The serial murder of sex workers: The social construction of serial killers by sex worker advocacy groups.

Heidi Rebecca Charlotte. Baker

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The Serial Murder of Sex Workers: 

The Social Construction of Serial Killers

by Sex Worker Advocacy Groups

by

Heidi Rebecca Charlotte Baker

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
through Sociology
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts at the University of Windsor

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2003

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Abstract

Historic, academic and popular discourses on the serial murder of prostitutes have failed to incorporate the voices of victimized sex workers and their advocates. To fill this void, this thesis investigates how the serial murder of prostitutes is socially constructed by sex worker advocacy groups. Using standard content analysis techniques, it analyzes on-line texts generated by sex worker advocacy groups that are seeking to raise awareness of the victimization of sex workers by serial murderers. It additionally analyzes on-line news media accounts of these advocacy efforts beyond the Internet. Drawing on theoretical traditions of social constructionism, feminism and the sociology of social problems, the thesis finds that the social problem of the serial murder of prostitutes is socially constructed by advocates as a result of societal negligence that is based on the patriarchal foundations. In the examination of the serial killer, it was found that, contrary to claims in the literature, the serial killer is not a product of a psychological disorder but rather of a patriarchal society. Examination of the prostitute revealed that although the prostitute is not constructed as a victim-precipitator of violence, as commonly held in the literature. It was found that societal neglect, on behalf of the police, judicial system, media and public community systems, is responsible for the continuation of violence against prostitutes. The texts revealed that the prostitute is neglected as a victim primarily due to her semi-legal, and “sub-human” status. In response to these constructions of prostitutes, advocacy groups attempt to reconstruct prostitutes as autonomous workers, as women, and as humans to promote their legal, victim and human rights. In conclusion, advocacy efforts have brought victimization of prostitutes to public attention and have been successful in promoting the prostitute as worthy victims. This thesis evidences sympathy from the public to the claims voiced by sex workers. Although these citizens represent the voice of
a small minority's public rhetoric, it evidences that the voices of sex workers has been
heard. Hence, future research is necessary to examine the role of advocacy groups and the
public in advancing the career of the social problem and policy responses.
Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my family and friends.

To my parents, Bob and Charlotte. All my life, you have inspired me to be the best I can be, yet you have always encouraged the person I am. You have strengthened confidence in myself. Although I have had doubts along the way, I have kept going along the path to my goals with your enthusiastic encouragement. I want you to know how much your love, support and encouragement means to me. Thank-you for giving me the opportunities in my life to find happiness and success. You have given me the chance to make my dreams come true.

To Himadri, my husband. Your passion and drive has inspired me to pursue my goals and transcend my borders of familiarity and safety to experience a new and wonderful world. I have enjoyed every moment of this adventure with you.

To Ryan and Dione. Though we are family, you have been the greatest friends to me. Thank-you for all of the good times and for being there the times when I needed a friend to lean on.

To Paige, Sebastien, and your new baby sibling. Your innocence has inspired me to help create a safe world in which you can grow free of harm and fear.

To my grandmothers, Lillian and Ruby. Thank-you for sharing your love, faith, wisdom and laughter.

Lastly, I dedicate this thesis to the memory of the women who have met with the ultimate darkness of violence. You will not be forgotten.
Acknowledgements

I would like to express thanks and appreciation to Dr. Ruth Mann for providing direction, insight, encouragement and support throughout the research process.

I would also like to thank Dr. Lippert and Dr. Virdi for participating on my thesis committee. Your contributions were significant and very much appreciated.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the authors of the texts included in this study. Their opinions, ideas and presentation of facts have contributed significantly to the research on the serial murder of prostitutes.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abstract</th>
<th>iii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Appendices</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER | PAGE

### I. INTRODUCTION

1

### II. THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

3

- Social Constructionism: 3
- Feminist Theory: 5
- Social Construction of Social Problems: 8
  - Blumer: Social Problems as Collective Behaviour: 9
  - Spector and Kitsuse: Constructing Social Problems: 10

### III. LITERATURE REVIEW

14

- Social Problem of Serial Murder: 14
- Victimization of Prostitutes: 21
  - Targeting of Prostitutes as Victims: 21
  - The Blaming of Prostitute Victims: 23
- Feminism and Serial Murder: 26
  - Patriarchal Foundations of Serial Murder: 26
  - Serial Murder – Sexual Terrorism: 29
- Sex Worker Advocacy Solutions: Policy Change: 30
  - Feminism and Action Agenda of Advocacy: 32
- Electronic Advocacy: 32
  - Women’s Organizations on the Internet: 34
  - Voices of the Marginalized in Cyberspace: 34
- Emotional Culture of Social Movements: 36
  - Emotional Culture of Women’s Organizations: 37

### IV. METHOD

40

- Content Analysis: 40
- Sampling – Rationale and Strategy: 42
- Unit of Analysis: 44
- Protocol: 45
- Data Collection: 48
- Data Analysis: 49
Subjective Dilemma of Content Analysis 50

V. FINDINGS 52

Foreword 52
Sex Worker Advocacy Texts 53
News Media Texts 57
Micro-Examination of Serial Murder of Prostitutes 63
Serial Killers: "The Psychopath" 63
Prostitutes: "Victim Precipitator" 64
Macro-Examination of Serial Murder of Prostitutes: Society 66
Police Negligence 67
Judicial Neglect 76
Public Negligence 77
Media Negligence 79
Of Consequence: Societal Neglect 81
The Sympathetic Victim: Good vs. Bad Girl 82
Serial Killers: "Patriarchal Zealot" 88
Sex Worker Advocacy 90
Sex Worker Right's Activist Groups 91
Victim Support Groups 93
Memorial Groups 94
Electronic Sex Worker Advocacy: Political Stance 95
The Victim Stance 101
Memorial Groups: the Human Stance 104
Summary and Conclusions 105

VI. CONCLUSION 106

Emergence of the Social Problem 106
Decriminalization of Prostitution 106
Legitimization 107
Mobilization of Action 108
Public Response to the Social Problem 110
Licensing and Legalization of Prostitution 112
Patriarchal Law 114
Proposals and Recommendations 115

BIBLIOGRAPHY 117

APPENDICES 126

VITA AUCTORIS 153

viii
## LIST OF APPENDICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPENDIX</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Protocol</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. List of Sex Worker Advocacy Groups and their Acronyms</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Listings of Website Homepage Addresses for Sex Worker Advocacy Texts</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Listings of Website Homepage Addresses for News Media Texts</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Photograph Images from Texts</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Themes: Findings Flowchart</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Bar graphs: Findings</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"The women I killed were filth-bastard prostitutes who were littering the streets. I was just cleaning up the place a bit" - Peter Sutcliffe, The Yorkshire Ripper (Schechter, 1997: 345).

"Some were prostitutes, but perhaps the saddest part of the case is that some were not." -Sir Michael Havers, Prosecutor on the Sutcliffe murder trial (Caputi, 1987: 125).

It is these voices - the voices of the serial killer and law officials - that are frequently quoted in the research on the serial murder of sex workers (Radford, 1992; McKaganey, 1996). Researchers have obtained a great understanding of serial murder by examining the perspectives of these two parties. However, research has yet to incorporate the voices of victimized sex workers and their advocates.

In order to fill this void, this thesis proposes to investigate "How the serial murder of prostitutes is socially constructed by sex worker advocacy groups." Sex worker advocacy groups provide a voice for women silenced by violence that delivers them to their death. To achieve the goal of bringing these voices into academic discourse, texts available on Commercial Sex Information Service (CSIS), and similar telecommunication sites, designed to generate dialogue and debate among sex worker advocates, members and sex workers will be analyzed. These Internet sites serve as a forum, creating an environment of interactivity allowing for the social construction of meaning. This qualitative analysis will explore the surface and implicit messages on serial murder and sex work that are conveyed by these texts.

The analysis is grounded in the theoretical traditions of social constructionism, feminism and social problems. The research methodology is qualitative content analysis, focused on the study of dialogue and texts. This methodology will be used to explore how
sex worker advocates construct the reality of serial murder. This methodology is consistent with social constructionist theory, and its fundamental assumption that knowledge is generated through social discourses. Feminist social theory, with its focus on male power over women, will be used to contextualize and socially situate the issues and perspectives advanced in how sex worker advocates construct the problem of serial murder. Moreover, social problems theory provides a model that outlines the phases and steps through which sex worker advocates must pass, in order to gain recognition of the serial murder of prostitute women as a significant social issue.

By exploring the various social constructions, as defined by sex worker advocates, it is my action agenda to inform the severity of the serial murder of prostitution, to gain acknowledgement, and perhaps arouse controversy, so that this problem reaches its “transformation point,” as coined by Spector and Kitsuse, so that it may be legitimized, and reach a resolution to prevent further loss of human life. May the lives of all women be sanctified by all of humanity.
CHAPTER II
THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

Social Constructionism

That the value of the world lies in our interpretation; that every elevation of man brings with it the overcoming of narrower interpretations; that every strengthening and increase of power opens up new perspectives and means believing in new horizons. The world with which we are concerned is false, it is not fact but fable, an approximation on the basis of a meager sum of observations; it is “in flux,” as something in a state of becoming, as a falsehood always changing but never getting near the truth. For there is no “truth” (Nietzsche, 1967/1901).

Nietzsche’s statement captures a “strict” constructionist orientation that rests on the premise that “in the realm of things social, there is no one reality, no inherent nature, no right or wrong, correct or incorrect answer to the question of reality or truth” (Maticka-Tyndale, 2001:1). The terms by which we understand our world and our self are neither required nor demanded by “what there is.” From this strict constructionist perspective, there is no “objective reality,” only multiple subjective realities (Best, 1989). There is no reality or truth outside of people’s understandings or interpretations. For any state of affairs, a multiplicity of descriptions and explanations are possible. In principle, not one of these descriptions or explanations can be ruled superior in terms of its capacity to map, picture, or capture the features of the “situation in question”. The strict constructionist is not, consequently, interested in assessing or judging the truth, accuracy, credibility or reasonableness of what actors say or do.

In contrast, “a contextual constructionist holds a more moderate position, which allows researchers to examine the plausibility and factual basis of the claims made in order to support varying perspectives on reality as actors understand it” (Jenkins, 1994: 225). As
Best (1989) argues, a social constructionist analysis need not and should not assume that there is no “objective” reality shaping human actions. It does, however, recognize that our knowledge of reality is never objective; it is mediated by language, discourses and the social contexts in which, and through which, these are produced, negotiated, fought over, and reproduced.

In both “strict” and “contextual” constructionist traditions, the study of dialogues, discourses and texts is extremely important. In both instances, it is predicated on the assumption that “the terms by which the world is understood are social artifacts, products of historically situated interchanges among people” (Gergen, 1999: 267). Knowledge is one of the many coordinated activities of individuals and as such is subjected to the same processes that characterize any human interaction. As Gergen (1999: 267) explains: “Accounts of the world take place within shared systems of intelligibility – usually a spoken or written language. These accounts are not viewed as the external expression of the speaker’s internal processes, such as cognition, intention, but as an expression of relationships among persons.”

The emphasis of social constructionism is on the collective generation of meaning as shaped by conventions of language and other social processes. Our modes of description, explanation and representation are derived from social practices, relationships and structures. Such considerations evoke reflexivity, the attempt to place one’s premises into question, to suspend the obvious, to listen to alternative framings of reality, and to grapple with the comparative outcomes of multiple standpoints.

As Michel Foucault (1978) states, “all talk is a text,” meaning that all talk promotes a preferred account of the world, one that necessarily disqualifies other accounts. For Foucault (1978), domination emerges when some truths become hegemonic within their social
domains. While Foucauldian conceptualizations of power politicize all talk, in these post-structural accounts, power does not operate in only a “top down” manner. Because power is located at the level of saying and knowing, it infuses all aspects of social life, and consequently emerges from “below,” through resistance as well as through domination or repression. Following Foucault, post-modernists and post-structuralists argue that if power “resides” anywhere, it is not only in the dominant discourses of the day; it is also in alternative and silenced or disqualified discourses (Smart, 1996; Comack, 1999). Power resides in the routine encounters between those who artfully represent and reproduce the era’s dominant discourses, and the responses of those who are marginalized or silenced by them.

**Feminist Theory**

Feminist social theory is concerned with understanding fundamental inequalities between women and men and with analyses of male power over women, and of women’s resistance. “The key concept in various feminist analyses of gender inequality and gender stratification is patriarchy – a hierarchical system in which men in society enjoy more social and economic privilege and power than do women, using their privileged and powerful positions to maintain dominance over women” (Radford, 1992:3). Knowledge as a means to know or as a means not to know is socially embedded, and it is invoked in the interrelationships created by men and women. Those mutually constituting relationships include power. Men and women produce and reproduce the institutions that distribute power, even as they produce and reproduce the institutions that distribute knowledge as a social resource (Foucault, 1978).

Feminist modes of theorizing have emerged that contest male-centred ways of knowing. These provide a “voice” for women who have been silenced by academia and...
other forms of knowledge production, providing perspectives from the “standpoint” of women’s lives. “Giving voice to women’s perspectives means identifying ways women create meaning and experience life from their particular position in the social hierarchy” (Jenness, 1993: 126). The epistemological basis for standpoint feminism is experience. Feminist experience is achieved through a struggle against oppression, and it is therefore argued to be more complete and less distorted than the perspective of the ruling group of men. “A feminist standpoint then is not just the experience of women, but of women reflexively engaged in a struggle by which a more accurate or fuller version of reality is achieved” (Comack, 1999: 295). A feminist standpoint involves the production of knowledge “about” and “for” women. In its efforts to establish this knowledge, feminist theory incorporates “contextual” constructionist insights in recognizing that, as moral actors, individuals take a stance, and participate in the construction of their world (Miller, 1993).

Standpoint feminism, however, had one major limitation — marginalized women were not given a “voice.” “Initially, standpoint feminism adopted an essentialist notion of ‘Woman’, neglecting to account for diversity and difference of women’s multiple realities and fractured identities (Comack, 1999: 290). Feminism continued to resist this realization by invoking notions of womanhood as a core essence to unite women. In criticizing this “essence,” women marginalized by the feminist unitary definition of ‘Woman’ instilled doubt in the assumption that women’s experience are monotonously similar, regardless of their endlessly varied cultural, spatial and historical specificity. “Post-modern feminist theory came to recognize the problems of a subject history, and replaced unitary notions of woman and feminine gender identity with plural and complexly constructed conceptions of social identity, treating gender as one relevant strand among others, attending to class, race ethnicity, age and sexual orientation” (Smart, 1996: 462).
In raising the issue of the ways knowledge and power emerge from the discursive practices of marginalized actors, Foucault provided one alternative for feminist thought to advance theorizing on efforts to achieve the political aim of empowering marginalized or silenced women to resist male violence and oppression. Because humans have historically lived in male-dominated societies, women have more often been the objects of knowledge rather than the producers of it. As a result, much of what has passed as knowledge of the world has been produced by men, and is framed by their particular location in society as men. As Carol Smart states (1996: 454), “feminism is now raising significant questions about the status and power of knowledge and formulating challenges to modes of totalizing or grand theorizing which impose a uniformity of perspective and ignore the immense diversity of subjectivities of men and women.” Moreover, feminist social construction involves challenging much of what has counted as knowledge (see also Miller, 1993).

Social constructionism has been important in feminist theory and methodology for denaturalizing social problems. “The feminist project is driven by critique and a desire to transform the social relations of power that construct and deconstruct the world and its inhabitants in particular ways” (Miller, 1993: 312). Giving notice to the non-natural, non-essential, and fundamentally social nature of arrangements, institutions and knowledge has allowed feminists to make visible how humans and things are engendered (Fenstermaker & West, 2002).

In postmodern and post-structural accounts, feminism participates in the deconstruction of truth and analysis of the power effects that claims to advance truths. This entails a shift away from treating knowledge as objective or, at least, the final standard, and hence, reveal the concealed truth (Comack, 1999). This variety of feminist analysis is
predicated on a recognition that knowledge is a part of power, and that power is both extraordinarily complex, and ubiquitous.

**Social Construction of Social Problems**

“Social problems lie in and are products of a process of collective definition” (Blumer, 1971: 301).

“We define social problems as the activities of groups making assertions of grievances and claims, with respect to some putative conditions” (Kitsuse and Spector, 1987: 415).

These statements by Herbert Blumer (1971) and John Kitsuse and Malcolm Spector (1973, 1975) laid the foundation for contemporary constructionism, leading to new, subjectivist definitions of social problems. They began by criticizing the standard definitions, which equated social problems with objective conditions:

> It is a gross mistake to assume that any kind of malignant or harmful social condition or arrangement in a society becomes automatically a social problem for that society. The pages of history are replete with instances of dire social conditions unnoticed and unattended in the societies in which they occurred (Blumer, 1971: 302).

