engineers or I still see some rig workers but not as many, I've seen people, I've seen a professor who works for the university, I've seen, like anyone you could ever think of, it's very strange.

Brittney acknowledges that although a lot of clients were oil industry workers, there is still a vast range of clients she sees in all kinds of occupations. She also notes the recession has affected the number of oil industry clients she sees. Another sex worker told me that the number of oil workers she sees has drastically decreased:

(Context: group interview)

Kassandra: I was just asking them, if you're able to estimate at all how many of your clients are oil workers?

Donna: Yeah, I could probably do that really easily, I'd say 25 to 30 percent.

Kassandra: Okay, has that dropped at all?

Donna: Yeah about 25 to 30 percent haha.

Donna estimates oil industry workers made up at least a quarter of her clientele before the recession. Therefore, in interviewing sex workers, I was able to confirm that oil industry workers (prior to the recession) made up a significant proportion of their clientele. I also asked the women *how* the oil industry influenced their work.

Influence of the Oil Industry on the Sex Industry

As demonstrated by Donna in the above section, it is evident the recent recession affected the number of oil workers the women I spoke to saw. However, I learned through my conversations with the women that the effects of the oil industry go beyond the number of oil workers sex workers may see.

Some sex workers 'follow the money.' A couple of the women I spoke with travel to other oil dominated regions of Alberta to make more money. Patricia was one of the women I spoke to who has traveled outside of Edmonton:

Patricia: When Fort McMurray was big, people travelled there, I travelled to Saskatchewan and Red Deer sometimes and that's because I'm following the money, so like mainly the reason, mainly the reason, there's so many oil people here as a part of our income is because we are here to take their money.

Patricia admits to "following the money", and travelling to regions outside of Edmonton where she knows she will make money. Tammy and Brittney travelled outside of Edmonton to other oil-rich regions as a means to make more money as well. The women were also strategic about *when* they would work and/or travel. I learned that they would track the paydays of oil industry workers and make sure they would work the day of, or the day after a payday. Brittney also explained this to me:

Kassandra: Did you ever notice, when the oil workers would get paid or something that...?

Brittney: Oh yeah! Yeah.

Kassandra: Okay, so that influences your work?

Brittney: Well...we always keep track of when payday is and stuff.

Kassandra: Oh interesting.

Brittney: Yeah and like if it's a slow week it's usually because payday is coming up or like when we go out of town, we try and see like when payday was so we can go that day or the day after...right...

Brittney states that she and her co-workers keep track of paydays, as well as strategically plan out of town trips around paydays. This suggests there is a connection between Alberta's oil industry and the sex industry in ways other than the number of clients the women see.

Furthermore, the women discussed negative effects the oil industry bust was having on the sex industry such as women pushing their boundaries to make money. Julie explained this to me in the below excerpt from our interview:

Julie: Since the recession, there has been so much more dirty, cheap, stuff...so much more, like there's girls doing car dates now.

Kassandra: Oh really?

Julie: There's tons and tons of that, all of that stuff has been in the past year for sure, I guess.

The decrease in business because of the recession has forced some women in the sex industry to push their boundaries outside their comfort zones into riskier and potentially dangerous behaviours to still make money. Julie refers to this being an increase in "cheap" and "dirty" work. Courtney and Patricia also spoke about how more of their clients are trying to push boundaries with them since the recession:

Patricia: Like the economy is really bad right now, so...like I haven't had any really bad experiences working here, but there have been men, more testing the boundaries, like just asking once and a while if they can pull off the condom, and like...you gotta be, like have a really firm and hard no, but like, if the economy is shitty, and they are offering you an extra 50, that extra 50 can be groceries or go to your rent and so like there is like a lot of judgement for survival sex workers who are in that situation who would take that.

Courtney: Yeah, I have found like lately, I'll say what my half an hour rate is and some guys will be like well I'll pay you 20 less, and if you're like no thanks, then they are like 'well who else is gonna come don't you need the money' like they will say that kind of stuff, and so like, they know, their work is hard off and so our work is too like a little bit, like...not solely but a bit.

Interview: Have you guys had to drop your prices or anything like that?

Patricia: Yeah.

According to Patricia and Courtney, there have been more instances of clients trying to test boundaries and/or barter with them for costs of services. They attribute this to the declining Albertan economy. Consequently, the economic effects of the recession affect the interactions sex workers have with clients, as well as push some women out of their comfort zones when delivering services.

The ways the industry influences the women's work makes it clear there is a relationship between the oil industry and the sex trade. When the economy is not doing well, the negative

effects go beyond financial difficulties for both oil workers and sex workers. What I also sought to find out though, is whether the masculinist oil production culture permeates into interactions with sex workers.

Oil Industry Worker Clientele

With the exception of one sex worker, the women I spoke to stated that their oil worker clientele is, in general, respectable to deal with. The women generally struggled to name any explicit differences between their oil worker clientele and clients of other occupations – rather they named age and intoxication as influences on whether or not a client is pleasant to deal with.

Oil Industry Clientele: No Differences

All of the women except Julie struggled to name differences between their clients who are oil industry workers and clients of other occupations. For example, from my interview with Brittney:

Kassandra: So then...are your, do you notice if there's any kind of differences between your clients who are oil workers and your clients who aren't oil workers?

Brittney: Um...not really...like I don't know, everyone is kind of the same haha I don't know, there's weird people of all professions and there's nice people of all professions, I don't know, I don't think it really makes a difference, not to me.

Kassandra: Okay, so they don't treat you differently in any way?

Brittney: No...no...I wouldn't say that.

Brittney explains occupation is not necessarily a factor that makes a difference for client interactions. I heard similar responses to Brittney's from the other women:

Courtney: Yeah well I try not to make assumptions, but sometime you do and sometimes you'll see a guy who's super dirty carharts, big boots, he looks dirty, doesn't talk, kinda like rough, then you like leave to take a shower and you come back and he's like clean and totally nice and it's a good session and sometimes like the dude looks like an accountant and is the one trying to push the boundaries the entire time and like you have

to say no and ask him to leave so....I wouldn't say necessarily, they are more violent, I think when they are around each other they can be.²²

Like Brittney, Courtney implies that occupation is not much of a determining factor in whether or not a client is pleasant to deal with. However, Courtney makes an interesting observation, hypothesizing that although oil industry workers may not be more difficult clients, their behaviour may be different when they are around one another. Donna also provided me with a nuanced answer to the question 'are oil industry worker clients different than non-oil workers?' in stating that for her there are not differences in her interactions with oil industry worker clients but recognizes there may be differences in why they purchase sex:

Kassandra: I was wondering if you could just tell me a little bit about your clients who are oil workers or were oil workers, are they different from clients who are non-oil workers?

Donna: Well not really, it's not so much that they are different or not different, it's that a spectrum of personalities, throughout civilisation there just are, so to that degree so they sit the same as everybody else but what is different perhaps is that they tend to be younger, brawnier, and that's why they are in the oil industry, they are more likely to spend the money they have quickly just like young people do, I think all young people are willing to do that it's just that not all young people have jobs in the oil sector, they have jobs in the more mundane sector where they get paid less money so they can't party hardy [like oil industry workers] and it's just probably as simple as that, boys that work up in the oil field have more money, and more disposable income, therefore, they are more likely to spend it on gambling, on the ladies, and on drugs and alcohol and so in that sense they are only different in the sense that they are maybe like a privileged client.

Courtney and Donna stated there are not distinct differences in the ways oil industry workers *interact* with them, but they recognize that there may be differences in general between them and clients of other occupations. These differences just happen not to affect their interactions with the oil industry clients. However, some of the women pointed out *some* differences between oil

²² Courtney says 'assumptions' because she does not ask her clients about their occupation. Nonetheless, her point stands that occupation, to her, does not have a huge impact on the interactions she has with clients.

worker and non-oil worker clientele, as well as factors that do affect whether or not a client is difficult to deal with.

Oil Industry Worker Clientele: Differences

Although the consensus from the women I interviewed was that in general there are not any distinct differences between clients who are oil workers and clients who are not oil workers, there were a few differences discussed worth mentioning. Most of the differences I heard were either minor differences in interactions or differences connected to the broader culture of the oil industry that the women seemed aware of. One minor difference I heard from Tammy, was that her oil worker clients “know what they want because they are in town for a small amount of time, they are up front.” According to Tammy, clients who are oil workers are more straightforward, and this was a notable difference for her.

Donna refers to a broader difference she has noticed about her oil worker clients which were the fact that most of them are younger and have the financial means to purchase sex. Donna explains in the below excerpt:

It's just as people tend to get older, they develop the responsibilities, they've got married, even if they got divorced, they got married, they had babies, they've had their responsibilities, they've got their alimony, they've got their child support, they've got their mortgage payments, so now they aren't doing the drugs, they aren't doing the alcohol, so now they really are just like everybody else in mainstream society I think it's really just more that it's young people making fast money, so you got a group of people 18 to 25 that doesn't really have any responsibilities, and so the money is disposable income.

Donna attributes a large amount of oil worker clientele to them having a lot of money, and the party lifestyle oil industry workers are infamous for. However, to Donna, this does not affect interactions with her.

Julie however, stated oil industry worker clients are in general more difficult to deal with. She explained to me that she purposefully does not see oil worker clients because she tends to not get along with them. Julie articulates why this is in the following excerpt:

Kassandra: So then when you say you don't really get along with them [oil workers], could you explain why that is?

Julie: Um...cause I'm a feminist and they don't like women haha.

Kassandra: Alright! Haha

Julie: Yeah...pretty much. I even just had a client like two days ago that worked in oil and he was like this cocky like 20-year-old guy, like laughing and like you like it was a joke, like I don't know...it's just they're...they're just more violent.

Kassandra: Yeah?

Julie: Yes, they are! For sure. I mean it's all in the way you deal with things, like we [sex workers], as a group of people, are very good at you know like, we deal with all kinds right, so it doesn't, there's way you can deal with things, like it may not result in violence but are they more violent? Yeah.

Kassandra: Okay...

Julie: For sure like the things that come out of their mouth like whatever they do is more violent than most people.

Kassandra: What kind of things do they say?

Julie: They just talk about women as objects, a lot... There's a sense of entitlement, they are rough, um...they tend to be like very like hard on my body, you know what I mean?

In Julie's experience oil workers have been more violent, rougher, act entitled, and objectify women in interactions with her. Although I cannot account for why Julie has had experiences or noticed differences in oil worker clientele that the other women I spoke to have not, her experiences reveal *some* oil workers are distinctly more difficult to deal with.

Age & Intoxication as Factors Affecting Interactions with Sex Workers

What was repeatedly noted by the interviewees as being a factor that affected whether or not a client was difficult to deal with or not, was *age*, rather than occupation. All of the women I interviewed referred to age, as well as intoxication, as factors that often made clients unpleasant

to serve. Specifically, *young* clients were a problem to the women I spoke to. In fact, Patricia stated that she refuses to see young clients at all. In my group interview with Patricia, Courtney, and Donna, Patricia and Courtney discuss the difficulties they have had with young clients. At first, they are explicit in stating age as a predicting factor in how pleasant clients might be:

Patricia: There's definitely a difference between ages.

Courtney: It's mostly age but that doesn't necessarily mean profession.

Me: Right.

And then they continue, explaining what exactly they mean by the above statements:

Patricia: Um if you're thinking more oil workers are more violent, it could just be that more young guys...are working in the oil industry, they got that entitlement thing going on, and like I'm not saying that older men don't have entitlement but they've been doing this long enough to know how they, they get what they want and that's by being respectful and paying up front.

Me: Okay, why do you think that is? Why do you think it's young guys that just...?

Patricia: They think they are sexy and confident and deserve the world and shit.

Courtney: Yeah that's it, they assume that everyone we see is old and they're not so we should be like paying them almost, like they are doing us a favour.

Patricia: Yeah, I get so much of that.

Me: Really? That's awful.

Patricia: It's not like violence...but it's kind of like coercive, like 'oh but you should want to suck my dick', and it's like... 'oh I'm better at oral than those old guys' like 'aren't you happy to see someone young and sexy like me.'

Patricia and Courtney discuss how younger clients tend to act entitled as well as push boundaries with them. Donna and Tammy expressed similar feelings, discussing how a noticeable difference for them was age, and when combined with being an oil worker, that is when there were notable differences regarding their interactions with them. For example, Donna stated "like I said I don't see a huge difference between those and anybody else other than maybe the fact that more of them are young."

Being intoxicated also came up as a factor that determined whether or not a client was hard to deal with. Donna explained this best in the following quote:

Like I have older clients who aren't in the oil field but are difficult to deal with because they are drunk or whatever, you know, that's actually typical of older clients actually, they are drunk, drunks are difficult to deal with, like in any scenario you'd really just wish they would go home, like you don't want a drunk in a restaurant you know like go home and sleep it off right? So, you know this part is no different but I mean if we are looking at apple and apples and you are looking at an oil worker sober and a non-oil worker sober then you are going to have the same transaction you know so you know all we are really doing is adding more money which means we are adding perhaps drugs and perhaps more alcohol into the mix and then people get obnoxious.

Donna identifies intoxication as a factor that affects her interactions with clients, rather than occupation. However, she recognizes that a lot of oil workers have disposable income and this may lead to them spending money on drugs, alcohol, and sex. Therefore, to Donna, the fact that they are oil workers does not make a significant difference, but she implies that oil worker clients may be more likely to be intoxicated which is what affects client interactions.

Why Oil Workers Buy Sex through the eyes of Sex Workers

I also asked all of the sex workers I interviewed if they thought oil workers purchased sex for different reasons than non-oil workers. I saw a similar trend in answers when I asked the oil industry workers the same question. Answers from the women varied, but the consensus was that they do not believe oil industry workers purchase sex for different reasons than non-oil industry workers. For example, when I asked Julie if she believed oil workers buy sex for different reasons than non-oil workers, she said no:

Kassandra: So then do you think they buy sex for different reasons than non-oil workers?

Julie: No...

Kassandra: No? So, what are the reasons then?

Julie: Convenience, loneliness, ego, I don't know...

Julie believes that oil workers purchase sex for the same reasons men in other occupations purchase sex. This was the consensus among the other women as well.

Nevertheless, some of the women did recognize some minor differences in why oil workers purchase sex, such as their work schedules and the consequences of their work schedules. Courtney discussed this with me:

A lot of them, well you know, they work 3 weeks on, 1 week off, and they are stressed, like they aren't often home and so it's hard to keep a relationship, so they are like I'm gonna go back to where I live, blow off some steam, enjoy myself before I go back to work, and so like it's easy for them.