These definitions radically shifted the focus of the sociology of social problems away from social conditions and onto the process of collective definition or claims-making.

> What makes a given condition a problem is the ‘collective definition’ of that condition as a problem, that is, the degree of felt concern over a given condition of issue. To the constructionist, social problems do not exist objectively; they are constructed by the human mind, called into being by the definitional process (Goode, 1994: 150).

Both Blumer and Kitsuse and Spector outlined agendas for further constructionist research.
The societal definition determines whether the condition exists as a social problem. The societal definition gives the social problem its nature, lays out how it is to be approached, and shapes what is done about it. “The process of collective definition determines the career and the fate of social problems from the initial point of its appearance to whatever may be the terminal point in its course” (Blumer, 1971: 299).

As outlined by Blumer (1971) the career of the social problem passes through five stages. Stage One is ‘emergence’: the social problem emerges as a result of a process of definition in which a given condition is picked out and identified as a social problem. Stage Two is ‘legitimation’: the social problem must acquire social endorsement and a degree of respectability, entitling it to consideration in the recognized areas of public discussion. Stage Three is ‘mobilization of action’: the problem now becomes the object of discussion, controversy, of differing depictions and diverse claims. Stage Four involves ‘formation of an official plan of action’: the official plan that is enacted constitutes, in itself, the official definition of the problem; it represents how the society through its official apparatus perceives the problem and intends to act toward the problem. The last stage concludes with the ‘implementation of the official plan.’

This constructionist understanding of social problems as definitional processes focuses on claims-making activities in particular. Jenness (1993: 7) defines claims-making as the “activities of individuals or groups making grievances and claims with respect to some putative conditions.” As such, claims-making activities are primary mechanisms through which social movements are incited, the moral order is negotiated, and social problems are constructed.
Spector and Kitsuse: Constructing Social Problems

Spector and Kitsuse's natural history model incorporates some key elements of Blumer's formulation, though exceeding it in several respects. However, Spector and Kitsuse differ from the natural history formulation of Blumer with respect to the fate of social problems after some official or governmental response has occurred. Blumer posited the official response or implementation of policy as the final stage of the problem. This left the resolution of social problems suspended or unexamined. Blumer did not describe what happened after legislation has been passed, agencies established, and programs implemented. When does this social problem cease to exist?

Spector and Kitsuse endeavour to attempt to deal with this question. Spector and Kitsuse's natural history model consists of four-stages, with Stage 2 corresponding to the end of the Blumer model. "Stage 3 and 4 present a way of thinking about what happens to a social problem once policy has been determined and implemented. Stages 3 and 4 represent a kind of "second generation" social problem in which the solutions to previous problems become the basis for renewed claims and demands" (Spector & Kitsuse, 1987: 142).

As outlined in Constructing Social Problems (1987) the natural history of the social problem activity proceeds through four stages. In Stage One, "group(s) attempt to assert the existence of some condition, define it as offensive, harmful, or otherwise undesirable, publicize these assertions, stimulate controversy, and create a public or political issue over the matter" (Spector & Kitsuse, 1987: 142). According to the model, social problems activity commences with collective attempts to remedy a condition that some group perceives and judges offensive and undesirable. Initial social problems activities often consist of attempts to transform private troubles into public issues. Stage 1
is focussed on the contingencies of this transformation process. The most critical aspects of this formative stage of social problems are the ways that complaints are raised and the strategies used to press claims, gain publicity, and arouse controversy.

Stage Two is defined by the “recognition of the legitimacy of these group(s) by some official organization agency, or institution” (Spector & Kitsuse, 1987: 142.). This may lead to an official investigation, proposals for reform, and the establishment of an agency to respond to those claims and demands. Spector and Kitsuse (1987) characterize Stage Two as “a point of transformation”:

When governmental agencies or other official and influential institutions to which claims might be put respond to the complaints of some group, the social problems activity undergoes a considerable transformation. This transformation begins when the agencies start to recognize a group and respond to its complaints. With recognition of its claim, the group may be asked to participate in official proceedings on the problem. At this point it finds that it is no longer just a protest group, but the bonafide spokesperson for a constituency that may be much broader than the original group (Spector & Kitsuse, 1987: 148).

Stage two is complete when complaints about some condition have become domesticated and routinized by some agency that develops a vested interest in doing something about the complaints, though not necessarily in dealing with the conditions to which the complaint refers.

In Stage Three, “the claims and demands of the original group(s), or by others, re-emerges, expressing dissatisfaction with the established procedures for dealing with the imputed conditions, the bureaucratic handling of complaints, the failure to generate a condition of trust and confidence in the procedures and the lack of sympathy for the complaints” (Spector & Kitsuse, 1987: 142).

Spector and Kitsuse (1987) contend that established procedures may be conceived or inappropriate to the claims and demands they were designed to handle; the procedures
may focus on remedies for the imputed condition, but fail to satisfy the demands of group members as complainants. Whereas, at the other extreme, “the established procedures may, in fact, turn out to be a public relations solution in which the imputed conditions are ignored on the view that the social problems activities can be “cooled out” by establishing a committee, creating a liaison position for “increasing communication,” and programming regular meetings to “decide issues” that are never resolved” (Spector & Kitsuse, 1987: 151). As a consequence, assertions about the inadequacy, inefficacy, or injustice of the procedures may themselves become the conditions around which new social problems activities are organized. The outcome of stage 3 social problems activity may be a renegotiation of procedures, reform of existing practices, dismissal of a high-level administrator, and possibly the establishment of a new, more specialized agency. If this lack of confidence in institutional processes is an historical trend, Stage 3 problems may increasingly move into Stage 4 activities.

Lastly, Stage Four entails the “rejection of complainant group(s) of the agency’s or institution’s response, or lack of response to their claims and demands, and the development of activities to create alternative, parallel, or counter-institutions as responses to the established procedures” (Spector & Kitsuse, 1987: 142).

A new stage in the development of social problems occurs when groups base their activities on the contention that it is no longer possible to “work within the system.” Their focus shifts from complaints and protests against the establishment procedures to creating and developing alternative solutions for their perceived problems. Such attempts concentrate on a local community and its problems – activities that occur in every area of social life. These activities are organized by claims that challenge the legitimacy of established institutions and their procedures for processing claims (Spector & Kitsuse, 1987: 153).

*Constructing Social Problems* outlines the two directions in which social problems in Stage 4 develop: (1) the creation of alternative institutions as a means of developing a
social and political base for radically changing procedures. This is characterized as value-oriented. The alternative institutions created by value-oriented social problems seek to establish those institutions, not only for their members, but also for the society at large; or (2) disaffiliation and withdrawal from the institutional system to create alternative institutions as limited solutions for group members. This is characterized as interest-oriented, its primary concern being to create a viable solution for the members of the group, requiring only a negative relation to the established system, that is, to be allowed to pursue, without hassle or harassment, their own solution.

Spector and Kitsuse (1987) assert that the two types of orientation to Stage 4 activities are diametrically opposed with reference to relations with the established system. Insofar as both of them achieve their goals, they have markedly different consequences for that system. A successful value-oriented group would establish its program as the institutional form, and thus radically transform the existing system. In contrast, a successful interest-oriented group would remain apart, always vulnerable to the possibility of the revocation of tolerance or indifference on the part of the established system that is a condition of maintaining the alternative.

Spector and Kitsuse characterize their approach as "'grass-roots' view of social problems in which popular movements, as well as interest groups, agitate to bring social conditions to official agencies for change or amelioration' (1987: 155). Official governmental response to such activities has been conceived as the major criterion of their effect and success so that social problems are commonly viewed as those conditions that are recognized and included as a formal part of the society's institutional agenda.
CHAPTER III

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Social Problem of Serial Murder

In Serial Killers (1998) Seltzer’s work on the phenomenon of multiple murder establishes the technical definition of the serial killer as a kind of person, becoming available in the mid-1970s, with what FBI agent Robert Ressler called a “naming event”: the coining of the term serial killer. Seltzer describes the naming event as “more complex than a simple nominalism; it is not that the concept or category is simply ‘made up’, but that the make-up of such concepts has its own internal ‘torque’” (Seltzer, 1998: 108). It involves the positing of a category or type of person as a sort of point of attraction around which a range of acts, effects, fantasies and representations then begin to orbit.

Seltzer elaborates how large quantities of information about the serial killer have accumulated since the mid-1970s, in the form of criminological and psychological investigations; feminist, gender and cultural studies; journalistic, fictional and cinematic representations. A good deal of this material, professional and popular, rehearses a body of confident, if uncertainly reliable, general knowledge about serial murder.

As the works on serial murders and serial killers demonstrate, the problem is constructed in objective terms, masking the social interests behind the various claims. Even when a “naming event” (Seltzer, 1998) is identified by social agents, such as the FBI, the background assumption is that serial murder is an objective problem wanting to be named. Alternatively, many academics tend to assume that the objective problem lies at a deeper level.
As the review that follows demonstrates, the literature tends to construct the problem of serial murder in “objective” terms, advancing claims on its nature and extent, while ignoring or downplaying social interests. Logically, serial murderers could include any offenders, male or female, who kill multiple victims over time. As O’Reilly-Fleming (1996) and others have noted, it is possible to discern a pattern in the killings that may be associated with types of victims selected, and methods or motives of the killings. This generic category logically includes murderers who, on repeated basis, kill within the confines of their own home, for example, a woman who kills a series of husbands for their life insurance, as well as those who operate within the confines of a city or state or even travel through several states or nations as they seek out victims not previously known to them (O’Reilly-Fleming, 1996: 17).

In Serial and Mass Murder (1996), O’Reilly-Fleming provides a classification of serial murderers first devised by Holmes and DeBurger (1988). The schema outlines four categories of serial killers, based upon crime scene characteristics, motivations and psychological assessments.

1. “The visionay serial killers, a class of killers who suffer from delusions or hallucinations that instruct them to kill certain types of persons” (O’Reilly-Fleming, 1996:19). These killers may believe, for example, that murdering certain types of persons may gain them a special place in heaven. 2. “The mission-oriented serial killers, exhibit the belief that certain kinds of people deserve to die in order to “cleanse society” and may believe that it is necessary “to teach them a lesson (O’Reilly-Fleming, 1996:19). A hallmark of this type of killer is the tendency to target a particular category of persons for extinction,
for example, prostitutes.\(^1\) According to Caputi (1987), the mission-oriented serial murderer
should not be construed as a wild-eyed psychotic. "Such a killer is very much aware of
his actions and of the hazards related to the self-imposed duty of ridding the world of an
unworthy group. But the killer nonetheless forges ahead on the mission" (Caputi, 1987:
74). Such killers live in the real world and interact with it on a daily basis and usually do
so successfully. The selected victim group needs to meet only the definition of
"unworthy" to qualify as targets of the mission.

(3) The *hedonistic serial killer*, a category that includes two distinct sub-types: a)
lust-murderers who have fused sexuality and violence at some earlier stage in their
psychological development and so associate the sexual with both the suffering of the victim
and the actual act of murder b) thrill-oriented killers whose murders are directed by a
longing for excitement induced by the act of homicide – both of these forms of serial
homicide may involve elements of necrophilia, sexual assault and sadism (O’Reilly-
Fleming, 1996:20). (4) "The *power/control serial killer* seeks to literally "play God" with
their victims"(O’Reilly-Fleming, 1996: 20). As described in the literature, they may bring
their victims to the point of death through strangulation, only to revive them so they can beg
for their lives, and be "killed" once again.

This typology assumes an objective stance that is empirically accessible with its
contexts and motives knowable. However, typologies are constructed by academics,
intending to provide an inclusive set of categories for describing a particular behaviour or
phenomenon and in the case of Holmes and DeBurger, dominant motives in serial murder.

\(^{1}\) Peter Sutcliffe believed he was doing the Lord’s work in ridding the world of such women. Dr. Teet
Haerm of Sweden also believed he was engaged in a righteous cause. During the 1980s, he killed
dismembered, and occasionally cannibalized a string of Stockholm prostitutes in order - so he claimed - to
clean the streets of sin (Schechter,1997:236)
This typology model was classified under three conditions: (1) Behavioural background of the perpetrator: academics investigate the basic roots or sources of the behaviour, what motives impel it, and what the goals are in the violent behaviour pattern; (2) Victims; (3) Methods, such as strangulation, stabbing, shooting.

Similar to O'Reilly-Fleming (1996), in his work, Serial Murder Egger (1990) argues that, what he calls stranger, motiveless murders, are a problem "out there" that began occurring in the mid-sixties, when the "Son of Sam" killer, David Berkowitz stalked victims in New York and gunned them down with a .44 pistol, without apparent motive. Egger argues that since that time there has been considerable upswing in these types of murders, and that in the past decade, the rate has climbed to an almost "epidemic proportion" (Egger, 1990: 10). As he notes, the U.S. Justice Department hesitates to refer to serial murder as an "epidemic", while acknowledging the volume of cases of serial murder has brought attention to the phenomenon. Egger quotes the FBI director of the National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime, Roger Depue: "It isn’t just a matter of being more aware of serial murders. The actual number seems to be increasing" (Egger, 1990:12). However, according to Statistics Canada, in 2002, the murder rate in Canada continues to generally decrease since its peak in 1976 (http://www.statcan.ca/start.html).

In To Kill Again, U.S. author, Donald Sears (1991) presents a statistical foundation that portrays serial murder as on the rise, as “a nationwide problem that is of alarming proportions” (Sears, 1991:5). He asserts researchers estimate that since 1980, murders with unknown motives have increased by 270 percent, and that official crime statistics confirm this. In 1988, for example, he maintains as many as 4,589 murders were committed in the United States by someone with unclear or unknown motives. Five years earlier, in 1983, during U.S Senate subcommittee hearings held on serial murder, it was found that from
10,000 to 12,000 people per year are murdered by strangers, and that as many as 5,000 of these are victims of serial killers. Sears further states that law enforcement officials estimate that there are anywhere from 35 to 500 serial murderers at large in the United States, and it is believed that of all homicides between 1983 and his writing, one in four has been committed by a serial murderer. Moreover, as is common in social problem arenas, he asserts that it is feared that, even with our present knowledge of these individuals, society is still defenseless against these intelligent, dedicated criminals (Sears, 1991:5).

Hickey's work, Serial Murderers and Their Victims (1991), names many of the killers and indicates the kind of killers and the number of victims in each case over a 200 year period in the U.S. between 1795 and 1988. Hickey identifies the victims of thirty-four female and one hundred and sixty-nine male serial killers in the United States. These 203 individuals are responsible, he asserts, for a minimum of fourteen hundred and eighty-three homicides and a maximum of two thousand, one hundred and sixty-one homicides (Hickey, 1991:9).

Social statistics describe society, but they are also products of our social arrangements. It is necessary to note that official statistics are the products of organizational practices, and should be interpreted with caution. The statistics cited above reflect a combination of organizational practices and the social world. "Academics and researchers who bring attention to social statistics have reasons for doing so; they inevitably have their own goal" (Best, 2001:18). Statistics are tools, used for particular purposes. In virtually every case, promoters use statistics as ammunition; they choose numbers that will draw attention to or away from a problem, arouse or defuse public concern. People use statistics to support their point of view, to bring others around to their way of thinking. There is an
old expression that captures this tendency: “Figures may not lie, but liars figure” (Best, 2001: 18).

Sears, Hickey and Egger are among those who assert that most people envision that serial killers are hopelessly insane, or that they appear outwardly evil, and therefore, are readily detectable. However, they argue that this is not the case. According to Sears (1991):

The most frightening characteristic of the serial killer is that he usually presents to the public an image of the all-American boy, the nice man next door, or the shy quiet neighbour down the street. Often very intelligent, he may appear as a successful, well-respected model citizen in his community; he is the last person anyone would suspect of committing a horrible crime (Sears, 1991: 5).

Canadian serial killers, Paul Bernardo and Karla Homolka fit this “all-American” description well. “Karla and Paul were known as Barbie and Ken by friendly neighbours, but beneath the doll-like smiles lay a pair of sadistic butchers accused of 43 sex attacks and a string of sadistic killings” (http://www.loveanddates.com/paul_bernardo_and_karla_homolka.htm).

There is a tendency in contemporary cultural studies from the margins and from below, to understand serial killers – from Jack the Ripper to Ted Bundy – as condensed symptoms of the social: as microcosmic histories either of social control or, conversely, of social breakdown; as maladies of sociality or pathologies of the soul; as types of the “over-socialized” individual (the mass in person) or the “asocial” psycho (the drive in person (Seltzer, 1998: 126).