Courtney's response was similar to what I heard from the oil industry workers. Working away, difficulty building or maintaining relationships, and the ease of buying sex are reasons that oil industry workers may buy sex that differ from non-oil workers.

Most interestingly, the women I interviewed were aware of the hyper-masculine nature of the oil industry. A few of the women I spoke to discussed the socio-cultural factors I found to be cultivated in the oil industry work environment. As already briefly mentioned, although some of the women stated there were no differences in their interactions with oil industry worker clients, they did recognize that they may behave differently outside of their one-on-one interactions with the women. Patricia and Courtney explain this as being a part of 'toxic masculinity:'

(Context: we are talking about how some oil industry workers may talk negatively about women, but this does not affect interactions with Patricia or Courtney)

Patricia: Yeah that's that whole toxic masculinity...

Me: Right but if they see you guys they could be respectful?

Courtney: Yeah, it's like they are nice when they see us but then when they see their bros what they say about us is probably different.

Me: Right, yeah.

Courtney: I just compare all of it to like frats and other like...

Patricia: YES!

Courtney and Patricia discussed how oil industry workers were respectful to them but recognized this might differ when they are among themselves. There was recognition that there is a ‘toxic’ masculinity present and performed among oil industry workers. However, according to the women I interviewed, such masculinity does not *necessarily*²³ permeate into interactions with sex workers and/or women outside of the industry.

As this was not what I anticipated finding, I had to reflect on *why* and *what* these two perspectives from the oil industry workers and sex workers meant. I will discuss my theorization and marrying of the two groups' perspectives in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion & Conclusion

The goal of this research project was to answer the research questions: 1) How does the oil production culture contribute to oil industry workers purchasing sexual services? 2) What economic and social aspects of the oil production culture contribute to oil industry workers purchasing sexual services? 3) What can we learn about the sex trade and the oil industry when using a feminist lens? After conducting my research, I am able to offer some thoughts on answers to these research questions.

The research questions for this project presumed there was a connection between the oil industry and the sex trade. As discussed throughout this thesis, I was able to establish there is a connection between Alberta’s oil industry and the sex trade, one that goes beyond purely an economic relationship. The oil industry workers I interviewed confirmed a connection exists in that a lot of their coworkers purchased sex and described a culture that normalizes purchasing sex. Furthermore, the sex workers I interviewed explained the various ways their work is

²³ I say ‘necessarily’ because my findings are not generalizable. I can only speak for the six sex workers and five oil industry workers I interviewed. Also, the status of the sex workers (being high paid sex workers) I interviewed undoubtedly impacts the way clients treat them.

connected to Alberta's oil industry. Before the recession, oil industry workers made up a large amount of sex workers' clientele, and since the recession in Alberta, the number of their oil industry workers have significantly declined. The sex workers also informed me that since the recession where thousands of oil industry employees have lost their jobs, they have had to lower their prices, and some women in the sex industry have been forced out of their comfort zones into riskier and potentially dangerous behaviours to still make money.

Having the sex workers' perspective allowed me to further understand the oil industry's connection to the sex industry, as well as informed me of the context specificity of the treatment of women in the oil production culture. However, when I began this research project, I did not anticipate learning that such views and treatment of women within the oil industry did not affect interactions with indoor sex workers. I went into my interviews with the sex workers expecting to hear that oil industry worker clients were more difficult clients to deal with, perhaps even more violent, but that is not necessarily what I found. At first, I struggled with connecting my findings from the interviews with the oil workers and sex workers. The oil industry workers I interviewed were clear in talking about pervasive sexist attitudes and views of women, and the objectification/degradation of women in their work environment. But in processing how such views and attitudes do not affect interactions with sex workers, something Brett said to me came to mind. I asked Brett if he and his coworkers would talk to the women in their lives, or those outside of the industry in general, the same way they do to each other while at work. Brett promptly responded, "oh fuck no." Brett's response suggests then that the frontier mentality is context specific. Brett's response resonated with me as well because each oil worker I interviewed was likeable and respectful to speak to, therefore compelling me to ensure I am not painting the participants, or oil workers in general, as 'bad guys.' Consequently, in marrying the

results from my oil industry worker interviews and sex worker interviews, I conclude that the frontier mentality/masculinity found in the oil production culture is an expression of masculinity specific to the context of the oil industry. The masculine values of the industry, male domination of the workforce, and gendered nature of the work results in an ugly manifestation of masculinity. Although my main finding suggests the poor treatment of women within the oil production culture is context specific, I speculate it facilitates negative views of women within the oil industry, including the objectification of women and the normalization of purchasing sex, therefore, influencing the purchasing of sex by oil industry workers. I discuss the culture and its connection to the sex trade in relation to my research questions in the remainder of this chapter. My research has led me to conclude that my second research question needs to be addressed first, as I have found economic factors to be the largest contributing factor to oil workers purchasing sex.

Economic & Social Aspects of the Oil Production Culture Contributing to Oil Industry Workers Purchasing Sexual Services

Economic factors are arguably what contributes most to oil industry workers purchasing sexual services. All of the participants asserted the excess amounts of money most oil industry workers make is the biggest driving factor for why oil industry workers purchase sex. If oil industry workers' earnings were not as high as they are, I do not believe we would see as much 'risky behaviour' from oil industry workers (i.e. purchasing sex, heavy drinking, and illegal drug use). Money is what permitted the oil industry workers and/or their coworkers I interviewed to engage in such behaviours. Furthermore, the sex workers I interviewed acknowledged that their services are in many ways a privilege to be able to afford as they are high paid sex workers. Therefore, it was logical that when the industry was doing well, a large amount of their clients

were oil industry workers because they had the money to spend on sexual services. In contrast, during the recession, they saw a large decline in oil worker clients. This demonstrates the economic connection to the oil industry. As I suggested in my introduction and literature review of this thesis, it is evident the sex trade *booms* and *busts* with the oil industry.

The oil industry and sex trade's relationship was also illustrated by the fact that sex workers 'follow the money' by travelling to oil-rich regions across Alberta, tracking oil workers' pay days, and the recent recession meant the women, as well as their clients, pushed working boundaries. Boundaries were pushed by lowering prices, clients asking not to use condoms during sexual intercourse, and some of the women performing acts they normally would not because of their need for money (i.e. agreeing not to use condoms). These all illustrate that there is a strong economic connection between the oil industry and the sex trade.

It was also evident that, although money is one of the largest factors contributing to oil industry workers purchasing sex, the high incidences of oil workers purchasing sex is also influenced by social factors. Excess money, compounded by other factors like age, and the overall culture of the oil industry, are factors that contribute to oil industry workers purchasing sex as well. The majority of the oil industry worker participants were in their twenties, making my sample's average age quite young. In all of my interviews with oil workers and sex workers, the theme of age being a factor in oil workers buying sex and engaging in other risky behaviors was prominent. Although the oil workers and sex workers were explicit in stating that those of all ages purchase sex, both populations discussed how *young* men working in the oil industry tend to purchase sex more frequently. Therefore, being young while also making a lot of money seems to be the greatest influence on oil industry workers purchasing sex. Most of the participants rationalized that younger men were more likely to purchase sex because of fewer

financial responsibilities. When the factors of money, age, and the overall culture of the oil industry are combined, the high incidences of oil industry workers purchasing sex is better understood. Ultimately, I learned that money is the largest contributing factor to oil workers purchasing sex. Then, factors like age and the overall culture of the oil industry further influence oil industry workers purchasing sex.

The Oil Production Culture's Influence on Oil Industry Workers Purchasing Sexual Services

As discussed in my literature review, there is a body of literature that identifies the oil production culture as a distinctly masculine culture (Angell, 2015; Carrington et. al, 2010; Dorow, 2015; Filteau; 2014; Miller, 2004; O'Shaughnessy, 2011). In addition, there is literature that describes working in resource extraction industries as both physically and socially harsh, and as a means of coping with these harsh conditions, men engage in 'deviant' behaviours, rowdiness, and corrupt behaviours such as purchasing sex (Angell, 2014; Bradwin, 1928; Lucas, 2008). I sought to find out whether or not my participants would describe their experiences working in the oil industry as such, as well as their thoughts on the oil production culture. In asking such questions, my findings aligned with the literature. According to most of the participants, the oil production culture is distinct *and* distinctly masculine.

More specifically, researchers who have researched resource extraction industries have found frontier masculinity is the type of masculinity found in industries like the oil industry. Frontier masculinity is characterized by toughness, tenacity, personal isolation, emotional self-reliance, and savage ruthlessness (Angell, 2015; Miller, 2004; O'Shaughnessy, 2011). The presence of frontier masculinity within the oil industry affects men and women in the industry in various ways such as such as limiting their identities and negatively impacting men's well-being.

All of my participants acknowledged the oil production culture was primarily characterized by its male-domination, which meant masculine norms and values were idealized

in their work culture. Further, all of my participants expressed how the male domination of the oil industry fostered a hyper-masculine culture. Then, in the discussions with my participants about the conversations and treatment of women, it became increasingly evident that the masculinity that pervades all aspects of the oil industry affects the way people perform their gender identities, and leaves little room for identities that do not conform to the ideal hegemonic (frontier) male. According to the participants, women's identities are therefore limited within the oil production culture. Limited in that there is little room for women's identities at all in the oil industry, but also that women's identities are often reduced to their sexuality. The participants spoke about how they did not often work with women, and that women were undesirable to have around in the workplace unless they were fulfilling a sexual need. These findings confirm what other researchers have found when researching women working in Alberta's oil industry. O'Shaughnessy and Miller who researched female oil industry workers found the masculine oil culture reduced, limited, and excluded female identities (2004; 2011). More specifically, O'Shaughnessy describes how women's gendered identities in Fort McMurray are often reduced to being sexual temptations, and/or gold-diggers (2011). In my study, the oil industry workers described to me how women's identities in the context of the oil industry were reduced, limited, and excluded.

All of the oil industry worker participants openly discussed the negative discourses about women and how women's identities in the oil production culture were often reduced to sexual ones. If women did not fulfill such a role for them, they preferred women not to be around at all. That such sexism is present in the oil industry culture arguably creates a vicious circle where sexist views and discourses are continuously reproduced therefore reinforcing the sexist nature of the culture. This culture of sexism is compounded by the culture of racism, homophobia, and

general intolerance for difference. Again, this is linked to the need to uphold the typical hegemonic male within the culture. Those who do not meet the ideal standard are thus treated as inferior and systemically oppressed.

Additionally, some participants attributed the intolerance toward ‘others’ in this work culture to the male domination of the industry. Although the fact that the oil industry is male dominated does not *cause* or even explain why other bigoted beliefs may exist among the oil industry workers, it is nonetheless notable that the participants attributed male domination as playing a role in these beliefs. I understand this as having to do with frontier masculinity and upholding the frontier hegemonic male ideal within this industry. It is clear that while ‘fitting in’ in the oil industry means maintaining the heteronormative patriarchy and a frontier mentality, it does not mean that each person who works in the oil industry fits into these standards. Rather, those who are ‘different’ attempt to make their difference less obvious or adapt to the culture by, for example, not expressing their difference (such as not expressing a more liberal or leftist political opinion like some of my participants explained to me). *Adapting* though does not mean changing their opinions or beliefs. The fact that most of the participants were aware of sexist or racist tensions that existed in the oil production culture and were able to speak about them with me shows that they may not necessarily conform to such beliefs or behaviours. But unfortunately, by remaining silent, they play a role in maintaining such standards.

The oil production culture I learned about, then, encourages some oil workers in purchasing sexual services. The most important contributing factors are the high amounts of money most oil industry workers make, and the age factor in that young men with excess money working in the oil industry seem to be more likely to purchase sex. Then there are the larger socio-cultural factors associated with the oil production culture that I believe normalize

purchasing sex. The general ‘work hard, play hard lifestyle’ of the oil industry encourages risky behaviours as a means of coping with working in the oil industry, an industry that I learned is difficult to work in, both physically and socially. When this lifestyle and culture is compounded with young men, excess money, as well as broader negative views of women, the purchasing of sex is facilitated within the context of the oil industry.

What can we learn about the sex trade and the oil industry when using a feminist lens?

I consider this research project as having a feminist lens for several reasons. First, I identify as a feminist researcher. Secondly, my research was largely driven by a feminist and gendered theoretical framework. Gender identities, and the notion of ‘doing gender,’ are dominant themes throughout the entirety of my research project. By utilizing feminist work like Messerschmidt’s theorization on masculinity and risky behaviours, I can make sense of the theoretical underpinnings of my research study. I am able to go beyond presenting my findings as they are by utilizing a feminist lens in this research project. I understand the men I interviewed as describing the performance of gender and masculinity within their work environments. My findings, therefore, come to life when using Messerschmidt’s theorization on masculinity(ies) and risky behaviours.

Messerschmidt (1993) argues that, depending on the social context, there are patterned ways in which masculinity is represented and enacted, and dependent on the setting, differing conceptions of hegemonic masculinities are defined and sustained. Therefore, gender identity is embedded within certain social contexts and in practices where social relations are structured; thus, we ‘do’ gender (Messerschmidt, 1993). This also means different types of masculinities exist. He argues then, risky behaviours are one avenue to ‘do gender’ in a way that meets the desirable form of masculinity dependent on the social context.

Within the social context of the oil industry, the form of hegemonic masculinity present is frontier masculinity. My oil worker participants accurately described frontier masculinity's presence in their work environments. The social context of working in the oil industry in Alberta means there are patterned ways in which masculinity is represented and enacted, and as a result, individuals "do gender." My findings suggest that a means to "do gender" in the Albertan oil production culture is to express negative views of women, objectify women, as well as to adopt the 'work hard, play hard' lifestyle which includes heavy alcohol and/or drug use, and purchasing sexual services. Frontier masculinity, like all other masculinities, is performed and is something that needs to be accomplished. The participants informed me that this is accomplished in their work environment by engaging in negative conversations about women as well as in risky behaviours like purchasing sex.

However, as Messerschmidt (1993) asserts, masculinities are not created in a vacuum, meaning frontier masculinity has been shaped not just by what men do, but also by structures like the gendered division of labour, and sexuality. The influence of structures on the creation of masculinity facilitates the institutionalization of masculinity which allows men to draw on patterned masculine ways of thinking/behaving (Messerschmidt, 1993). Messerschmidt's conclusions about the institutionalization of masculinity explains the institutionalization of frontier masculinity within the oil production culture and helps to illustrate that the participants I spoke to and their coworkers have been drawing on patterned masculine ways of thinking/behaving. One of these patterns of behaviours oil workers draw on is purchasing sex, which also explains how purchasing sex became institutionalized in and of itself within the oil industry.