Such an approach in effect constructs the subject as a reflex or cliche of his or her culture.

Philip Jenkins’ Using Murder (1994) is an example of a social constructionist analysis of serial murder that places the issue of serial homicide in a political context. Jenkins shows how the issue was appropriated by specific political, cultural and bureaucratic groups, and manipulated to enhance their interests. Interpretations of the serial murder
phenomenon naturally reflected prevailing social and political currents, which in the United States at that time tended to be strongly conservative:

The election of Ronald Reagan to the presidency in 1980 marked the apogee of a New Right movement whose rhetoric and politics profoundly influenced social reactions to crime and violence. The growing public interest in serial murder following the 1970s thus coincided exactly with a strong political trend toward a re-evaluation of the etiology of social problems, a general tendency toward viewing wrong-doing and deviancy as issues of personal sin and evil rather than social or economic dysfunction (Jenkins, 1994:5).2

Jenkins' work demonstrates how some groups, by virtue of their superior power, finances, status, organization, technology or access to the mass media, have greater control over information and resources to make their constructions appear legitimate, to make their version of reality adhere. These powerful political or bureaucratic groups stand in stark contrast to advocacy groups, for example, that are lacking in status, power and access to resources.

From the late 1970s, when the "problem" of serial murder first emerged as a social issue, many activists and groups attempted to interpret the accumulating evidence of increased serial murder activity in order to construct the problem in a manner advantageous to their particular interests or ideological stance. As Jenkins states: "Each claims-maker normally suggested that the typical serial killer represented a particular type of individual, acting with a distinctive motivation, and would choose exemplars accordingly" (1994:10). Feminist theoreticians, for example, placed the greatest emphasis on the male sex-killer, to the exclusion of virtually any other type.

2 For conservatives of the Reagan era, the central issue in morality was a renewed emphasis on the responsibility of the individual, and a denial of the effectiveness or validity of solutions that emphasized the
Victimization of Prostitutes

In *Making Work, Making Trouble* (1998), Brock provides a statistical background that exemplifies the extent of the murder of prostitute women in Canada, as constructed through the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. Between 1991 and 1995, sixty-three prostitutes were murdered in Canada, with approximately half of the solved murders attributed to customers (Brock, 1998:139). This figure represents 5 per cent of the women killed in Canada over the same period. John Lowman found that at least forty-eight prostitutes were killed in the province of British Columbia between 1988 and 1996 and that 77 per cent of Vancouver prostitutes had at least one violent customer every month (cited in Brock, 1998). Unless British Columbia is a proportionally much more dangerous place for prostitutes to work, Lowman’s research suggests that the murder of prostitutes for Canada as a whole is underreported. The rate of violent crime is indeed high in the province of B.C.3

The Targeting of Prostitutes as Victims

Serial Murderers and their Victims, (1991) introduces the topic of prostitutes as victims of serial killers in examining profiles of the typical serial killer from accumulating statistics on offenders and victims. Hickey (1991) describes the most stereotypical of all serial murderers to be involved sexually in some way with their victims. By making themselves available to anyone on the street, prostitutes expose themselves to grave consequences and more opportunity to be victimized. Due to the accessibility required by their trade, prostitutes are

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3 There were 85 people slain in the province of British Colombia in 2001, the same number as in 2000. The average for the period from 1991 to 2000 was 113. B.C.’s homicide rate was the lowest in western Canada, but still well above the national average of 1.78. Atlantic Canada continued to experience the lowest incidence of murder in the country ([www.statcan.ca/start.html](http://www.statcan.ca/start.html)).
eminently vulnerable, explaining their extremely high rate of victimization by serial killers (Hickey, 1991:157). A serial killer can cruise a red-light district, shopping around for the woman who best conforms to his deadly sexual fantasies. When he finds her, the prostitute willingly complies with his wishes until it is too late.

In his chapter on "Suggestions for Preventing Serial Murder," Sears (1991) elaborates on the vulnerability of prostitutes, clarifying that their vulnerability rests not only in their accessibility. As runaways or drifters, there is lack of concern or notice, when prostitutes disappear. In this discussion, Sears refers to a specific category of prostitutes as those who work the streets.

Serial killers, when trolling for prostitutes along a red-light strip, can be reasonably assured that because of their typically transient lifestyle, the disappearance of his victim will not be immediately deemed foul play (Sears, 1991:153).

Moreover, as Sears and others note, society devalues women who sell their bodies, especially those who are poor, and in B.C. and other Canadian provinces, commonly also of Aboriginal background. The capture of the killer, therefore, often takes low priority, and the killer knows it. Hence, the serial killer can hunt the prostitute with relative impunity. Far too often, the murders go unsolved, even unacknowledged.

"Ambivalence is core to violence against women in general, but 'prostitutes are subject to it in the extreme'" (Kuo, 2002: 102). Kuo, in her work, Prostitution Policy, foresees the consequence of societal neglect of prostitute victims. While prostitutes are more likely to be victimized by physical and sexual violence, however, they are likely to receive the least institutional support when they are victimized. Community stigmatization of prostitutes facilitates their exploitation. "Lack of community response to known instances of the abuse of prostitutes, including the murder of prostitutes - the
lack of outcry and concern when such instances are reported in the media – encourages those who would abuse and exploit women to seek out prostitutes for victimization and exploitation. They are acceptable targets” (Kuo, 2002: 76).

Prostitutes are also made vulnerable to attack by aggressive police tactics, such as “street-sweeping” which forces prostitute women to retreat into isolated and dangerous areas. According to Cohen (1980) in his chapter on the police in Deviant Street Networks, the main tactic or pattern usually followed by the police, regardless of the neighbourhood, is to disperse prostitutes. Police “sweep” prostitutes off the street by placing them under arrest. “This tactic usually occurs during a crackdown when either an important dignitary or group is visiting the city or after a particularly well-publicized violent act, especially related to prostitution” (Cohen, 1980: 72). Most prostitutes avoid the location during these special tours. Usually as the police pass a given location the prostitutes flee or attempt to hide. Cohen (1980) argues that prostitutes engage in a game of hide and seek with police in which they appear to display deference and respect. “Abandoning a location momentarily while police passed was a way prostitutes showed that the police really control the streets” (Cohen, 1980:73).

*The Blaming of Prostitute Victims*

That the prevailing conceptual construct of the prostitute promotes her as “an acceptable target” for violence, is supported by Radford and her assertion that the killing of prostitutes is often treated as a classically victim-precipitated crime, as evidenced in the following quote:

The police chief in charge of the case, Charles Warren, told the press in October 1888, “The police can do nothing as long as the victims unwittingly connive at their own destruction. They take the murderer to
some retired spot, and place themselves in a position that they can be slaughtered without a sound being heard” (Radford, 1992: 185).

McKaganey’s *Sex Work on the Street* (1996) provides another construction on the occurrence of violence against prostitutes. He defines these incidents as part of the way in which women in this society, at least, are defined apropos of men (McKeganey, 1996:79). A woman who prostitutes violates norms of how women ought to act and calls forth her own violation. In the first place she is overtly selling sex, dressing for sex, making herself available for sex. Prostitutes serve as models of female promiscuity. As sexual solicitors, they are assumed to invite violence.

Caputi (1987), in her work, *The Age of Sex Crime*, elaborates on the concept of female norms of sexuality, to include the traditional “virgin/whore” dichotomy that Caputi argues, operates as a means of policing women’s sexuality. The control of these categories resides with the male arbiter or labeler. The importance of male expectations as to how women ought to act is further underlined by the narrowness of those expectations. Citing an example of the judicial system in the United States, Caputi identifies such attitudes to be a common prejudice motivating judges and juries to side with the accused in murder cases, disbelieving the victim if she can in any way be construed as a “bad woman.” “That this model of thinking is widespread in society is evidenced by the fact that by stepping outside the normal parameters of male control, prostitutes are frequently denied the kind of protection against violence that may be afforded by the judicial system to ‘innocent’ or ‘decent women’ (Caputi, 1987: 100). Insistence on female sexual purity is used to justify the social and legal denial of a woman’s most basic legal rights.

We know that if we are raped, to the degree that they think we are neither a virgin daughter nor a chaste wife, police prosecutors, judges and juries may be likely to deny that the crime has taken place (Nagle, 1997: 84).
According to Caputi (1987), working as a prostitute disqualifies women from the category of legitimate women. This is clearly evident in the different treatment of prostitutes before the courts. For example, prostitutes who allege sexual assault are often discriminated against within the trial process.

In Ruling Passions, Lees (1997) further addresses the misdemeanors of the justice system:

The judiciary has become more entrenched than ever in denying and minimizing the abusive way that some men treat women. Women complainants in rape trials are put ‘on trial’ and their credibility is judged by totally unfair and sexist criteria. Studies of rape trials, for example, have shown how evidence relating to the prostitute status of a victim, as a construction of the latter’s promiscuity, is frequently allowed in cross-examination in the formation of verdicts. Prostitutes are blamed for not taking sufficient precautions to protect themselves from male violence, for actively provoking violence through solicitation (Lees, 1997: 15).

Caputi (1987) further describes how the “Madonna/whore” dichotomy determines societal response to violence against women. The dichotomy of women as either madonna or whore whereby the madonna resists sexual advances, but the whore invites them, leads to the assertion that nice girls do not get raped or if they do, it is somehow a more monstrous assault than the rape of a prostitutes. Caputi contends that this discriminatory attitude toward violence against prostitutes is especially obvious in instances in which prostitutes are killed. In these cases, prostitutes are often portrayed as expendable objects and their deaths are considered less worthy of attention than those of non-prostitute women. Caputi cogently illustrates this by presenting the comments made by legal personnel in connection with the Sutcliffe case in Britain. The Acting Assistant Chief Constable, Jim Hobson, said of Peter Sutcliffe (the ‘Yorkshire Ripper’): “He has made it clear that he hates prostitutes. Many people do. We as a police force will continue to arrest prostitutes. But the Ripper is now killing innocent girls.”
prosecuting counsel in the Yorkshire Ripper case made a typical assessment of the worth of a prostitute when he remarked that ‘some of the victims were prostitutes, but perhaps the saddest part of this case is that some were not.’ In the 1970s, public discourse was immersed in the tragedy of the killer’s inability to confine himself to prostitutes. Concern about the Yorkshire murders escalated dramatically when the Ripper killed Jayne MacDonald, a respectable, young woman.

Just after this happened, an open letter to the Yorkshire Evening Post addressed the killer thus: How did you feel yesterday when you learned your bloodstained crusade had gone so horribly wrong? That your vengeful knife had found so innocent a target? (Radford, 1992: 240).

**Feminism and Serial Murder**

Jill Radford’s *Femicide: The Politics of Women Killing* (1992) addresses the misogynist killing of women by men, and its scant treatment in criminological analysis. Her aim is to bring to light a feminist explanation of femicide through an analysis of cases of victimization of prostitutes by serial killers and the mistreatment of these cases and victims by the police, the courts and the public. As feminists have repeatedly asserted, the construction of female sexuality entails its objectification:

In the contemporary context, this process reduces women to passive heterosexual objects compliant to male needs, though at the same time, objectification also presents women as sexually enticing and potentially threatening, necessitating their oppression (Radford, 1992:47).

**The Patriarchal Foundations of Serial Murder**

From a feminist perspective the serial murder of women is not a product of some inexplicable deviance. In the *Age of Sex Crime*, Caputi (1997) argues that serial murder is not some inexplicable explosion or epidemic of an extrinsic evil or the domain only of the mysterious psychopath, but rather an eminently logical step in the procession of patriarchal roles, values, needs, and rule of force. Caputi contends that serial murder
enacts a primary principle of male supremacy and can be recognized as one of the latest expressions in a tradition of *gynocide*, as first named by Mary Daly.

Gynocide is “the systematic crippling, raping and killing of women by men…the relentless violence perpetrated by the gender class men on the gender class women.” Far from being a randomly occurring freakish event, the arrival of the multiple murderer is dictated by specific stresses and alterations in the human community. Moreover, far from being deluded, he is in many senses an embodiment of the central themes in his civilization as well as a reflection of that civilization’s critical tensions. He is thus a creature and a creation of his age (Caputi, 1997: 3).

For feminist analyses of sexual violence, it cannot be enough to say that sexual killers are madmen or psychopaths, to go along with the mainstream criminological emphasis on the individual in order to explain why serial killers behave as they do. Thus, according to Radford (1992) and other feminist researchers (Jenness, 1993; Lowman, 2000; Caputi, 1987), what is needed is an approach that will recognize that although the murderer is by no means typical, he is the product of his social order. Though few men could do what Sutcliffe, Bernardo and other serial killers have done to their female victims, many men share misogynist beliefs similar to those expressed by men who serially kill women.

The fact that male violence is endemic in our culture has long been recognized in feminist analyses. As maintained by Caputi, the very normality of male sadistic violence has become one of the commonplaces of recent feminist-psychoanalytic work on sexual violence:

Feminists place serial killing at the extreme end of a continuum of sexual violence whose less extreme manifestations are normalized by a culture structured around systemic gender inequality. The failures of distinction between normal and pathological male fantasies and acts thus become legible in the normalization of violence as part of the psychopathology of male everyday life. They become legible, that is, at the expense of another form of generalization: the leveling conviction that sadistic violence is a permanent and transhistorical component of the male psyche. Critical eloquence on the subject of male sadism holds the
gender bottom line” in our culture, “providing our ultimate gender story” (Caputi, 1997: 204).

The wider context that makes possible brutal killings such as Sutcliffe’s is one of widespread misogyny and a culture that encourages and supports a male sexuality based on violence and aggression towards women. Despite the defense’s denial of a “sexual motive” to Sutcliffe’s killings and the prosecution’s unease with the suggestion, the Sutcliffe killings certainly implicate Sutcliffe’s sexuality in particular and male sexuality and masculinity in general. Far from “deviating from the norm,” Sutcliffe was an exaggeration of it. Violence and aggression form central components of male sexuality as it is socially constructed (Caputi, 1997: 106).

As Jenkins (1994) contends in his chapter on femicide in his work Using Murder, feminists locate male violence against women in the realm of the political. It expresses not purely individual anger and frustration but a collective, culturally sanctioned misogyny which is important in maintaining the collective power of men (Jenkins, 1994: 143). Serial murder is seen by feminists, as a powerful weapon in the political suppression of women, and the ideologies surrounding the offense are considered almost as damaging as the behaviour itself. Feminists suggest that the offense is constructed to provide support for patriarchal ideology, a pattern that can be traced back to the early case of Jack the Ripper. Many feminists have argued that violence against women, exemplified in practices like rape and incest, is not just a collection of randomly vindictive acts, but a social institution which is crucial in reproducing male power by keeping women in a state of fear and unfreedom.

Over the past hundred years, the Ripper murders have achieved the status of a modern myth of male violence against women, a story whose details have become vague and generalized, but whose moral message is clear: the city is a dangerous place for women, when they transgress the narrow boundaries of home and hearth and dare to enter public space (Jenkins, 1994:144).
Serial Murder – Sexual Terrorism: A Political Weapon

Whether a monster, a psycho or a predator, Caputi (1997) asserts that the serial murderer performs both practical and symbolic functions for the culture that has produced him: he massively generates the sexual terror that preserves male power.

“Sexual terrorism” is an apt description of the effect of sexual murder on the female population. A generalized fear of the lurking sex beast is instilled in women from their early years; it is death we fear, just as much as rape, and sadistic killers haunt our very worst nightmares. When a multiple killer is at large in our communities, women often end up living in a state of siege (Caputi, 1997: 12).

In Violence Against Women, Kelley (1996) supports this tenet, exemplifying, where in the United States and in other highly developed modern industrial urban centers of the West, “sexual terrorism is a system that functions to maintain male supremacy through actual and implied violence...the perpetuation of fear of violence forms the basis of patriarchal power” (Kelley, 1996: 64). Although some groups of women are branded as especially vulnerable, all women are meant to internalize the threat and message of sexual terrorism. Sexual terrorism is nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear.

The phenomenon of serial murder is often employed to illustrate the dehumanization of a particular group and the extreme social dysfunction indicated by the prevalence of this crime. Some feminists argue that in serial murder, both killer and victim are in a sense a representative of broader categories in the wider society. For example, as Cameron (1987) explains, in the case of the Yorkshire Ripper, the prostitute victims represented female sexuality - which our patriarchal culture hates and fears and which it feels a need to punish – and the serial killer represented the category of men as punishers and oppressors of that sexuality.
Serial murder is thus typified by feminism as a political problem, an issue of the relative power held by different groups. According to Jenkins, this argument is used to criticize every aspect of mainstream society, from government and law enforcement agencies to academic and therapeutic services, as well as the official media. All are attacked for treating serial murder in a way that appears to accept and even legitimize its misogynist foundations. To quote feminist legal theorist, Catherine MacKinnon, “this is a social world that wants, even loves women dead (cited in Jenkins, 1994:143).