Broader structures are also contributors to the institutionalization of frontier masculinity and ways of thinking and behaving (i.e. purchasing sex). Frontier masculinity encourages more traditional ideals of masculinity, and the hyper-masculine nature of the oil industry means traditional notions of masculinity are strongly emphasized in the working culture of the Albertan oil industry. As discussed in chapter two, Messerschmidt identifies three social structures that affect gender relations: gendered division labour, gendered relations of power, and sexuality. According to my findings, all such structures affect gender relations in the oil industry. The fact that the oil industry remains a male-dominated field, and incomes for the field are so inflated, points to the gendered division of labour and the historical nature of this division. A lot of the oil worker participants implied this when telling me that their work is ‘manly,’ they rarely work with women, and many of their coworkers do not enjoy having women around unless they are fulfilling a sexual desire. The second structure Messerschmidt identifies is the gendered relations of power referring to how men control many of our society’s institutions and the fact that masculinity is often connected to power, authority, and control. Therefore, risky behaviours are a means to gain power and masculinity. Again, this applied to the findings in this project. The oil worker participants implied that by partying, and buying sex as a part of the ‘work hard, play hard lifestyle’ embraced by either themselves or their coworkers was often a means to accomplish masculinity, especially when in groups and when subject to peer pressure to conform to such activities. Further, Messerschmidt identifies the Western constructed norm of heterosexuality as another structure affecting gender relations. The norm of heterosexuality means masculinity is usually associated with heterosexuality, and with having an “insatiable appetite for women” (Messerschmidt, 1993, pg. 75). Therefore, normative heterosexuality shapes women as objects of heterosexual desire. It was evident heterosexuality was the normative

standard in the oil production culture, where I learned women were routinely objectified and treated as objects of sexual desire. Furthermore, the participants informed me of a culture that is homophobic, and Alex spoke specifically about how many men who had other sexual preferences could not openly express them. The oil production culture, and frontier masculinity, both idealized and encouraged normative heterosexuality.

Nonetheless, Messerschmidt (1993) also states that hegemonic masculinity does not reflect men's personalities, but rather is associated with context specific practices. Therefore, frontier masculinity shapes and limits the positions and identities of both men and women working in the oil industry. But, it does not reflect personalities of the men that I interviewed; rather the masculinity described to me by the participants is context specific.

The context specificity of negative attitudes and treatment of women in the oil industry also resembles what Michael Kimmel describes as 'guyland.' Guyland is a space where "the gains of feminism are put on hold, and hyper-masculinity is rampant" (Willey, 2015, par. 2; Kimmel, 2008). Guyland is primarily filled with younger men, in their twenties to thirties, and is a space where 'guys can be guys,' and are not hassled by demands of adulthood (i.e. girlfriends or wives, kids, etc.), as well as one where women are the objects of men's satisfaction and little else (Kimmel, 2008; Willey, 2015). Guyland is not a specific space, but a place, or a "bunch of places" that young men occupy; it represents the world many younger men live in (Kimmel, 2008, pg. 6). Kimmel's concept of 'guyland' has been used to understand behaviours or activities young men engage in where masculinity is unrestrained; for example, Robin Willey applies Kimmel's work to bachelor parties. Willey (2015) discusses how, during bachelor parties, he and his friends enter 'guyland,' which entails entering a misogynistic liminal space, and then once he and his friends leave, they go home to the women in their lives and treat them as persons of great

importance to them. This context specificity of a bachelor party experience that Willey describes is eerily similar to my learnings of the context specificity of the sexist and/or racist, homophobic, oil production culture. When several men, particularly young men, dominate spaces within the oil industry, masculinity which is already present in the values of the nature of work and in the industry as a whole (Miller, 2004), manifests itself in an ugly way; it becomes 'guyland.' In some instances, the oil workers I interviewed referred to men using their jobs as a means to get away from their home lives, or, when escaping the demands of their work, drinking heavily, doing illegal drugs, and perhaps purchasing sex. The oil industry and its culture have become its own version of 'guyland' then; a frontier Albertan version of 'guyland.' When the oil workers I spoke to leave work, they also leave 'guyland.' This helps to explain why the pervasive negative attitudes and treatment of women within the oil production industry do not, according to five out of the six sex workers, I spoke to, permeate into interactions with them.

Implications of Research

This project provides a better understanding of the Albertan oil industry, specifically from a sociological perspective. I gained insight into a topic of study that is under-researched and provides information about the Albertan oil industry, the young men who work in the industry, its culture, and lifestyle, and its connection to the sex trade. The thesis also provides insight into the perspective of indoor sex trade workers. This thesis offers contributions on three main topics: what it is like working in the oil industry; the lifestyle and culture of the oil industry; and the connection Alberta's oil industry has to indoor sex work. I learned about the masculinist oil culture and how it makes for a difficult working environment for all of the men I spoke to, particularly because many of my participants explained feeling uncomfortable when women were treated poorly at work or feeling pressured to 'adapt' to the masculinist oil production

culture. In spite of the participants being uncomfortable, they remain silent. Without someone standing up and stating their discomfort with sexist, racist, and/or homophobic conversations, or a total change in the values of the industry, the industry will remain the same. My hope is that eventually, the masculine values of the oil industry will change, to create a more inclusive environment for those of all genders. Perhaps this thesis by shedding light on the realities of the masculinist oil production culture can contribute to such a change, and those who feel uncomfortable with the sexist, racist, and/or homophobic tensions present in the culture may be more willing to speak up now knowing some of their coworkers feel uncomfortable as well.

Limitations

This project was exploratory, as there is not an abundance of literature on my topic of study. As an exploratory study, my project accomplished the goal of shedding light on a topic that has not been exclusively studied in a Canadian or sociological context. However, there were several limitations to this research project. This project was limited in time and scope. As a Master's thesis, I did not have the ability to explore my topic as thoroughly as I would have liked, meaning collecting more interviews and being able to travel to Fort McMurray for my research would have been desirable. Therefore, for any future research on this topic, I would recommend an ethnography in the Fort McMurray area on my topic of study. Ethnographies aim to understand cultures and groups of people in the context of their daily lives (O'Reilly, 2009). An ethnographic methodological approach would allow for a more in-depth understanding of the oil production culture as well as increases potential to build rapport with participants (O'Reilly, 2009). Further, having a bigger sample size, as well as additional perspectives would be helpful for informing my topic of study (i.e. employees who work for non-profit organizations that assist those involved in the sex trade, outdoor sex workers, and/or health care workers). I would also

recommend starting with broad sample criteria. Limiting the sample criteria, then having to change it several times, also slowed the recruitment process.

Furthermore, I would broaden my topic of study to delve deeper into the overall culture and lifestyle of the oil industry. Although there is potential to continue to study Alberta's oil industry connection to the sex trade, its connection to other risky behaviours in a broader sense would be a valuable direction for future research. Other scholars who have studied masculinity(ies) in resource extraction industries have asserted the need to further study the effects the hyper-masculine work culture has on those who work or live in the cultures (Angell, 2014; Filteau, 2014). There is also potential to explore my topic of study from an international perspective, as Thomas shed light on the international angle of my topic of study in discussing how his coworkers and himself purchased sex while working outside of Canada.

In addition, my research project does not explore the sex workers' perspective at great length, and this is another angle that could be pursued for future directions of research in sex work. Any future research though would need to acknowledge the complexity of sex work and this research topic. Although the masculinist oil production culture is harmful to those working in it, and I argue for a need to change the misogyny present in it, the implications this may have on sex workers' incomes and livelihood should be considered in any future research.

In addition to limitations in scope and time, my sample is limited in that my findings are not generalizable and my sample is potentially unrepresentative of oil industry workers *and* sex workers. All of my participants did refer, to an extent, about how they do not fit into the oil industry. My participants were speaking to the diversity that exists within the oil culture. Diversity within any culture is undeniable, and it is possible I only interviewed those belonging to a particular 'clique' (a risk any qualitative researcher using snowball sampling takes). The

possibility that I only interviewed those who do not fit in, then, is a limitation of my study. Nonetheless, all of my participants were able to speak to my topic of study, the hegemonic masculinity present in the oil culture, as well as the pressures to conform to such masculinity. Also, regardless of the diversity of the culture, the pressure to be the ‘ideal’ frontier male exists no matter what the clique.

In Conclusion

This research project sought to explore the connection between Alberta’s oil industry and the sex trade. The following research questions were asked and answered: 1) How does the oil production culture contribute to oil industry workers purchasing sexual services; 2) What economic and social aspects of the oil production culture contribute to oil industry workers purchasing sexual services; and 3) What can we learn about the sex trade and the oil industry when using a feminist lens? I used a qualitative exploratory methodology to explore answers to the research questions. In total, I conducted 11 semi-structured interviews, including five oil industry workers and six indoor sex workers. My major conclusions suggest that there is a strong economic connection between Alberta’s oil industry, and sex work, as well as that negative views of women, the objectification of women, and the normalization of purchasing sex, are all pervasive aspects of the oil production culture. However, the negative treatment of women within the oil industry seems to be context specific to the oil production culture insofar as I also found there are no significant differences in sex workers’ interactions with oil industry worker clients compared to non-oil industry worker clients. Regardless, the culture maintains standards that are harmful to women and men in the oil industry culture. Furthermore, even if the poor treatment of women within the oil production culture is context specific, the negative views and treatment of women limits and reduces women’s identities in the culture, maintaining the hyper-

masculine culture. This is double-edged in that it results in short term gains for the workers who uphold this hegemonic masculinity, but also results in a long-term failure to change the masculine values of the industry – even if these values are not harmful to indoor sex workers.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Consent Forms

Booms & Busts: The Sex Trade in Alberta's Oil Industry

Kassandra Landry, MA Thesis Student, University of Alberta

CONSENT FORM – Oil Industry Workers

This interview will contribute to a research project on the sex trade within Alberta's oil industry. The project is a part of my Master's Thesis and will fulfill the program requirements towards completion of my Master's Degree in Sociology at the University of Alberta. I hope that your participation in this research will contribute to understanding the oil production culture and its relationship with the sex trade. I also hope that you will gain some personal benefit from sharing your experiences and perspectives with me.

The interview will be conducted by me, Kassandra Landry. The interview will take approximately 1 hour, and will be scheduled for a time and place that is comfortable for you. I wish to audio record the interview, but will only do so with your permission.

All information from this interview will be kept confidential, and your anonymity will be protected to the best of my ability, by changing your name and other identifying information in all records and documents. If you wish, I will send a transcript of the interview for you to review.

Audio recordings and any written notes from this interview will be kept on a secure, encrypted computer, as well as, in a locked cabinet. Only I will have access to these files. All files will be destroyed five years after collection, electronic files and the audio recordings will be deleted and documents will be shredded.

If you do not feel comfortable responding to particular questions during the interview, please let me know. You have the right to stop the interview at any time as well as indicate any comments that you would like to be "off the record," meaning I will not include them in my final project. You also have the right to withdraw from the study any or all portions of your contributions to the research project. If you wish to withdraw any contributions, you must indicate this to me a month after the interview.

I will not reveal any information to police officers unless it is necessary in order to protect a child or an individual at risk of future harm. Therefore, if I believe you will harm yourself or others, I will be obligated to report information to authorities. In order to assure participating in this study will not put you at risk of criminal prosecution, you cannot inform me of any specific instances where you have paid for sex as well as any future plans to pay for sex. All discussions of engaging in sexual activity with a sex worker must be in general terms, where the exchange of money is not discussed. Also, I cannot be informed of any illegal activities where a child/minor was involved as well as if you plan to illegally profit from the sale of sex such as through pimping or trafficking. In general, this interview must consist of discussions of individual activities in the past with consenting adults in order to mitigate any risks of criminal prosecution.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by Research Ethics Board 1 at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

If you have questions or concerns about the interview or the research project as a whole, please ask me at the time of the interview, or contact myself, Kassandra Landry at (780) 965-3009 or at klandry1@ualberta.ca, or my supervisor Dr. Jana Grekul at jgrekul@ualberta.ca

Consent

By signing below, I am indicating that I have read and understood the above information, and that I consent to participate in this research project.

_____ Interviewee's Name	_____ Interviewee's Signature	_____ Date
-----------------------------	----------------------------------	---------------

Please initial below for any items to which you agree:

I give permission to be contacted for follow-up research _____

I give permission for this interview to be audio recorded _____

Allow me to review (read and/or edit) transcripts _____

Not necessary to review transcripts _____

Signature of Researcher _____

Date _____

Booms & Busts: The Sex Trade in Alberta's Oil Industry

Kassandra Landry, MA Thesis Student, University of Alberta

CONSENT FORM – Sexual Service Providers

This interview will contribute to a research project on the sex trade within Alberta's oil industry. The project is a part of my Master's Thesis and will fulfill the program requirements towards completion of my Master's Degree in Sociology at the University of Alberta. I hope that your participation in this research will contribute to understanding the oil production culture and its relationship with the sex trade. I also hope that you will gain some personal benefit from sharing your experiences and perspectives with me.

The interview will be conducted by me, Kassandra Landry. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour, and will be scheduled for a time and place that is comfortable for you. I wish to audio record the interview, but will only do so with your permission.

All information from this interview will be kept confidential, and your anonymity will be protected to the best of my ability, by changing your name and other identifying information in all records and documents. If you wish, I will send a transcript of the interview for you to review.

Audio recordings and any written notes from this interview will be kept on a secure, encrypted computer, as well as, in a locked cabinet. Only I will have access to these files. All files will be destroyed five years after collection, electronic files and the audio recordings will be deleted and documents will be shredded.

If you do not feel comfortable responding to particular questions during the interview, please let me know. You have the right to stop the interview at any time as well as indicate any comments that you would like to be "off the record," meaning I will not include them in my final project. You also have the right to withdraw from the study any or all portions of your contributions to the research project. If you wish to withdraw any contributions, you must indicate this to me a month after the interview.

I will not reveal any information to police officers unless it is necessary in order to protect a child or an individual at risk of future harm. In order to assure participating in this study will not put you at risk of criminal prosecution, I cannot be informed of any illegal activities where a child/minor was involved. Participants also cannot inform the researcher of any information regarding criminal activities that are unaccounted for by authorities. In general, this interview must consist of discussions of individual activities in the past with consenting adults in order to mitigate any risks of criminal prosecution.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by Research Ethics Board 1 at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

If you have questions or concerns about the interview or the research project as a whole, please ask me at the time of the interview, or contact myself, Kassandra Landry at (780) 965-3009 or at klandry1@ualberta.ca, or my supervisor Dr. Jana Grekul at jgrekul@ualberta.ca

Consent

By signing below, I am indicating that I have read and understood the above information, and that I consent to participate in this research project.