Gender, however, is not the only contributing factor to the vulnerability of prostitutes as victims. For feminist theorists, gender is interwoven with the social factors of race and class, determining the extent of oppression of the individual. As a group, lower class, minority women occupy a position in society in which they are collectively at the bottom of the occupational ladder and their social status is lower than that of any other group. The majority of women that work the streets are of poor and minority descent. Thus, the women in this position bear the brunt of societal, sexist, racist and classist oppression.

**Sex Worker Advocacy Solutions: Policy Change**

In *Making It Work* (1993), Valerie Jenness explicates how sex worker advocacy groups, including the prostitutes’ rights movements, have used contemporary feminist discourse on violence against women nationally and internationally in efforts to decriminalize prostitution. Jenness (1993) extends this interpretation to policy responses, and the suggested solutions to the serial murder problem. She argues these solutions are to be found not in the arrest or punishment of any given individual, but in broad social changes to enhance the equal rights and safety of women. Feminist writers suggest that men and the society they
dominate are to blame for serial murder, and yet official responses almost invariably call for women to restrict their freedom of movement and safety.

Feminists thus challenge the implication that public space is men’s space and women’s presence in it is conditional on male approval. Feminist responses to serial murder incidents often take the form of attacking such restrictions, to assert the collective strength of women to move and travel as they wish despite intimidation (Jenness, 1993:75).

Also, as outlined by Jenness (1993) COYOTE (Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics) advocates the repeal of all existing prostitution laws, the reconstitution of prostitution as a credible service occupation, and the protection of prostitutes’ rights as legitimate workers. While acknowledging a number of abuses against women associated with prostitution, for example violence against prostitutes, COYOTE claims that most of the problems associated with prostitution are directly related to the prohibition of prostitution and the stigma attached to sex and especially sex work.

Making It Work (1993) provides the three propositions that underlie COYOTE’s crusade to reconstruct the social problem of prostitution. First, prostitution is work and the master concept of work should replace the master concept of crime as the fundamental stance of society toward prostitution. Second, most women who work as prostitutes choose to do so, even in a society where prostitution is, for the most part, illegal. Finally prostitution is work that people should have the right to choose and that should be respected and protected like work in legitimate service occupations. COYOTE argues that along with the right to choose prostitution as an occupation, prostitutes must have the right not to be subject to public harassment, such as: stigma, rape, violence, denial of protection by and under the law. From COYOTE’s perspective, as workers, prostitutes should be afforded equal protection under the law and should be free of violations of their civil rights.

31
Feminism, and the Action Agenda of Sex Worker Advocacy

Jenkins (1994) proffers an example of a sex worker advocacy group employing feminist ideology, turning words into action. The Green River Killings, in Seattle, Washington, evoked a similar response, organized through the ‘Woman’s Coalition to Stop the Green River Murders.’ By 1984, the group was organizing marches in Seattle in which women will mobilize to take back the night and to claim rights to live after sunset. The group suggested that the crimes reflected bias and neglect and that the prostitute victims were victims of a sexist society. The police were subject to particular criticism because of the farce of their investigation, which by that point had been in progress for two years without locating a plausible suspect. This failure resulted from the low priority accorded to the victims: “If fifty-two white, middle-class college girls were missing or dead, there would be an entirely different response” (Jenkins, 1994:146). As of now, there are approximately 52 total prostitute women missing. Some of the victims’ bodies have been recovered, their murders being charged against Robert William Pickton.

Electronic Advocacy

“The Internet is a global pool of information and services, accessible locally through individual computer stations, each of which is part of a global system of interconnected computer networks” (Hick, 2002: 6). The Internet has affected all areas of social, economic and political life. It is having a powerful impact on organizations that are committed to social change and social justice. While the use of the Internet for advocacy and activism is of fairly recent vintage, there is clear evidence that this use is growing. The practice is alternatively called NetActivism, e-advocacy, cyberactivism, and electronic advocacy. “These labels describe a practice that (1) makes use of Internet-based technologies; (2) represents a move toward “new media” and away from traditional
media approaches, including mass media and (3) compliments more traditional approaches to advocacy” (Hick, 2002: 9).

“Electronic advocacy is generally defined in broader terms to include organizing groups of people with common interests or concerns to gain support for an issue, change policy around an issue, or undertake direct action to change a situation” (Hill, 1998:28). Electronic advocacy is increasingly being used to link people around the world to address the changing political and policy landscape. It is revolutionizing the ways people engage in advocacy, including community organization and policy practice.

Numerous case studies have documented the efficiencies of using Internet-based advocacy, which includes e-mail-based strategies, Web-based tactics, and hypertext links. Technological advances allow for cheaper, faster, more manageable avenues of conducting the work of advocacy. E-mail techniques can facilitate the distribution of written materials to supporters. Online databases and discussion groups can be used to gather tactical information with relative ease. Websites can be used to conduct online fundraising, to attract volunteers and to post information and other materials from groups throughout the world. Embedded within either the text or graphics of a Web page, hypertext links when clicked send the user to another page, either at the current site or anywhere else on the Internet. This way, pages can link to each other, to other sites of interest, and so forth. For advocacy groups, this ability to link to other sites is very important. One of the major tasks that any interest group must accomplish is the establishment of alliances with like-minded groups.
Women's Organizations on the Internet

Women around the world suffer from personal and legal discrimination and marginalization in spite of explicit international declarations calling for women’s rights. Women are the direct objects of sexual assault, and are exposed to other violence brought about by poverty and discrimination. The oppression of women is universal.

In spite of such oppressive and unlawful treatment, women are keeping their social cause alive by networking and community organizing around issues intrinsic to their well-being. In an information age, women organizers must use new technologies to continue their organizing efforts. Although community organizing has traditionally taken place within a geographic setting, it is now imperative that it also take place in non-spatial or “virtual” communities. “Organizers must rethink organizing within the new global context, and to consider the possible inequalities that an international society brings to women. Organizing in the twenty-first century calls for the development of analytic skills that translate theoretical concepts to praxis and that support innovative methods of collaboration among women to promote social change” (Hill, 1998:117). Organizing efforts must facilitate opportunities for online access to those with limited voices in the mainstream forums.

Voices of the Marginalized in Cyberspace

The key to understanding the World Wide Web as a publishing outlet is to grasp its deregulated nature. “CNN, ABC, and the New York Times are all gatekeepers of information in the print and broadcast worlds: they ultimately decide which stories to print and air, what type of spin to put on those stories, and whom to interview” (Hill, 1998: 135). Of consequence is a conscious or unconscious bias against non-mainstream ideas and social groups. Thus, the Internet is essential for marginalized groups, as it
allows these groups to get their messages out to the public without the filtering mechanism of the mainstream media. Representatives from minority groups, and people who have not participated in the past, may join the computer-mediated dialogue. Electronic advocacy enables greater political participation from typically underrepresented groups, and the potential for online activism and fundraising is vast, bringing a new and diverse generation to the effort.

The Web, as a political space, foils the traditional media’s gatekeeper status. Any group or individual with a point of view about a political or social issue will simply put together a website within the larger political space of the Internet. This site will then be potentially accessible by all forty-million-plus people with access to the web. No other communications technology has ever offered such widespread access to as large an audience of potential members and sympathizers.

“Partisanship, religion, geography, race, gender, and other traditional political divisions are giving ways to a new standard – wiredness – as an organizing principle for political and social attitudes” (Hick, 2002: 23). Indeed, in the twenty-first century, “wiredness” is a critical factor in advocacy practice. “However, it is cautioned that information poverty, or the digital divide, threatens to exclude groups who lack either the opportunity to develop computer skills or access to advanced equipment and networks” (Hick, 2002: 23). Marginalized groups will not be positioned to participate fully in emerging political activity.
Emotional Culture of Social Movements

As stated by Taylor and Rupp (2002), "if there is a single precept that has emerged from the past three decades of social movement research, it is that social movements develop out of pre-existing social networks built on personal trust, reciprocity, and shared cultural meanings" (Taylor and Rupp, 2002: 141). One of the primary ways social movements create the solidarity necessary to act in unison is by fashioning a collective identity that marks off the group and politicizes the shared everyday experiences of members by connecting them to a larger set of social claims or injustices. In turn, this process of constructing a collective identity is facilitated by the mobilization of emotion within the movement.

"Like other aspects of culture, emotions can be seen as an aspect of all social actions and social relation. The empirical task now is to look at the interaction of emotions with other kinds of cultural dynamics but also with organizational and strategic dynamics" (Goodwin et al, 2001:9) The expression of emotion is an important way by which we come to know and gain the ability to change the world we live in. This view of emotion contradicts the popular idea that emotions are merely "personal." Instead, it suggests that emotions—our understandings of them, the forms of expression they take, and the way we experience them—are products of and responses to social structures. Emotional tones revolutionize in interactional settings, producing reconfigurations of thought. "The detailed account of interaction within advocacy and social movements portrays the ambivalence, anger, laughter, pride and a host of feelings accompanied by the emergence of new ideas, embodied in new social relationships, identities, institutions, and a sense of collective power" (Goodwin, 2001: 93).
A great share of the work of mobilization is what Hochschild (1983) has termed "emotional labour." It involves channelling, transforming, legitimating, and managing one's own and others' emotions and expression of emotions in order to cultivate and nurture the social networks that are the building blocks of social movements. Social movements develop rich and distinctive emotion cultures that structure and socialize participants' emotional experience and expression. A key insight of the sociology of emotions is the recognition that emotions and emotional displays are governed by feeling rules that guide appropriate feelings in a given situation. "To the extent that a gender division of emotion exists, feeling rules are gendered. This sometimes results in fundamental differences in the emotional climates of women's and men's networks and organizations" (Taylor & Rupp, 2002: 142).

**Emotional Culture of Women's Organizations**

Women's organizations, and its rhetoric of emotion, demonstrate the centrality of emotion to the critique and transformation of oppressive social conditions. "Researchers who have examined feminist organizations find that such groups frequently devise distinctive emotion cultures that conform to a feminine logic by treating emotional expressiveness and caring nurturant personal relationships as primary" (Taylor & Rupp, 2002: 142).

Most scholars of the women's movement consider the existence of close personal ties of love and friendship between women, particularly a willingness to shape personal relationships around the cause, essential to the maintenance of feminist cultures. Within the international women's movement, two types of intense affective ties – friendship and family-like relationships – provided a source of identification with the movement, reinforcing international feminist solidarity (Taylor & Rupp, 2002: 147).
"Whether leaders stood in as mothers or stepmothers, daughters formed bonds among
themselves, or organization recreated a family atmosphere, what was significant was that
international families ignored the biological and national bonds of traditional family life
in favor of new transnational connections" (Taylor & Rupp, 2002: 151). In this way they
applied the emotion of familial love to the relationships they formed in the course of their
commitment to the international women's movement. Clearly, in the case of both
friendships and family-like ties across the borders of nationality, the rich emotion culture
of the international women's movement grew out of historically and culturally specific
gendered emotion norms that permitted women to form passionate relationships with
other women and condoned open displays of love and affection between women.

This analysis focuses on the gendered emotion culture of feminist organizations, and
demonstrates that all social movements have distinctive feeling and expression rules and
that a challenging group's emotion culture is shaped both by emotional interactions
between participants and by the larger social structure and culture that regulate the
quality, intensity, object and setting of emotional reactions more generally.

The marginalized constituency of prostitutes, however, is not necessarily indicative of
the "culture" of advocacy movements. To organize political contentions, the
marginalized, stigmatized and consequently invisible individuals face two main problems.
First is that of the absence of a common identity that is crucial for protest to emerge
(Passy, 2002: 338). The prostitution underworld has different statuses that are often
related to sexual practices and the prostitute's relation to her procurer. This variety of
statuses makes the building of collective identity difficult. These difficulties are
exacerbated by the fact that prostitutes have to collectively mobilize negative and
stigmatized identities, the kinds that are reluctantly made public. "The second problem is
the lack of resources – technical, such as computer equipment, political, organizational, and financial. The lack of resources, especially political competence and organizational skills, combines with the absence of identity resources to block entry to the field of protest politics” (Passy, 2002: 338).

In such a context, the only possibility for protest to emerge is to successfully mobilize existing structures. Hence, the role of political allies is crucial. Political allies, mainly feminist organizations, play a structuring role in protest building. They not only bring political competence, material resources, and key linkages with the political and media systems to emergent prostitute contention, but they also help protest actors construct a common identity, thereby allowing contention to genuinely emerge.
CHAPTER IV

METHOD

Content Analysis

In the study on the serial murder of sex workers, as constructed by sex worker advocates, texts generated by sex worker advocates were qualitatively analyzed using standard content analysis techniques as described by Altheide (1996) and other methodologists who have developed and employed this research methodology (Holsti, 1968; Neuman, 1994). To attain an understanding of the process in which serial murder is socially constructed, through the discourse of sex worker advocacy groups, texts available on Commercial Sex Information Service (CSIS) and similar telecommunication sites designed to generate dialogue, discourse and debate among sex worker advocates, members and workers were analyzed. These Internet sites serve as a forum through which sex worker advocates’ social construction(s) of serial murder can be accessed.

"Content analysis has been defined as a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories, based on explicit rules of coding" (Berelson, 1952:14). Holsti offers a broad definition of content analysis as, “any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages (Lindzey, 1968: 597).

Quantification has usually been accepted as one of the most important characteristics of content analysis. In spite of this general consensus on the defining quantitative characteristic of content analysis and its elements of objectivity, system and generality, there is considerable debate surrounding the question: Must content analysis be quantitative?
Qualitative content analysis follows a recursive and reflexive movement between concept development-sampling data, collection-data, coding-data, and analysis-interpretation. The aim is to be systematic and analytic, but not rigid. Categories and variables initially guide the study, but others are allowed and expected to emerge throughout the study, including an orientation toward constant discovery and constant comparison of relevant situations, settings, styles, images, meanings and nuances (Altheide, 1996: 16). “The major goal of qualitative content analysis is to capture and make sense of the meanings, emphasis, and themes of texts, and to understand the organization and process of how and why these are presented” (Altheide, 1996: 33).

Derived from a review of the literature, operational definitions of three key terms were constructed. 1) Serial murder is “a series of two or more murders, committed as separate events, usually, but not always, by one offender acting alone. The crimes may occur over a period of time ranging from hours to years. Quite often the motive is psychological, and the offender’s behaviour and the physical evidence at the scene will reflect sadistic, sexual overtones” (Egger, 1990: 6); 2) Sex worker advocacy groups are “organizations that provide support and various services (health, educational and legal) for individuals involved in the sex industry. These organizations also promote decriminalization and professional standards of sex work, advocating the rights (such as safety and well-being) of sex workers as professional” (www.blackstockings-seattle.com); 3) sex work is “a transaction between the individual, as seller, and the client, as buyer, of a sexual service in exchange for money or things of monetary value” (Jenness, 1993: 68); a sex worker is “a person who exchanges sex or sexual energy or a sexual performance or images for money” (www.blackstockings-seattle.com).
Originally, the study proposed to explore the serial murder of sex workers, which by definition, includes call girls, exotic dancers, porn models, dominatrix workers, and prostitutes. However, the preliminary analyses of the texts indicated that the texts referred only to the serial murder of prostitutes. Thus, the focus of the study was modified, to exclusively analyze, the serial murder of prostitutes. It is also significant to note that the constructions of sex workers, integrated in the study, were predominantly those of prostitute women, and were not based on the perceptions of other types of sex workers.

**Sampling – Rationale and Strategy**

The general goal of qualitative content analysis is to capture and make sense of the meanings, emphasis, and themes of texts, and to understand the organization and process of how and why these texts are presented. As Altheide (1996) and others note, this requires the inclusion of a wide range of relevant texts in a sample (see also Berelson, 1952). It is difficult, however, to know what this range and variety of this sample will be at the start of the research. To a varying degree, the range and variety of texts, which come to be included in the sample, emerge as the researcher inspects and reflects upon initial materials. Similarly, rather than trap the analysis with too many preset categories and cases derived from a rigid pre-determined sampling strategy, a progressive theoretical sampling strategy was employed.

"In qualitative content analysis, theoretical sampling refers to the selection of texts to be sampled based on emerging understanding of the topic under topic"(Altheide, 1996:33). In my research on sex worker advocates’ constructions of serial murder, texts were selected for conceptual or theoretical relevance to serial murder and sex work as identified in the literature reviewed above. This entails identification of the unit of
analysis, which attempts to capture the process of how sex worker advocates construct meanings of serial murder in intra-group and public forums.

It was found that Internet activism of sex worker advocacy groups on the issue of the serial murder of prostitutes was extremely limited. An extensive exploration of the Internet seeking texts on the subject issue of the serial murder of sex workers was executed by means of operating a number of word finds on various search engines, such as Yahoo, Google, and MSN, and the pursuit of a sundry of links served by the advocacy web pages. A limited collection of a mere twenty-seven texts, generated by sex worker advocacy group websites, was gathered.

The limitation on the aggregate of sex worker advocacy group texts was unforeseen by the researcher. In order to rectify this dilemma, the sample was amended to include texts generated by news media texts. A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select news media texts that best represent the issue of serial murder of prostitutes and the voices of sex worker advocates and sex workers. The inclusion of news media texts in the research study, hence, involved constructions other than sex worker advocacy groups on the serial murder of sex workers. The researcher appreciated these additional constructions as an opportunity to compare and contrast with those of sex worker advocacy groups. This association allowed for the researcher to socially situate the constructions of sex worker advocacy within a more extensive context of society. The purposive sampling strategy was also employed to select news media texts that best represented the voices from society, such as the police, media, and the government.
**Unit of Analysis**

As defined by Babbie (1989: 82), a unit of analysis is a unit or thing that is observed and described in order to create summary descriptions of all such units and to explain differences amongst them. In the study, relevant units of analysis were various species of texts produced by sex worker advocacy groups which are assessed through platforms provided by Internet network organizations including CSIS.

The following lists the sex worker advocacy groups from which twenty-seven of the texts were collected:

- Real Change News
- Women’s E-News
- Vanished Voices
- First Nations Drum
- Sabrina Speak
- Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP)
- BMJ
- Vancouver Rape Relief and Women’s Shelter
- Sex Worker’s Alliance of Vancouver (SWAV)
- Commercial Sex Information Service (CSIS)
- English Collective of Prostitutes
- Vancouver Missing Women (discussion board)
- Mayhem.Net
- Parliament Canada

The English Collective of Prostitutes, BMJ and Vanished Voices each provided two texts; CSIS provided three texts; Vancouver Rape Relief and Women’s Shelter, and SWAV each provided five texts.

The archives of the sex worker advocacy websites currently provide access to documents relevant to serial murder from the early 1990s (1993) to 2002. A time frame was not placed on the study. Texts available on these websites that were incorporated in the study, included: letters to editors of news media, letters to families of murdered victims, conference reports, articles from electronic advocacy magazines, press...
statements and releases, speeches, message boards, poems, as well as other reports and personal/narrative documents on the victimization of prostitutes by serial killers.

In the study, relevant units of analysis also included texts produced by news media. The time frame of these articles ranged over a five-year period, from 1998 to 2003 (present). The following lists the news media sources from which the nine texts were collected:

- The Guardian
- CBC News
- The Peak
- Vancouver Courier
- Yahoo News Canada
- Vancouver Magazine
- Vancouver Sun
- Toronto Sun
- The Independent

**Protocol**

The analysis of the texts began with the development of a protocol. Altheide (1996: 27) describes a protocol as a list of questions, items, categories or variables that guide data collection from documents. Several items or categories (variables) will be listed to guide data collection and to draft a protocol. The protocol will have some pre-coded categories derived from the themes outlined in the literature review. These themes include: *characteristics of the text, the serial murder of sex prostitutes, aspects of mainstream society, views on prostitution, the victims of serial killers, serial killers, and sex worker advocacy groups*. Each theme contains listings of several categories designed to guide data collection (note: these listings are elaborated on in the findings section). The protocol categories will have more than one possible outcome or value to them. For example:
1. Serial killers are:
   a) Pathological
   b) products of society
   c) evil
   d) monsters
   e) sadists
   f) other ____________

2. Serial murder of prostitutes is:
   a) punishment
   b) occupational hazard
   c) misogyny
   d) random vindictive acts
   e) other _______________

An auxiliary value was added to most categories to include “other” values, imparted by the texts, that the researcher did not foretell.

It is important to note that the researcher found that for each category, most texts had more than one possible outcome or value to them. For example, in category 11 of the protocol,

Serial murder of prostitutes is typified by the text as a __________ issue:
   a) political
   b) cultural
   c) patriarchal
   d) economic
   e) legal
   f) moral

the text may define the issue as both a legal and political issue. Therefore, because the majority of texts presented more than one value per category, there are a greater number of values listed than the total of the text. Thus, a percentage of values were calculated.

The protocol categories were coded using a combination of latent and manifest coding techniques. Using manifest coding – the coding of visible, surface content in a text – a coding system will be developed to list terms, which will then be located in the text, counted and recorded”(Neuman, 1994: 264). Terms were located in the text and recorded in the protocol.5 Using latent coding, the underlying, implicit meaning in the

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4 See Appendix A
5 My research proposal also included counting the terms. However, in the initial analyses, the texts did not denote a pattern of word or term repetition. Hence, I removed the procedural step of counting of terms from the research method, as the data derived from counting would be irrelevant to the study, and would not advance my findings.
content of the text was examined by reviewing the entire text and making a judgment as to how the text should be classified. It was found that a number of the texts explicitly stated the values for its pertaining category, through comments and statements by the author and/or citations of a source. However, there were a percentage of texts in which the researcher interpreted the values of a category based on the entire sense of the document established by the author’s presentation of facts, opinions, and implicit messages, guided by general rules of the coding system. The protocol derives from the coding as the list of terms is organized into separate categories that represent different themes and content.

Each type of coding reveals different aspects of the content of the text, therefore, a combination of latent and manifest coding techniques may be more informative for the purposes of my research than either manifest or latent coding alone. “Whereas manifest coding measures the frequency of terms in order to document the content, latent coding tends to focus on meaning and the revelation of themes in a text” (Neuman, 1994, 265). Used together, however, the two modes of coding techniques produce a detailed picture of the texts’ content and meaning.

The protocol categories included some pre-coded items. As is typical in content analysis, however, most items were coded and given refined meaning after the data had been collected” (Altheide, 1996: 27). The number of protocol categories was initially kept to a minimum, with the expectation that additional categories would be added as the research proceeds. Included were categories that are relevant to the social action of sex worker advocacy groups, including information about the time, place and manner of this activity. Stated differently, categories addressed what sex worker advocacy is and how it is performed; where and when it is performed; who does it, with what rationale; and
whether any motives are apparent. The goal is to show that the document reflects social
activity, and the categories are useful ways to capture what Altheide (1996: 27) calls the
“dramaturgical character” of action.

The protocol also provided categories for the following: case number, medium,
date, location, length, title or emphasis, focus or main topic, source, and themes. There
was a category relevant for format considerations, particularly visuals included in the
document, for example photographs, about who (advocacy group) and what they are
doing (vigils, marches, protests etc.). Lastly, the protocol included a reflective statement
for research notes and comments about how a document was similar or different from
others.

**Data Collection**

In the study, the data consisted of texts on serial murder of prostitutes and that are
produced by sex worker advocacy groups, and news media texts, and available through
the Internet, using search engines such as Google, Yahoo, and MSN. Data collection on
sex worker advocates constructions of serial murder were guided by codes and
descriptions based on themes derived from the literature review, and preliminary analysis
of the documents themselves. Web links provided in primary sources were also followed,
and notes were taken on these explorations.

Data specific to serial murder of sex workers were kept with the original
documents from which these data are derived. In the research proposal, it was intended
for these data to also be entered in a computer-text-word processing format for search-
find-text coding. However, due to the small sample size, the researcher manually
performed searches through reading, and re-reading, the texts, and recorded her text and
word finds in the protocol. As is typical in content analysis (Altheide, 1996: 37) when data collection is approximately half to two thirds completed, the data was examined to permit emergence, refinement, or collapsing of additional categories. Appropriate adjustments to other data were made, and data collection completed.

Data Analysis

"In content analysis, the data are analyzed through a multi-step process, beginning with extensive reading, sorting, and searching through materials; and proceeding through comparing protocol categories, and coding and adding key words and concepts" (Altheide, 1996: 43). Although outlined in the proposal, the researcher opted not to use software programs (e.g. word processor) to facilitate category-by-category searches, both of the entire text, and of individual fields or categories within each text, as stated earlier, due to the small sample sized.

"In the last step of content analysis, the findings were integrated with the researcher’s interpretation and key concepts" (Neuman, 1994: 271). In this instance, in which the aim of the research was to capture the ways sex worker advocates construct serial murder of prostitutes, this entails summarizing each of the protocol categories in a paragraph, using illustrative materials where appropriate, including descriptions and quotations. The documents were then sorted into types with respect to the various units of analysis, listed above, and with respect to distinctive characteristics. The most important variation will be the theme and the focus. There are twenty-six texts specific to serial murder of prostitutes gathered from the advocate group websites, and ten texts from news media websites. I determined four themes in which most documents would fit:

*mainstream society (police, media, government, community), prostitute victims of serial*

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6 See Appendix E

49

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The documents were further examined by answering the following: Which documents do not fit one or more of the 3 to 5 core themes? What is missing or odd about a document? What are some surprises from the research?

**The Subjective Dilemma of Content Analysis**

Most analyses of the content of texts have been within a positivist paradigm. The claim made for traditional content analysis is that it 'provides for an objective and quantitative estimate of certain messages attributes, hopefully free of the subjective bias of the reviewer. As offered by Holsti, content analysis is defined as, “any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages (Lindzey, 1968: 597).

There are major problems, however, with the claim that traditional content analysis is 'objective.' As stated by Reiner (2002), “while the categories used to quantify 'certain message attributes' may be free of 'subjective bias' they always embody some theoretical presuppositions by the researcher about criteria of significance.” The findings of a particular content analysis are directly related to the definitions of the various content categories developed by the researcher. As Reiner (2002) construes: “the 'objectivity' of traditional content analysis lies in the precision of the statistical manipulation of data, but the categories used necessarily presuppose some theory of meaning, usually about likely consequences.” Thus, the validity of these definitions is an important consideration in the evaluation of any content analysis.

The questions raised by Reiner (2002) are about the claims of a positivist content analysis to quantify in a value-free way aspect of a supposed objective structure in texts. Counting features of texts should be self-consciously seen as based on the observer's
frame of reference, according to explicit criteria. Results must be interpreted reflexively and tentatively as one possible reading. As such, Reiner (2002) concludes, "they can yield valuable insights and questions about the significance of trends and patterns."
CHAPTER V
FINDINGS

Foreword
As demonstrated in the analysis which follows, historically, academic and public discourse surrounding the serial murder of prostitutes has been based on the statements voiced by those in the mainstream. Missing are the voices of prostitutes who have been silenced by the act of murder. The following narrative fills the void of silenced prostitutes in reporting and discussing the findings of the qualitative analysis of twenty-seven sex worker advocacy texts, and nine news media texts which incorporate the constructions, opinions and voices of sex worker advocates and sex workers. In both a micro-examination of the individual actor and a macro-examination of society, the content of the voices and experiences of sex workers, advocates, journalists, police representatives, judicial officials, and the public are analyzed. This analysis focuses on several recurring themes implicated in the social construction of the serial murder of prostitutes. These include the social construction of serial killers as “psychopaths or patriarchal zealots,” the social construction of sex workers as victims, and the construct of claims of “societal neglect” by police, judicial system, community and media.

“I share my conspiracy theories here because I simply cannot talk about it anywhere else” (www.pub.alxnet.com/guestbook).

As this quotation makes explicit, the Internet is a forum which is giving voice to this still largely marginalized constituency.

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7 See Appendix F
Introduction: Internet Sex Worker Advocacy and News Media

Internet sex worker advocacy is an electronic network of prostitutes in the sex industry, political advocates, health workers, service providers and legal advocates organized to support the rights and needs of sex trade workers, with its highest priority being the situation as it affects the most vulnerable populations of prostitutes (www.blackstockings-seattle.com).

Sex Worker Advocacy Texts

The twenty-seven texts generated by sex worker advocacy groups were comprised of a variety of formats:

1) five press release statements posted on the websites of All Women Count, Vancouver Rape Relief and Women’s Shelter, and NSWP

2) five articles from First Nation’s Drum, Herizons Magazine, Women’s E-News, Real Change News, and Xtra! West (special interest electronic magazines and journals, targeted at First Nations’ people, women, the homeless, and gay and lesbian audiences)

3) three “letters,” posted by SWAV⁸ addressed to editors and/or journalists of news media, and one letter addressed to the family of a murder victim; CSIS posted a letter-writing campaign to the Minister of Justice, House of Commons, originated by Ina George, a mother of a murder victim, regarding the mistreatment of her daughter’s murder by the court

4) two journal articles from the medical journal, British Medical Journal (BMJ), a report on the study findings on violence against sex workers, and a book review of Some Mother’s Daughter: the Hidden Movement of Prostitute Women Against

⁸ See Appendix B
Violence (a collection of short essays, protest leaflets, and accounts of activism
from the International Prostitutes Collective)

5) two poems, posted on Vanished Voices and Mayhem.net, one poem by Sarah
Devries, written by a prostitute victim prior to her death

6) one speech by Daisy Kler of Vancouver Rape Relief And Women’s Shelter, at
the 10th Annual Memorial for the missing and murdered women of the Downtown
Eastside

7) a discussion forum, comprised of posted messages by ten individuals,
including concerned citizens, sex workers, advocates etc.

8) four personal commentaries

9) and a motion put forward, to the House of Commons by Ms. Libby Davies,
Vancouver East NDP, to review prostitution solicitation laws.

Nature of the Source

In the data collection stage, it was found that the sources for the sex worker advocacy
texts were classifiable by advocacy and non-advocacy websites. Advocacy websites
included those of sex worker rights activists – CSIS, SWAV, NSWP, and the English
Collective of Prostitutes, Vancouver Rape Relief and Women’s Shelter, and Vanished
Voices.

Non-advocacy websites included: Women’s E-News, First Nation’s Drum, Real
Change News: Newspaper of the Poor and Homeless; a true crime website,
www.mayhem.net; a personal website by Sabrina Speak, comprised a collection of
writings by an independent writer; BMJ, a medical journal that publishes original
scientific studies, review and educational articles, and papers commenting on the clinical,
scientific, social, political, and economic factors affecting health; and Canada
Parliament’s website, www.parl.gc.ca, providing comprehensive and reliable information to the public about Canada’s Parliament – documentation, research and analysis with extensive and pertinent collections to support the functions of legislation and representation.

Websites of Sex Worker Advocacy Groups

The primary function for the sex worker’s rights activist websites was information provision. However, upon initial analysis of the sex worker rights activist websites, it was found that the websites communicated information in differing styles.

The websites for NSWP and the English Collective of Prostitutes undertook an austere tone, to impart its information, primarily based on research and studies conducted by its advocates and other academic members. The format for the NSWP website consisted of several hyperlinks which included 1) Health and Safety (STI, AIDS and Violence Prevention); 2) Rights (Charters and Resolutions, World Charter of Prostitutes’ Rights); 3) hyperlinks to other sex worker rights groups’ URLs focussed on research ethics (Community-based Research, and Clinical Research Guidelines) and 4) World News (providing a hyperlink to the CSIS site of ‘News Clippings’). The website for the ECP is accessed through a hyperlink from the ‘All Women Count’ homepage, a website for women’s rights as workers. The ECP link consists of nineteen hyperlinks in the “Summary of Work by the English Collective of Prostitutes.” Among these are “Organizing for Decriminalization,” “Stopping Serial Murderers and Rapists,” and “Defending Sex Workers Against Police Illegality and Racism.”

9 ‘All Women Count’ is an international, politically-independent, anti-racist, and anti-sexist women’s network, making visible the contribution of women’s work worldwide (www.allwomencount.net)
Although websites for both SWAV and CSIS also equipped its sites with legal links (government reports, court records and legal tips such as “If Cops Want to Talk to You”) and health links on safe sex and medical research, SWAV and CSIS communicated this information in a laissez-faire style that conveyed the culture of the sex industry. As they describe this culture, it employs and is epitomized by “filthy pictures,” and “dirty words.” However, they frame their use of this rhetorical focus as aimed at education:

The Commercial Sex Information Service is an educational archive of information about sexual pleasure for pay. There is information available here — both text and images — that is sexually explicit. This archive provides this information for purely educational and research purposes. Sources for illustrations at this site include commercial and underground comics, historical and modern satirical drawings. These works of art are intended to enhance the effectiveness of this material in serving its educational purpose (www.walnet.org/csis/disclaimer.html).