_____	_____	_____
Interviewee's Name	Interviewee's Signature	Date

Please initial below for any items to which you agree:

I give permission to be contacted for follow-up research _____

I give permission for this interview to be audio recorded _____

Allow me to review (read and/or edit) transcripts _____

Not necessary to review transcripts _____

Signature of Researcher _____

Date _____

Appendix B: Information Sheets

Information Sheet: Oil Industry Workers

Booms & Busts: The Sex Trade in Alberta's Oil Industry

Research Investigator:

Kassandra Landry, MA
Department of Sociology, University of Alberta
Edmonton,
klandry1@ualberta.ca
Phone: 780-965-3009

Supervisor:

Student Dr. Jana Grekul
Department of Sociology, University of Alberta
AB Edmonton, AB
jgrekul@ualberta.ca
Phone: 780-492-0477

Goals of the Research: Research in oil-rich economies and regions shows that the sex trade booms with the oil industry. However, the connection between these two industries has not been widely studied. I am interested in exploring the oil production culture and how this plays a role in oil industry workers purchasing sexual services. Therefore, to fulfill my program requirements towards completion of my Master's Degree in Sociology at the University of Alberta, I am conducting a research project on the relationship between the sex trade and oil industry. I am looking for participants who are able to inform me about this relationship and the oil production culture.

Procedure: I will use semi-structured interviews in this project. I aim to interview 10 participants who consist of non-executive oil industry workers who have had exposure to my topic (have purchased sex or have coworkers who do so). With permission of participants, I will audio record the interviews and may also take some notes. The audio recordings will be typed up afterwards and used in my final research report. Only I and my supervisor, Dr. Grekul, will have access to the interview transcripts. If audio recording is declined, I will just take notes during the interviews. Interviews should be anywhere from 30 to 60 minutes in length.

Confidentiality: No real names be used in any research documents or discussions; every participant will be assigned a fake name that will be used in all research documents and discussions as soon as the interview is over. Company names will not be used in the research project. Identities will be protected to the best of my ability. This means no identifying information will be in any of the research documents or communication. All documents, including interview transcripts, will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and/or on a password protected computer.

Risks/Benefits: I will ensure to the best of my ability that the participants are not at risk. Interviews will take place in a comfortable setting for the participant, and no one will be informed about your participation in my research project. Although there will be no payment for participation in this research project, participants will hopefully gain some personal benefit from sharing experiences and perspectives with me. I will not reveal any information to police officers unless it is necessary in order to protect a child or an individual at risk of future harm. Therefore, if I believe participants

will harm themselves or others, I will be obligated to report information to authorities. In order to assure participating in this study will not put my participants at risk of criminal prosecution, you cannot inform me of any specific instances where you have paid for sex, any future plans to pay for sex, any sexual activities involving children, any illegal activities where a child/minor was involved, or any plans to illegally profit from the sale of sex such as through pimping or trafficking. All discussions of engaging in sexual activity with a sex worker must be in general terms, where the exchange of money is not discussed. In general, this interview must consist of discussions of individual activities in the past with consenting adults in order to mitigate any risks of criminal prosecution. Participation in this study will assist me in understanding the relationship between the oil industry and the sex trade.

Rights to Withdraw: Participation is completely voluntary and participants will sign a consent form prior to participation. The consent form outlines the right to consent, to terminate, and to withdraw. Participants will have the right to stop the interview at any time, as well as indicate any comments that they would like to be “off the record,” meaning I will not include them in my final project. Participants will also have the right to withdraw from the study any or all portions of your contributions to the research project by a given timeline provided at the time the consent form is signed. The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by Research Ethics Board 1 at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

If you have questions or concerns about the interview or the research project, please ask me at the time of the interview, or contact myself, Kassandra Landry at (780) 965-3009 or at klandry1@ualberta.ca, or my supervisor Dr. Jana Grekul at jgrekul@ualberta.ca.

Information Sheet: Service Providers

Booms & Busts: The Sex Trade in Alberta's Oil Industry

Research Investigator:

Kassandra Landry, MA
 Department of Sociology, University of Alberta
 Edmonton,
 klandry1@ualberta.ca
 Phone

Supervisor:

Student Dr. Jana Grekul
 Department of Sociology, University of Alberta
 AB Edmonton, AB
 jgrekul@ualberta.ca
 Phone: 780-492-0477

Goals of the Research: Research in oil-rich economies and regions shows that the sex trade booms with the oil industry. However, the connection between these two industries has not been widely studied. I am interested in exploring the oil production culture and how this plays a role in oil industry workers purchasing sexual services. Therefore, to fulfill my program requirements towards completion of my Master's Degree in Sociology at the University of Alberta, I am conducting a research project on the relationship between the sex trade and oil industry. I am looking for participants who are able to inform me about this relationship and the oil production culture.

Procedure: As a part of my research project, I am looking to interview sex workers. I think sex workers have a valuable perspective on my topic. Also, I'd like to note that my research is not for abolishment purposes, I truly just want to hear sex workers' perspectives. With permission of participants, I will audio record the interviews and may also take some notes. The audio recordings will be typed up afterwards and used in my final research report. Only I and my supervisor, Dr. Grekul, will have access to the interview transcripts. Transcripts can be read and edited by participants if they wish, and copies of my final report will be available to my participants to read if they wish. If audio recording is declined, I will just take notes during the interviews. Interviews should be anywhere from 30 to 60 minutes in length. In-person or over the phone interviews are available. Participants may also read my final write-up if they wish.

Confidentiality: Participation will be anonymous. No real names be used in any research documents or discussions; every participant will be assigned a fake name that will be used in all research documents and discussions as soon as the interview is over. Identities will be protected to the best of my ability. This means no identifying information will be in any of the research documents or communication. All documents, including interview transcripts, will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and/or on a password protected computer.

Rights to Withdraw: Participation is completely voluntary and participants can provide written or verbal consent. Written consent forms outline the right to consent, to terminate, and to withdraw. Participants will have the right to stop the interview at any time, as well as indicate any comments that they would like to be "off the record," meaning I will not include them in my final project. Participants will also have the right to withdraw from the study any or all portions of your

contributions to the research project by a given timeline provided at the time the consent form is signed. The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by Research Ethics Board 1 at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

If you have questions or concerns about the interview or the research project, please ask me at the time of the interview, or contact myself, Kassandra Landry at (780) 965-3009 or at klandry1@ualberta.ca, or my supervisor Dr. Jana Grekul at jgrekul@ualberta.ca

Appendix C: Interview Guides

Interview Guide – Oil Industry Workers:

First: Consent Form

Then: Briefing – As you already know, this interview is going to help me complete my thesis project for my Master's degree. I'm interested in the culture of the oil industry in which you work in. I'm going to turn on the tape recorder now and just put it right here, if you get uncomfortable with it being on at any point, please let me know and I can turn it off!

The interview is going to go a little like this: I am going to begin by asking you a little about yourself, and then I am going to ask you about your occupation, the 'oil culture' which you work in, and your experiences with the sex trade.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Introduction:

- Alright, so I'm going to start by asking you to tell me a little about yourself
 - o Specifically, tell me about your occupation and how you ended up in it.
 - o How old are you?

(PROMPTS:

- How long have you worked for the organization you work for?
- What's a typical work day for you?
- Tell me why you are doing this line of work?
- Do you enjoy your job?
- What are some positives of your job?
- What are some negatives or challenges of your job?)