Websites for both Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter and Vanished Voices also served as instruments for information provision. The Vancouver Rape Relief and Women’s Shelter website equips its site with informative hyperlinks to “Issues” (a page that publicly discusses the issues surrounding all forms of violence against all women, from domestic abuse to the serial murder of prostitutes) and “Statistics” (in regard to violence against women). Vanished Voices also equips its site with hyperlinks to victim services and resource sites, women’s resources, police sites, ‘media news and updates,’ and research rooms.

Information provision, however, is not the fundamental purpose for Vancouver Rape Relief or Vanished Voices. The primary function of the Vancouver Rape Relief website is to organize collective mobilization, as its hyperlinks focus around providing listings of “Events” (such as walkathons and “Take back the Night” marches), and “Women’s
Organizations.” The hyperlink “Herstory,” provides inspiration for its audience by demonstrating the influence of actions taken by feminists from 1973 to 2000.

The primary functions of the memorial site Vanished Voices is remembrance and reflection.

Vanished Voices Never Again! Project will contain graphics, images, and words that will help to preserve the memory of our loved ones, our friends and our sisters (www.geocities.com/waazby1.quilt.html).

The website provides memorial links which included: 1) “Serenity Rooms” (containing poems written in memory of the missing women of Vancouver and paintings of angels); 2) “Flame of Hope” (consisting of photographs, information and listings of all the missing and murdered women); and 3) a hyperlink to http://pub.alxnet.com/guestbook (a discussion forum comprised of posted messages by sex workers, advocates, friends and concerned citizens which allowed for visitors of the website to discuss the issue of the serial murder of prostitutes and to pay their respects and express their memories of other prostitute victims – family members and friends – lost to violence).

News Media Texts

Internet Newspapers

As stated in the literature, “Internet newspapers are defined as publications available on the World Wide Web, a platform provided by navigation software. Such news sites use computer assisted graphic devices to present text and graphics containing news information on a computer screen” (Li, 1998: 353).

The sample of nine news media texts were comprised of nine articles generated from eight electronic newspapers:

1) two international newspapers - The Guardian, and The Independent

2) four Canadian national newspapers – Vancouver Sun, Toronto Sun, CBC News, and the Vancouver Courier
3) one customized news site – Yahoo! News Canada

4) one university newspaper – The Peak: Simon Fraser's University Newspaper

5) one local Vancouver magazine – Vancouver Magazine.

Nature of the source

In the data collection stage it was found that the sources for the news media texts were classifiable by mainstream and independent newspapers.

Mainstream

Mainstream newspaper websites include Toronto Sun, Vancouver Sun and CBC, Vancouver Courier, Vancouver Magazine and Yahoo! News Canada, all of which offer a range of factual-based, general news reports. Mainstream newspapers were found to be conservatively traditional in its reporting. Mainstream Canadian newspapers are governed by the 1991 Broadcasting Act that adheres to the statute: “broadcasting systems should reflect Canadian attitudes, opinions, and ideas by offering information and analysis concerning Canada and other countries from a Canadian point of view” (www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/LEGAL/BROAD.htm). This is reflected in the “Mission Statement” of CBC News:

The CBC is Canada’s largest cultural institution. It touches the lives of our citizens on a daily basis. Owned by all Canadians, it is the only cultural institution and the only broadcaster offering services to all Canadians in English and in French across Canada. The CBC has a heritage as the nation’s greatest supplier of Canadian cultural content. The CBC has a singular responsibility and a unique capacity to make Canadian voices heard, allow Canadian stories to be told, build mutual understanding among Canadians and help Canadian culture flourish. These simple facts lie at the heart of the CBC’s role. They are the foundation of the CBC’s mission to “tell Canadian stories reflecting the reality and the diversity of our country;” to “inform Canadians about news and issues of relevance and interest” (http://cbc.radio-canada.ca/htmen/fast_facts.htm).
Independent

The independent newspaper websites included British newspapers The Guardian and The Independent, and Simon Fraser University’s student newspaper The Peak. These newspapers provided personal, liberal and opinionated commentaries and narratives. This is demonstrated in the mandates of The Guardian and The Peak.

*The Guardian*, a daily English newspaper printed in London and Manchester, has been in existence since 1919, with a circulation of about 400,000 copies a day. Since then, *The Guardian* has grown to become one of world’s great liberal newspapers, with a distinctive and critical view of events in Britain and abroad. It draws its strength and powerful voice from its structure. The paper is run, not by a proprietor or press baron, but by a trust set up by the Scott family. Its sole purpose is to maintain the profitability of the paper, appoint its editor and protect his independence (http://www.guardian.co.uk/guardian/).

*The Peak* has been Simon Fraser University’s Student Newspaper since 1965. *The Peak* is SFU’s STUDENT newspaper - a newspaper for the students, run by the students. Here on the Internet, *The Peak* takes an electronic form, with the e.Peak: Having an electronic version of *The Peak* will hopefully encourage more people to read it and get involved. The Internet often fosters debate and discussion, and it was *The Peak*'s belief that if we provided *The Peak* in such an environment, then we could benefit from the large amounts of creative energy that flow through the wires of SFU everyday (http://www.peak.sfu.ca/).

**Reporting Styles**

The mainstream sources did not address the core issue of the serial murder of prostitutes.

The mainstream newspaper reports, rather, reported basic facts around persons (primarily the serial killer Robert Pickton) and events (such as the preliminary hearing). This is demonstrated in the following quotes provided by the texts of CBC, Vancouver Sun, and Yahoo! News Canada.

Within months, the owner of that farm, Robert William Pickton, would face seven charges of murder...In September 2002, Pickton was charged with four more murders. In October 2002, four additional charges were added, bringing the total to 15 (http://www.cbc.ca/news).
Pickton’s preliminary hearing, which began January 13, 2003, is expected to last for months (http://www.cbc.ca/news).

As Robert Pickton was charged Tuesday with his third, fourth, and fifth counts as first-degree murder – charges that make him, by definition, an accused serial killer – experts in the study of serial murder said the disappearances in which Pickton was charged, and the investigation of those disappearances, fit well-worn and troubling patterns (http://www.canada.com/vancouver/vancouversun/).

Robert William Pickton faces 15 counts of first-degree murder in the case. The 53-year old farmer was arrested in February by a joint RCMP-Vancouver police task force that took over the case in spring 2001 after an outcry by angry family members. Pickton’s preliminary hearing is scheduled to begin Dec. 2. Pickton has been charged with killing 15 of the 63 women missing since 1978. Thirty-eight of the women disappeared in the five-year span from the beginning of 1997 to the end of 2001 (http://news.yahoo.com).

Focusing on the serial killer, mainstream news articles neglected to provide detailed information around the prostitute victims. The articles from all three independent newspaper sources, however, provided an in depth analysis and description of all persons involved in the case (both serial killer, Robert Pickton, and his prostitute victims). These articles primarily addressed the issue of the serial murder of prostitutes.

I offer no attempt at simplistic solutions, but aim merely to give notice to a problem too easily overlooked, too quickly forgotten, and too often accepted (http://www.peak.sfu.ca/).

This is a group of people that must accept the daily threat of violence and assault (http://www.peak.sfu.ca/).

There is constant violence. The prostitutes have taken so many beatings that their faces are as scarred and swollen as boxers (http://www.guardian.co.uk/guardian/).

It is a shrine to the city’s disappeared, a startling toll of female drug addicts and prostitutes from one of Canada’s poorest districts who have vanished from the streets without a trace (http://www.guardian.co.uk/guardian/).
A few years ago there was much talk about the possibility that a serial killer was stalking the prostitutes of Hull, and for a time the media staked out the streets where the women walked on a Saturday night. I was there too, talking to the women, and then seeing my fellow journalists depart, as I did, as soon as it became clear that there was no serial killer in Hull, only the grim round of violence to which prostitutes are always exposed and which had become fatal for three of them (http://www.independent.co.uk/).

Last year, the investigative journalist Maggie O’Kane looked into the deaths of women working as prostitutes. She found that more than 60 prostitutes had been murdered in the past ten years, and that most of these deaths were only given a tiny paragraph in the national press (http://www.independent.co.uk/).

Internet Newspaper Websites

The priority of all nine of the news media websites was information provision. This is demonstrated in the mission statements of Yahoo! News Canada, and Vancouver Courier.

Yahoo currently provides users with access to a rich collection of resources, including, various communications tools and news forums. Yahoo! Canada provides breaking news as fast as ever. Yahoo! readers have access to all news partners. The navigation will make it a cleaner, easier experience as you look for what interests you every day (http://news.yahoo.com).

Despite heavy competition from two daily newspapers, the Courier remains the paper of record for civic news in Vancouver, delivering news that’s closer to home to every doorstep in the city—more than 265,000 papers weekly. The mission of the Vancouver Courier is to provide first rate coverage of local news and entertainment to Vancouver readers (http://www.vancourier.com/).

The news information was provided through various hyperlinks on all of the nine newspaper websites. The homepage of the newspaper websites provided information both directly and via links to other files of the same application. On both home pages and front pages, headlines of top news were displayed. One click led the reader from headlines displayed on home pages to full news articles. The Toronto Sun, The Vancouver Sun, The Guardian and Yahoo website formats were visually complex with
many categories and hyperlinks on its homepage. Whereas, the websites for CBC, The Independent, Vancouver Courier, Vancouver Magazine and The Peak adopted a simple and clear approach and limited the number of links and categories.

**Voices of the Sound and Silenced**

The voices communicated in the independent newspaper articles are that of journalists, academics, the police, sex workers, and advocates. The independent newspaper articles incorporated multiple voices that reflected the opinions, ideas and attitudes that belong to that of the mainstream and the marginalized. This provided a wide context to the story of the serial murder of prostitutes.

However, it was found that four of the five mainstream newspapers (Toronto Sun, CBC, Vancouver Sun and Vancouver Courier) did not include the opinions and voices of the marginalized sex workers and sex worker advocates. Thus the mainstream newspaper articles tend to present a limited, imprecise and biased viewpoint by offering one-sided information and analysis of the serial murder of prostitutes from mainstream perspectives. These perspectives reflect and maintain socially acceptable and dominant attitudes of the Canadian status quo that are governed by the 1991 Broadcasting Act.
A Micro-Analysis of the Serial Murder of Prostitutes: The Killer and His Victim

Serial killers: the socially constructed psychopath

As maintained by Jane Caputi, in the literature, The Age of Sex Crime:

For many, a person who commits such inhuman, heinous acts as that of serial murder, is incomprehensible - their crimes do not appear to be based on any motives that make sense to the average person. Indeed, some serial murderers have committed crimes that are so far outside the bounds of human experience that the perpetrators seem almost to belong to a different species (1987: 73).

Confronted with the inhumanity of serial murder, Caputi suggests that many construct the serial killer as inhuman, attributing these actions to the psychological abnormality of the individual, and separating the serial killer from the rest of humanity. In an attempt to diagnose serial murder by the mental state of the serial killer, the social constructions of “crazy,” “madmen” and “psychopath,” are conveyed in the sex worker advocacy texts. This is especially evident in Women’s E-News, and the article by Sabrina Speak entitled “An Acceptable Victim.” It is also evident in the news media texts of Vancouver Sun, and The Guardian.

“Whoever did these killings is obviously a psychopath,” sociologist, Dee O’Brien, the executive director for the Walnut Women’s Center in Santa Cruz. (http://www.womensnews.org/).

You remember where you were when you first heard the news that 14 women had been gunned down in a Montreal university classroom by a woman-hating maniac... But even with the white ribbons and candlelight vigils and reflections on Decembers past, it’s possible for maniacs to strike down young women in this country (http://www.sabrinamehra.com/sabrinaspeak4.html).

They often kill for “some bizarre notion of reality.” Neil Boyd, a criminologist at Simon Fraser University (http://www.canada.com/vancouver/vanvoucersun/).
“The johns on the street are like the hookers on the street,” says Joanne. “For every one that goes there are two more that take their place. You can’t tell who’s crazy. You have to trust your gut instinct” (http://www.guardian.co.uk/guardian/).

Caputi (1997), however, counters the micro-examination of the individual that constructs the serial killer as insane, suggesting that:

the diagnosis of psychopath to define those who commit the act of murder not only absolves the serial killers themselves, but that diagnosis similarly protects society itself – in the socially constructed diagnosis of the serial killer as psychopathic, no one is responsible, no one is left to blame, except of course, the victims themselves(1987: 199).

**Prostitutes: The Socially Constructed Victim Precipitator of Violence**

As sexual solicitors, prostitutes are assumed to invite violence, calling forth their violation. As Hickey (1991) states in *Serial Murders and their Victims*, by making themselves available to anyone on the street, prostitutes expose themselves to grave consequences, and more opportunity to be victimized (1991: 158). These attitudes exist within society as evidenced by statements of the police, the judicial system, and the community in the texts generated by and reproduced on the sex worker advocacy sites of SWAV, NSWP, CSIS, Sabrina Speaks, Women’s E-News, the BMJ, and the news media site of The Independent. These sites advance the assumption that prostitutes are complicit in creating the harm they experience by constructing the serial murder of prostitutes as victim-precipitated. Violence, and even death are framed as an occupational hazard:

I have personally taken reports from hookers like this one: a known working girl with blood pouring from her head caused by an attack with a hammer, when finally able to flag down a cruiser, was asked by the female officer, “What do you expect in your line of work?” http://walnet.org/csis/groups/swav/letters/tonner_letter3.html

A street prostitute was beaten, choked with a rope and left unconscious in an alley. She had severe bruising on her neck and face the next day when she approached two female police officers to report the incident. They
asked her what she expected in her line of work and refused to take a report.
http://walnet.org/csis/groups/swav/letters/pimp_letter.html

The attitude in the justice system toward prostitutes was shockingly demonstrated yet again in Regina on January 30, when Justice Ted Malone handed out six-and-a-half-year sentences to two men for beating Pamela George to death. Malone said that it would be “dangerous” to convict the young men of first-degree murder because Ms. George “was indeed a prostitute.” These men will be eligible for parole in 40 months.
http://walnet.org/csis/groups/swav/letters/pimp_letter.html

It has been common knowledge since the days of Peter Sutcliffe that repressive policing of prostitution deters sex workers from reporting crimes against them to the police, and yet EUROPAP-UK is still receiving reports of cases where women have tried to report violence they have experienced to police, but have been threatened with charges for prostitution or have been rebuffed with comments such as “it is part of the job” or “you shouldn’t be out there in the first place.”
www.walnet.org/csis/groups/nswp/europap.violence.html

The truth is that prostitutes have never had the right to work free of prejudice, of hatred, of violence – and of fear. We’re expected to take it with the job. http://walnet.org/csis/people/grayce_baxter/index.html

The victims may be being ignored because many people think that being raped or beaten is part of the job of being a sex worker, said Dee O’Brien, professor of sociology and women’s studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz (http://www.womensenews.org/).

It’s even possible to wear a white ribbon while dismissing the abductions and murders of dozens of women as something they deserved – and have many people agreeing with your line of opinion. Impossible? Not when the women in question are sex trade workers.
www.sabrinamehra.com/sabrinaspeak4.html

The fact that the murdered sex trade workers ‘asked for it’ is a common sentiment in Vancouver dailies and bus shelters alike.
www.sabrinamehra.com/sabrinaspeak4.html

Rape, beatings, and abuse are often seen as inevitable, almost justified hazards of the “lifestyle.” www.bmj.com
One told me what happened the first time she was beaten up by a client and went to the police. "They said there was nothing they could do. They said, what do you expect, standing out there every night?" (http://www.independent.co.uk/).

The statements constructing the serial killer as "insane," however, are found in less than fifteen percent of the data set. Statements by the police, the judicial system, and the community which construct the serial murder of prostitutes as victim-precipitated or an occupational hazard comprise merely fifteen percent of the thirty-six sex worker advocacy and news media texts. Hence, the findings of the macro-examination of the individual disqualify both the psychopathic image of the serial killer, and the figure of the "willing" prostitute victim. Contrary to Caputi (1987), these do not appear as widely accepted constructions. In fact, the texts de-emphasize the significance of the role of the individual in the serial murder of prostitutes. Hence, the findings indicate the necessity of a macro-examination of society. This entails an examination of social norms, institutions, and ideologies to find bases for serial murder.

A Macro-Examination of the Serial Murder of Prostitutes: Society

Jenkins in Using Murder (1998) contends that the feminist critique of serial murder focuses on the structural injustices that are said to give rise to crime. This interpretation can be used to buttress the ideological position that any particular groups is subject to extreme persecution because of deep-rooted structural factors within the society (Jenkins, 1994: 148). Seventy-three percent of response values for sex worker advocacy texts, and 80% of news media texts constructed the serial murder of prostitutes as low priority to society as a whole.¹⁰ This constructs the neglect of prostitute victims as an injustice inherent within police, judicial, media, and community practices.

¹⁰ See Appendix G (I)
Police Negligence

Sixty-seven percent of sex worker advocacy texts, and 89% of news media texts criticized police negligence in the cases of serial murder of prostitutes.\textsuperscript{11} Descriptions of police negligence were defined in the statements in the sex worker advocacy texts of the Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter, SWAV, Vanished Voices, Real Change News, Women's E-News, First Nation's Drum, Parliament Canada, and news media texts from the Vancouver Sun, The Guardian, and Yahoo! Canada News. These texts claim these societal actors are complacent, lack will, and to confront the problem, that a low level of police activity is a result of these prejudices.

It is critical to address why it took so long for police to get to this point in their response to the missing women. Too many women are currently left in highly dangerous and increasingly dangerous situations (www.rapereliefshehor.bc.ca/issues_women01.html).

Police incompetence and neglect is totally unforgivable. (www.rapereliefshehor.bc.ca/issues/eastside_women02.html).

All of the criticisms cited are addressing the Vancouver Eastside case.

On this day of the 10th annual memorial for the missing and murdered women, we stand in front of the Vancouver Police Department outraged at the lack of political will that the police have shown towards solving these cases. We have heard that the Vancouver Police no longer has a special unit working solely on solving the cases of the women who have disappeared from the streets. These women deserve a full investigation, just as every woman does (www.rapereliefshehor.bc.ca/issues/eastside_women03.html).

The case of the more than 50 women missing from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside has garnered international attention and embarrassment for the city. Three mayors and the Vancouver Police Department stand accused of ignoring the disappearances as they began around 1984 (www.rapereliefshehor.bc.ca/issues/eastside_women05.html).

\textsuperscript{11} See Appendix G (II)
On the steps of the Vancouver Police Station, Viola Thomas and Arleena Jones gave much more political speeches. They pointed out the very high statistics of deaths of native women, particularly murders. They pointed out how the majority of the cases go unsolved. They complained that police and politicians are more interested in putting big budgets into protecting things like the Pacific Rim Economic Summit, rather than doing something about the murders happening to people on their streets. Mostly Aboriginal people
http://walnet.org/csis/groups/swav/whore_wars/womensmarch.html

Over and over again I am asked the same questions: How did this go on for so long before the Vancouver Police Department launched their investigation? Why was each case not investigated from the beginning? (www.geocities.com/waabzyl/quilt.html).

100 lost souls ‘disappear’ and the police force does nothing…for decades! Where is the justice I ask! (http://pub.alxnet.com/guestbook).

As a former Scotland Yard Detective, I am appalled at the lack of professional police work attributed to the local and federal police in this case. The federal and local PD’s should be ashamed. (http://pub.alxnet.com/guestbook).

The negligent attitudes has also been linked to the social class of prostitute victims.

The Vancouver missing women case is an object lesson in how crimes against poor people are treated. It has been called “an international embarrassment,” by Raven Bowen of Prostitution Alternatives Counselling and Education (PACE). “This is how our weakest citizens are treated.” A Joint Task Force (of the Vancouver Police Department and the RCMP) was not even established to investigate the missing women until April of this year (www.realchangenews.org).

Police interest comes and goes. There are a few members of the police who have taken an interest in the fate of these women. They are known among the community as the, “odd squad” (http://www.womensenews.org/).

There is a general sense as evidenced in the statements that the police cannot be relied upon for protection from and prevention of violence in the sex industry.

Most prostitutes have learned to rely on each other, and not the police, for warnings about dangerous clients. She recalled the case of a plumber who used to beat prostitutes up with pipes. “Everyone on the street knew
about him," she said, “but the police did nothing” (http://www.womensenews.org/).

“The reality for a woman offering sex for sale on the streets of Vancouver is that she can be murdered and there’s little chance that anyone will be prosecuted. She can be raped knowing that the police will likely not protect her,” states 2001 report released by a Canadian organization of past and present sex workers, the Prostitutes Association for Counselling and Education (PACE) (http://www.womensenews.org/).

A fierce critic of current policy toward prostitution, Lowman accuses the Vancouver police and fearful civic politicians of complicity, through inaction, in the murders and, more frightening, the unexplained disappearances of 31 skid-row area women – all prostitutes, all drug addicts, all almost certainly murdered, most in the past five years (www.firstnationsdrum.com).

As Canada’s Parliament website makes clear, these criticisms are not merely from the fringe constituency of sex workers and sex worker advocates.

There are many serious questions about the police investigations and why it took so long for a special taskforce to be put together to investigate the disappearances of these women (www.parl.gc.ca).

Mainstream news commentators also show that these criticisms are being voiced in the general public.

In an investigation last year, the Vancouver Sun showed how Vancouver police were slow to recognize the scope of the disappearances of women, mostly prostitutes, from downtown Vancouver, and how police did not commit adequate resources to the investigation in its early days (http://www.canada.com/vancouver/vancouversun/).

The city and its police stand accused by families and friends of the victims of looking the other way for years as the disappearances gathered pace, rather than admit that such an outwardly attractive tourist destination might harbour such a dark underside (www.guardian.co.uk).

Yet despite this frightening rate of attrition, and the ever-increasing desperation of the families of the missing, the police response appears to have been sluggish to say the least (www.guardian.co.uk).

According to “The Missing Women of Vancouver,” CBC News in the case of the missing women from the Vancouver Eastside “accusations of police negligence reached a

69
fever pitch when former detective and geographic profiler, Kim Rossmo, claimed that he told police that a serial killer was at work in the Vancouver area and was ignored” (www.cbc.ca). News media texts from Vancouver Magazine, Vancouver Courier, and the sex worker advocacy text, “Privatized Justice, No Justice for Women” from the Vancouver Rape Relief and Women’s Shelter publicized Rossmo’s dismissed claims:

The veteran cop told the B.C. Supreme Court that back in 1998, he’d urged his colleagues to issue a public warning that a serial killer could be at work in the Downtown Eastside. “It’s about being honest with the public. At least other potential victims could have made better informed choices,” he tells Vancouver magazine. Instead the department sent out a press release saying it didn’t believe a serial killer was responsible for the disappearances. “Cops kept mum on serial killer,” a typical newspaper headline scathed (www.vanmag.com).

Rossmo claims other members of the police department disagreed over whether the disappearing-women phenomenon really amounted to anything – prostitutes are transient by nature, many of them use aliases, and the often prefer to leave the profession without a trace, skeptics argued. “Look, these women are missing, but we’re going to find them over time,” he remembers a Major Crime Inspector saying then (www.vanmag.com).

Ex-Vancouver cop Kim Rossmo is the only person who worked in the department prepared to speak out about the fact that police did not take the case of the missing women from the Downtown Eastside seriously. Had they done so, more murders could have been prevented. We seethe with anger every time we think of the pathetically few resources devoted to the case until the last year (www.vancourier.com).

Senior officers allegedly ignored their own specialist’s warning of a serial killer operating in the downtown Eastside (www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca/issues/eastside_women05.html).

Dismissed claims of a serial killer by the police were also voiced by sex worker advocate Jamie Lee Hamilton, families and friends of the victim in news media texts Vancouver Courier, Vancouver Magazine, CBC News, and The Guardian:

The idea of a serial killer at work was discussed plenty of times, though police refused to publicly acknowledge that was a possibility. Praise must
be given to the family members of the missing women who never gave up and kept pushing police to investigate. Without their efforts, who knows how many more women would have gone missing (www.vancourier.com).

As long ago as 1983, Jamie Lee Hamilton, a long-time Downtown Eastside resident and an unspoken prostitute advocate, approached police with concerns that a serial killer was on the loose. “They were in denial and completely indifferent, in my opinion,” Hamilton says (www.vanmag.com).

Families of the missing women have accused Vancouver police of mishandling the investigation from the start by ignoring evidence that a serial killer was at work (www.cbc.ca/news).

Wayne Leng, a friend of another of the missing women, Sarah de Vries, says he had an anonymous tip that a prostitute who had visited the farm had spotted a number of women’s identification cards among Pickton’s possessions. He said he also passed this tip on to the police, with no apparent result (www.guardian.co.uk).

News media texts also provided statements in defence of accusations of police negligence (no sex worker advocacy text did so). Statements from police representatives in “Have You Seen These Women?” in Vancouver Magazine and statements in “A Working Girl’s Nightmare: The Murdered and Missing Women of Skid Row” First Nations’ Drum, attempt to justify police negligence. They claim police are hampered by lack of evidence, suspects, and witnesses.

Still, despite a growing public outcry, the VPD remains reluctant to concede that a serial killer is responsible. “As far as our official response goes, it’s not something that we would ever rule out,” driemel says. “However, there is no substantive evidence for us to conclude, at this point, that that is in fact the case. We have no bodies, we have no witnesses, we have no forensic evidence – we don’t even know exactly when these people went missing” (www.vanmag.com).

“I guess...that the problem still exists,” VPD sergeant Geramy Field admitted to the Vancouver Sun in April. “For awhile there – for the majority of 1999 – we felt that we didn’t have any more women going missing and that either somebody was in custody or the perpetrator had died or moved on.” (www.vanmag.com).
In many cases, police often only have access to the body dump site, not the murder scene, which one homicide detective said yields an estimated 75% of useful evidence. Police also cited the anonymity of the suspect and victim. People tend to notice what is out of place but street prostitutes are not noticed when they climb into a vehicle. The most common crime scene is a vehicle, but in very few cases are witnesses able to identify it. (www.firstnationsdrum.com).

Police and Dr. Elliot Leyton, a Newfoundland-based anthropologist who studies serial murder, similarly argue that the transient nature of prostitute women and the anonymity of suspects and victims seriously hamper effective police action.

Dr. Elliot Leyton, an anthropology professor at Memorial University in St. John’s, Newfoundland, who wrote a book on serial killers called Hunting Humans, says that police are rightly reluctant to identify serial murders because public panic often follows. “Responsible people have to be careful about making wild pronouncements about possible serial killers,” Leyton says. “And when we are not sure if it is true, then it is inappropriate to throw people into a state of panic. Prostitution is a very dangerous profession and many of the people in it are wanderers and not well connected to any conventional system of government controls or social services. So they can drift away from the system without being noticed for a very long time, even when nothing may have actually happened to them” (www.cbc.ca/news).

Leyton says that the difficulty in assembling a case is that these kinds of killers typically prey on strangers, so it becomes much more difficult for police to make the connections required to confirm the presence of a serial killer (www.cbc.ca).

The women’s unstable and alleged peripatetic lives made it difficult to label them “missing,” police said at the time, even though many regularly checked in with their families (www.vancourier.com).

In an interview with Leyton in CBC News, qualifies this, pointing to the movement of serial killers. However, he does not exonerate the police in the Vancouver instance.

“‘Often serial killers move around in vague, general, large areas, and they’re really hard to nail,’ said Leyton. ‘But when someone is picking up women from such a relatively confined area, from such a small social niche – street women – I mean, God in heaven, by serial killer

72

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investigation standards, it's relatively easy. When you have a number of people missing from a particular social type you have to ask questions” (www.cbc.ca).

The sex worker advocacy texts reaffirm Leyton’s observation. They contend that the police neglected to ask questions because of the victims’ statuses as prostitutes:

It is almost a fact that it is the stigma of prostitution that has permitted the disappearances to remain unsolved for so long (www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca/issues_women01.html).

The police have responded not with protection of women, but with street sweeps - stepping up the arrest of working women and clients. They are using prostitution as an excuse to deny women the protection we are all entitled to by law (http://allwomencount.net).

This status as prostitute confounds the marginalized status of these victims as impoverished and as drug addicts.

The prostitution, poverty and drug use attributed to the missing women has been identified as reasons for the low level of police activity on this case (www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca/issues_women01.html).

Most of the women on this Vancouver list were known to be prostitutes and or drug addicts. We believe this played a major role in why these women’s disappearances were not investigated thoroughly (www.geocities.com/waabzy1/quilt.html).

It is hard not to make assumptions about why this case has been treated so carelessly. The 10-block stretch of Hastings Street, where the 45 women have disappeared, is known as the Lower Track. It is a surreal terrain: Canada’s poorest postal code, an area with the highest intravenous drug use in the world, and an area where 80 percent of drug users engage in prostitution to support their drug addictions (www.realchangenews.org).

It’s their low status in the hierarchy of victims that kept their disappearances ignored by the police for so long, and it’s because of their low status that there’s no outcry on their behalf now (http://www.sabrinamehra.com/sabrinaspeak4.html).

The families also charge the police with neglecting the cases because many of the women were prostitutes and drug addicts (www.cbc.ca/news).
Three family members are suing police, the city and the government. Others want a public inquiry, saying the disappearances were ignored because the women were drug-addicted prostitutes (http://ca.news.yahoo.com).

This observation is also noted by the government of Canada:

I think many of us wonder, had these women not been sex trade workers or prostitutes, whether the investigation would have been treated differently, at a much earlier date and with a much more urgent priority (www.parl.gc.ca).

The illegality of prostitution constructs a status to prostitutes to justify punishing the outlaw prostitute by marginalization and dismissal. Forty-two percent of sex worker advocacy texts condemned what they maintain is a blatantly discriminatory, random and corrupt use or non-use of the law due to the semi-legal status of prostitution. Three of the nineteen texts generated from sex worker advocacy websites conveyed the societal construction of prostitutes as “sexual outlaws.” This is cogently illustrated in SWAV’s posting of the Xtra! West article “The issue that Won’t Go Away,” and SWAV’s letter to the editor of the Vancouver Sun in response to the article “Pimps and Predators,” “Victims Ignored in Two Serial Murder Cases” (Women’s E-News) and “A Working Girl’s Nightmare” (First Nations’ Drum):

Historically, lesbians and prostitutes, drag queens and gay men have been clumped together and ghettoized as sexual outlaws, deemed to be indecent and immoral (www.walnet.org/csis/news/vancouver_97/xtrawest_970710.html).

Prostitution itself has never been a crime in Canada, but activities associated with it are subject to criminal sanctions (www.walnet.org/csis/news/vancouver_97/xtrawest_970710.html).

Technically, it’s illegal to work for, live with, or even associate with a prostitute (http://walnet.org/csis/groups/swav/letters/pimp_letter.html).

In Canada, prostitution is legal but verbal solicitation in public is not (www.womensnews.com).
This alienates prostitutes from the protective powers of the police. For a prostitute to report an assault might entail that they were committing an offence, or violating a bail or probation area restriction (www.firstnationsdrum.com).

Sex workers and advocates are cognizant of the “sexual outlaw” status of prostitution. In Women’s E-News, the discussion board link, and the book review of Some Mother’s Daughter by the International Collective of Prostitutes, it is evident that prostitutes often self-prescribe this negative stereotype or status:

“Most prostitutes view themselves as outside the protection of the law unless they are an overt witness to an event,” a statement made by a spokeswoman for COYOTE, a San-Francisco-based organization (http://www.womensenews.org).

“People are threatened by what they see, because it represents something sinister in their perception. Well, the lifestyle is sinister, but that label shouldn’t automatically be placed on the woman involved” (http://pub.alxnet.com/guestbook).

“Vice girl, social pariah – these are some of the stereotypes about prostitutes” (www.bmj.com).

By stepping outside the normal parameters of legal control prostitutes are frequently denied the protection against violence normally afforded by the legal system. According to social constructionist theory, in the case of evaluating sympathy-worthiness, “in what may be a split second, a potential sympathizer considers the moral worthiness of the other, the sympathy-worthiness of the other’s plight, and one’s own situation relative to the other’s” (Miller and Holstein, 1993: 211). The semi- legality of prostitution conveys official sanction of category unworthiness of prostitute victims. Police and judicial responses occur within this officially constructed context. As the texts on police negligence demonstrate, when the victim category is constituted as that of prostitute
women, there is little concern among law enforcement personnel. Moreover, the judiciary, the public and media spheres within the community similarly are constructed as having adopted an attitude of negligence.

Judicial Neglect

In its denial and minimalization of prostitute victims of violence 26% of sex worker advocacy texts criticize the judiciary system of negligence. As emphasized in the statements in the sex worker advocacy texts of NSWP, the English Collective of Prostitutes, CSIS, BMJ and Vanished Voices, it is necessary to investigate not only the ‘front men’ of the legal system, the police, but also the judicial leaders who make the law.

The critique is directed towards judges and juries.