About the Job/'culture':

- What's it like working in the oil field?
 - o Is working on the oil field different than other work places?
- Have you worked in camp?
- What does it take to fit in? (qualities)
 - o Who doesn't fit in?
- Why do you think a lot of women don't work in the oil field?

Personal life:

- What do you do in your spare time outside of work? (on or off a job?)
- Are you in a relationship?
- What are the conversations like at work or with co-workers about women?
 - o (if yes to working in camp, are these conversations different in camp? What are the 'codes' in camp to get sex?)

- What do you know about the relationship between the sex trade and oil industry? (tell me what you know)
 - What are the conversations like at work or with co-workers about purchasing sex?
 - It's been found that a large amount of sex workers' clientele are oil industry workers, what do you think about that?
 - Why do you think that is?
 - Do you think the dropping oil prices has effected prostitution?

(PROMPTS:

- How acceptable is it to go out and party?
- How acceptable is it to pay for sex?
 - What's your opinion on prostitution?
- How acceptable is it to do drugs?)

Is there anything else that you'd like to talk to me about, or think I should know?

Do you have any suggestions for me to be able to talk to other guys?

Do you have any other questions or comments before we end?

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me and providing me with great insight

Interview Guide – Sexual Service Providers:

First: Consent Form

Then: Briefing – As you already know, this interview is going to help me complete my thesis project for my Master's degree. I'm interested in the culture of the oil industry and the sex trade. I'm going to turn on the tape recorder now and just put it right here, if you get uncomfortable with it being on at any point, please let me know and I can turn it off!

The interview is going to go a little like this: I'm mostly just going to ask you questions about your clients, this will be a brief interview and I will not be asking you any personal questions about yourself.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Introduction:

- Alright, so I'm going to start by asking you to tell me a little about yourself
- How long have you worked in the trade?
- What are some benefits and challenges of your work?

About the sex trade:

- Tell me generally about your clients
 - o Are most of them men?
 - o How many do you estimate work in the oil industry?
- It's been found that a large amount of sex workers' clientele are oil industry workers, what do you think about that?
 - o Why do you think that is?
 - o What is it about the oil industry that seems to affect oil workers purchasing sex?
- Are oil industry workers different than your other clients that aren't oil industry workers?
 - o In what ways?
- Since the oil prices have dropped, have the number of clients who are oil industry workers declined?

Is there anything else that you'd like to talk to me about, or think I should know?

Do you have any other questions or comments before we end?

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me and providing me with great insight

Online ‘Interview’ Guide/Internet ‘Survey’ for Sex Workers:

Hello,

I am posting these questions because I am graduate student at the University of Alberta, and I am in the process of doing my Master's thesis research. I was recommended to use this website as a means of getting some input about my research through someone I know who used to work in the industry.

My research is on the relationship between the sex trade and Alberta's oil industry, and as a part of it, I am looking to get sex workers input. I think sex workers have a valuable perspective on my topic and I want to help in any way as well as ensure that your voices are being heard. Also, I'd like to note that my research is not for abolishment purposes, I truly just want to hear sex workers' perspectives. I will not be using any names or identifying information in my final report - participation will be anonymous. **If you are interested, I would love to have your input on the questions below. If you wish to participate, you can electronically answer any or all of these questions, and privately email them to me at klandry1@ualberta.ca**, I am also open to any kind of input for me regarding my project at all, such as other means to contact people. By responding to my questions, you will be consenting to participate in my research project, please see below for important consent information. Thank you so much!

- If you wish, tell me about yourself (optional)
 - o How long have you worked in the trade?
- What would you like people to know about you and/or about your work?
- What are some benefits and challenges of your work?
- Tell me generally about your clients
 - o Are most of them men?
 - o How many do you estimate work in the oil industry?
- It's been found that a large amount of sex workers' clientele are oil industry workers, what do you think about that? Is this true?
 - o If this is true, why do you think that is?
 - o What is it about the oil industry that seems to affect oil workers purchasing sex?
- Are oil industry workers different than your other clients that aren't oil industry workers?
 - o In what ways?
- Since the oil prices have dropped, have the number of clients who are oil industry workers declined?

Is there anything else that you'd like to add?

Thank you for taking the time to respond to my questions and providing me with great insight.

Important Information & Consent Information:

The answer to these questions will contribute to a research project on the sex trade within Alberta's oil industry. The project is a part of my Master's Thesis and will fulfill the program requirements towards completion of my Master's Degree in Sociology at the University of Alberta. I hope that your participation in this research will contribute to understanding the oil production culture and its relationship with the sex trade. I also hope that you will gain some personal benefit from sharing your experiences and perspectives with me.

All information from the questions will be kept confidential, and your anonymity will be protected to the best of my ability, by changing your name and other identifying information in all records and documents.

Your responses will be kept on a secure, encrypted computer. I will destroy/delete your email addresses two months and all files, such as the email you send me with your response, will be destroyed/deleted five years after collection.

If you do not feel comfortable responding to any particular questions, you don't have to answer them, you can answer as many questions as you feel comfortable with. You have the right to indicate any comments that you would like to be "off the record," meaning I will not include them in my final project. You also have the right to withdraw from the study any or all portions of your contributions to the research project. If you wish to withdraw any contributions, you must indicate this to me a month after your response.

I will not reveal any information to police officers unless it is necessary in order to protect a child or an individual at risk of future harm. In order to assure participating in this study will not put you at risk of criminal prosecution, I cannot be informed of any illegal activities where a child/minor was involved. Participants also cannot inform the researcher of any information regarding criminal activities that are unaccounted for by authorities.

By responding to my questions, you are consenting to participate in my research project, and all of the above information.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by Research Ethics Board 1 at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

If you have questions or concerns about the interview or the research project as a whole, please feel free to ask me, Cassandra, at klandry1@ualberta.ca, or my supervisor Dr. Jana Grekul at jgrekul@ualberta.ca.

Appendix D: Coding Schemes

Sex Worker Interview Codes:

Name	Sources	References
Changed expectations from doing sex work	1	1
Characteristics of Clients	0	0
Age	2	2
Female	3	3
Male	4	4
Occupation	3	7
vulnerability	2	3
differences for oil workers	4	10
no differences	3	9
why the differences	4	9
Effects of recession	3	6
influence of industry on their work	3	6
Negatives of Sex Worker	4	12
New Laws	2	2
Nuances of the industry	4	19
Positives of Sex Work	4	9
Stigma of Sex Work	4	11
why oil workers	4	12
Why sex work	2	3
Working out of town	4	5

Oil Worker Interview Codes:

Name	Sources	References
Being young associated with spending money	1	1
Buying Sex Disruptive to Families	2	3
Buying sex as ruining relationships and families	2	3
Characteristics of Oil Culture	4	15
Hours different than other industries	2	2
experiences of coworkers buying sex	5	28
Lifestyle in Oil Industry	5	17
Expensive in Fort Mac	1	2
Negatives of Oil Industry	4	9
Long term plans	1	1
Masculinity of my participants	2	2
Partying as part of culture and lifestyle	4	7
disposable income - why they party	1	1
Reasons for oil workers buying sex	5	17
Money	3	4
Sex workers in camp	3	7
Views of Sex Workers	5	10
Addicted	1	2
Effects of Recession	5	6
Views of women	5	18
women as 'gold diggers'	1	1
women as manipulative	2	2
women as promiscuous	1	2
women in trades as non feminine	1	1
What it takes to Fit In	5	11
Working in Camp	1	1