This suggests that men who murder women or girls involved in prostitution frequently have a past history of violence against such women and others. It is hugely important that crimes of violence against sex workers are investigated with the utmost diligence, and the criminal justice system, and the general public who make up juries, treat these crimes with the seriousness they deserve (www.walnet.org/csis/groups/nswp/europap.violence.html).

We will be there to ensure that violence against women, particularly sex workers, is taken seriously this time by the judicial system. At the last hearing of Bokin on October 16, US PROS picketed the court after it became public that in spite of a long record for violence and 22 charges associated with the attacks on prostitute women, judges had released Bokin on bail when he allegedly went on to attack another woman (www.allwomencount.net).

Judge Malone instructed the jury to bear in mind that Pamela George was a prostitute and that the defendants had reduced capacity because of drunkenness. Judge Malone’s efforts to afford the defendants their due rights have trivialized the life, death and memory of a young woman and disrespected her children, family and community. Judge Malone’s comments as expressed in instructions to the jury interfere with and detract from judicial responsibility of securing a verdict based on law,

12 See Appendix G (lb)
13 See Appendix G(III)
and are therefore irresponsible and unacceptable (http://walnet.org/csis/people/pam_george/jm_letter.html).

There is also evidence that some men who attack sex workers are habitually violent: of the men convicted for the UK murders, half are known to have previous convictions for violence. This underlines the importance of investigating all attacks against sex workers vigorously, to interrupt patterns of serial and escalating violence (www.bmj.com).

The justice system has failed these women’s families...I find it difficult to see the women’s families degraded and ashamed in such a disgraceful and disgusting manner of ill-repute, respect and consideration for those of the families of lost ones! Way too lenient (http://pub.alxnet.com/guestbook).

**Public Negligence**

Thirty-four percent of sex worker advocacy texts, and a third of news media texts, criticized the public of neglecting prostitute victims of serial murder. Criticisms of public negligence were described as inhumane, lacking public concern, sympathy and outrage for prostitute victims. These are forcefully epitomized in the statements by sex workers and advocates in the sex worker advocacy texts of NSWP, Vanished Voices, Real Change News, Women’s E-News, and Sabrina Speaks. They are also evident in news media texts generated by the Toronto Sun, The Independent, and The Peak.

Members of the public are often unwilling to get involved when they witness a disturbance. Public servants who foment anti-prostitute attitudes bear some responsibility for such indifference (www.walnet.org/csis/groups/nswp/europap.violence.html).

Ashamedly, perhaps, it was too easy to ignore the other victims – they were “low track” prostitutes, the girls who ply Parkdale and Regent Park, hollowed-eyed, whisper-thin girls fighting crack or booze, wasted bodies who sold themselves for twenty dollars so they could feed the monster within. Easy to dismiss. Even Donna’s friend, Robin, knows how unfair it is to think that way, but admits, she was guilty all the same. “We used to think, nah, he’s down on the low track, he’s going after junkies. I’m not being rude, but they’ve already wasted their lives. I know it’s wrong, but part of me thinks, why not stay with them (http://www.canoe.com/NewsStand/TorontoSun/home.html).
There is a fatal tendency for us to shrug our shoulders at such tragedies, and put them all down to endemic urban violence that can never be combated or confronted (http://independent.co.uk).

I personally knew about ten of the missing (murdered) women and I am quite saddened at the lack of humanity in humans on this planet. The society is responsible in part for this. As I read about the lack of concern about these women I am appalled at the way the city (VPD) is reacting. I will not be marginalized, minimized, and told to go away by a society that has bigotry, hate, sexism as “THEIR” so-called moral agenda (http://pub.alxnet.com/guestbook).

The humanization of the victims as family members, however, serves to counter the dehumanization of their prostitute and drug addict statuses.

I cannot begin to imagine the shock, horror, rage of the families. All these women, be they single mom, welfare, white, First Nations, black, are gone and no one seems to care (http://pub.alxnet.com/guestbook).

If anything good comes out of this, I honestly hope that the general public will develop a more constructive level of compassion for people in the sex trade as human beings (http://pub.alxnet.com/guestbook).

The humanization of prostitutes inherently entitles them to human rights.

In one of the richest countries in the world that prides itself on preservation of human rights, in a city that has been repeatedly judged to have a high standard of living, the perpetration of violence and assault against a specific segment of the population seems to arouse an insignificant level of public concern (www.peak.sfu.ca).

But other than the family of the victims and a handful of activists who aren’t taken seriously anyway, there has been no outrage expressed on behalf of these murdered women. There are no ribbon or vigils or introspective reflections, and there probably won’t ever be. To the average Canadian, sex trade workers are not palatable enough for sympathy, let alone outrage (www.sabrinamehra.com).

Two poetic statements made by friends of the prostitute victims capture the inherent humanness of these victims and of our duty as member of the public to care.

For an hour they wept over Donna’s beautiful face. “But then they had to close the coffin,” Robin says with a shudder. Tears were falling from Donna’s left eye. Tears, I think, for our shameful silence (http://www.canoe.com/NewsStand/TorontoSun/home.html).
Though people have seen me,
Though people have heard me,
Though people have mocked me,
I am not acknowledged.
I am cold, depressed, and lonely, though I am surrounded by people.
People look onward. Around me. Behind me. Above me. Struggling not
to recognize me
(www.vanishedvoices.com/Missingwomen.html)

**Media Negligence**

Both sex worker advocacy texts and news media texts constructed press coverage of the serial murder of prostitutes that focused on the negligence of the police, the judiciary and the public. The testimony, ironically, voiced by journalists in news media texts (The Independent and The Peak) expressed contempt of media neglect of prostitute victims who had been terrorized, mutilated and murdered. Both journalists claim that these acts had been rendered insignificant by the media.

Last year, the investigative journalist Maggie O’Kane looked into the deaths of women working as prostitutes. She found that more than 60 prostitutes had been murdered in the past ten years, and that most of these deaths were only given a tiny paragraph in the national press. No appeals for witnesses, no front pages of newspapers, no probing of the public memory for clues to their demise, no grand calls for their killers to be hanged. These deaths do not spark outrage (http://independent.co.uk).

But if the police are guilty of indifference, then so are the press and the public. As one police officer, Max McClean, told Maggie O’Kane. “The first decision police make when they find a prostitute who’d been murdered is whether to tell the press she’s a prostitute. Because you think, right, if I go to the press and say that a single mother has been brutally murdered in the street, then I’m going to get the shock, horror, I’m going to get people interested. Your general man in the street, I think, genuinely doesn’t care if a prostitute gets murdered (http://independent.co.uk).

The media texts display a postmodern reflexivity:

In spite of the recent regeneration of interest in to the case of Vancouver’s missing women from the Downtown Eastside, within weeks, intense media attention has already begun to wane. Perhaps in
response to our information age attention span, or to coincide with the
obsolesce style of postmodern times, the recently fashionable trend of
showing concern for the safety of women who must deal with the threat
of violence, assault and rape on a daily basis have already been reduced
to the muzak with accompanies more sensationalist headlines
(www.peak.sfu.ca).

The more bizarre and unusual the murder case, the more sensational, the more
interested the news media may be. This claim is advanced both in news media texts
posted on the websites of The Independent and Yahoo! News Canada, and the sex worker
advocacy texts of the CSIS and Real Change News sites.

Indeed, if it were not for the staggeringly gruesome way in which their
bodies were found, cut into pieces in bins in north London, one can
confidently say that most of us would never have heard about their
murders (www.independent.co.uk).

It is only when the murders occur in groups that there is anything
newsworthy about such stories (www.independent.co.uk).

The report also criticizes some of the media reporting on the case and
suggests educational institutions provide proper media training, adding
that stories must be accurate and verified (http://ca.news.yahoo.com).

Newspaper headlines would like to turn the reality of our lives into
breakfast jerk-off sessions, sensational instead of sensitive to the many
friends, family and community who were anxious at her disappearance
and despaired as the weeks crawled by
(http://walnet.org/csis/people/grayce_baxter/index.html).

For example, an otherwise good, long article in the Seattle Post
Intelligencer about the three 1998 victims of Seattle serial killer
DeWayne Lee Harris used what appeared to be mug shots with its front-
page article, and the painful subhead: “Crack addiction led three women
down tragic path” (www.realchang news.org).
Of Consequence - Societal Negligence

Seventy percent of sex worker advocacy texts and 70% of news media texts identified “continuance of male violence against prostitutes” to be a consequence of societal negligence.14 Thus, the capture of the killer takes low priority and the serial killer can hunt prostitute victims with relative impunity. Again, the theme of prostitutes denied humanity and inherent right to be recognized as worthy and fully human is evidenced.

Because she worked as a prostitute, someone believed they could violate her rights and even take her life with impunity (www.walnet.org/csis/groups/swav/letters/pam_letter.html).

And the sex trade workers? Their peers will never stand a chance if we don’t allow ourselves to feel outrage. Because if we don’t, no one ever will, and the cycle of violence will continue (www.sabrinamehra.com).

This denial of humanity is again linked with a lack of effective police action.

They target prostitutes because they know that we can’t go to the police and that police don’t take our allegations and injuries seriously (http://walnet.org/csis/groups/swav/letters/pimp_letter.html).

People often think that prostitutes have no community — no family, no friends, no loved ones. This is often the reason that prostitutes are the targets of violence — because society cares so little that no one will hunt for the perpetrator (http://walnet.org/csis/groups/swav/letters/grayce_letter.html).

The victimization of prostitutes is linked to the broader issue of violence against women:

We believe that if the VPD had taken earlier reports of missing loved ones seriously it never would have gotten to the point that there are now more than 50 women reported missing from the downtown eastside Vancouver alone. Study after study shows that an abuser repeats their actions over and over again until they are caught and stopped (www.geocities.com/waabzy1/quilt.html).

We know that this is not the only man who can have attacked women in the downtown eastside and we know that other men will continue to attack as long as the police response to any raped or battered woman remains inadequate (www.rapereliefsfelter.bc.ca/issues_women01.html).

14 See Appendix G (IV and V)
As a front-line worker at Vancouver Rape Relief and a Board member of the Downtown Eastside Women’s Centre – I have come to learn that not only are the police responding inadequately to cases of male violence against women, but their lack of effective response often allows for the violence to continue (www.rapereliefshelter.bc/ca/issues/eastside_women03.html).

The semi-legal status of prostitution is related to their victimization.

Prostitution laws signal to men that sex workers are criminals and that violence against those of us in the sex industry will be dealt with leniently or not at all (www.womensenews.com).

The consequences of societal negligence is captured in the poetic expression by a friend of the victim, and a news media commentator:

Is it for nothing?
You make the decision.
You disregarded us while we were here.
Will you let it happen yet again?
(www.vanishedvoicees.com/Missingwomen.html).

More tears shed, more fear expressed, more anger that a killer – or killers – stalks them with impunity. Yet listen to the silence (http://www.canoe.com/NewsStand/TorontoSun/home.html).

**The Sympathetic Victim: Good Girl vs. Bad Girl**

As evoked in the social constructionist literature, *Constructionist Controversies*, societal concern about the victim category in the serial murder of women increases when this category includes sympathy-worthy types of people (1993: 212). In the case of the serial murder of women, the sympathy worthy type is that of the “respectable women.” Twenty-four percent of response values for sex worker advocacy group texts (represented by the accounts of Vanished Voices, BMJ, and First Nations’ Drum) and 25% of news media texts (*Vancouver Magazine*) made reference to non-prostitute serial murder victims to compare the dichotomous treatment of prostitute and non-prostitute victims. Again, this endorses the denial of prostitute women’s humanity.
We suspect if even three white middle class housewives went missing from any area of the country, an investigation would have begun immediately (www.geocities.com/waazbyl/quilt.html).

If these women were what society calls “normal, well-adjusted” individuals, the police would have taken action years ago...should I say ‘more’ action, ‘more’ effort (www.pub.alxnet.com/guestbook).

Only when “ordinary women are attacked does such violence become noteworthy (www.bmj.com).

Police Media Liaison officer Anne Drennan points out that if 31 university co-eds were to go missing, their friends and relatives would report it immediately and the details of their recent whereabouts would be known. With street prostitutes...Drennan lets her hands fall open, upward and empty (www.firstnationsdrum.com).

She believes that if the missing women were Kitsilano joggers or Kerrisdale socialites, detectives would be pursuing the investigation with considerably more vigour (www.vanmag.com).

The most relevant example of this dichotomous treatment, provided by the International Prostitutes Collective and the English Collective of Prostitutes, is that of the Yorkshire Ripper case. Prior to the Vancouver spate of prostitute murders, this case was the exemplar in the literature.

When the Yorkshire Ripper, an English serial killer, was terrorizing women in northern England the media distinguished between prostitutes and “innocent” victims. The attorney general declared that “perhaps the saddest part of this case is that...the last six attacks were on totally respectable women.” After one of the murders, the police warned that the next victim could be “somebody’s daughter,” as if the murdered prostitutes were not part of anybody’s family (www.bmj.com).

The police did not take the Ripper murders seriously until a “respectable” woman was killed. The media followed their line, labeling the murdered

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15 Between 1975 and 1984 Sutcliffe was known as the “Yorkshire Ripper” as he terrorized prostitutes around Northern England with his hammer and other instruments of torture. A former mortuary worker, Sutcliffe apparently spoke with God frequently. The good Lord ordered him to go out and hunt prostitutes and he did as he was told. On January 2, 1981, the Yorkshire Ripper’s five-year reign of terror came to an end. Sutcliffe was finally caught sitting in a car with a prostitute. While in custody he confessed everything. In the previous five years, beginning in July 1975 with his first attack, he had killed thirteen women and left seven others for dead (http://www.murderuk.com/serialkillers/petersutcliffe.htm).
women as prostitutes, thus giving the impression that non-prostitute women were safe. The Yorkshire Ripper killed 13 women and attacked seven others, many of whom were not prostitutes, as a result (http://allwomencount.net/MidlandMurders.htm).

As stated in the literature by Nagle (1997), “in the distinction between the Ripper’s “innocent,” “respectable” victims, and the “unrespectable,” guilty prostitutes and loose women, Sir Michael Havers, the Yorkshire Police, and the media, drew on an understanding and morality that predated the trial” (1997: 113). According to Nagle, patriarchy plays a large part in the conceptions of female sexuality.

“The distinction between women – as asexual and pure, or sexual, desired and hated – is centrally rooted within patriarchal “common sense” notions of women. The traditional “virgin/whore” dichotomy operates as a means of policing women’s sexuality – the control of these categories resides within the male arbiter or labeler” (1197:114).

By stepping outside the parameters of male control, as demonstrated by journalists of Sabrina Speak, Women’s E-News, The Independent, and The Guardian, the prostitute is reviled as an “unacceptable victim.” Discourses on the Vancouver murders challenge this. At the same time it challenges the dehumanization of prostitutes, it claims animals are actually more valued.

The murdered sex trade workers are not acceptable victims. To the average Canadian, sex trade workers are not palatable enough for sympathy, let alone outrage (www.sabrinamehra.com/sabrinaspeak4.html).

They did not, nor will they ever, qualify as victims in the eyes of the greater society (www.sabrinamehra.com/sabrinaspeak4.html).

One unidentified family member told a local television station: “I got more response from the Society for the Protection and Concern of Animals about my lost dog than from the police about my sister’s disappearance” (www.womensenews.com).

“If six dogs from the neighbourhood had disappeared, there would have been more done,” says Kathleen Hallmark-McClelland, mother of one of the victims (www.guardian.co.uk).

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For Bridgette MacClennan, no tragic note was discernible. The news of her identity was touched on briefly well inside the newspapers, and the facts of her life were stated without a smidgeon of sympathy. “Men used to arrive at her dingy home in a rundown council block at all times of the day and night,” one newspaper explained, and neighbours were questioned to provide a bleak commentary. “She was the neighbour from hell.” Already “from hell,” somebody like Bridgette McClellan is not seen as wholly innocent. And if she is not really innocent, can she be a true victim? And without a true victim, can this be a real tragedy? And if this is not a real tragedy, then it will never become a focus for grief or anger (www.theindependent.co.uk).

Thus, as stated by journalists (The Independent), by advocates (NSWP and SWAV, the English Collective of Prostitutes, and Vanished Voices) the prostitute is socially constructed as an acceptable target of male violence. She is an expendable human being, punished for her transgressions, with ritual destruction traditionally meted out to the “bad girl,” the “whore” (Nagle, 1997: 115).

In this indifferent culture, prostitutes are even seen as acceptable targets of male violence (http://independent.co.uk).

Sex workers are seen as “disposable,” their rights to protection under the law are disregarded (www.walnet.org/csis/groups/nswp/europap.violence.html).

It is the belief of many that certain “minorities” are disposable... First Nation’s people, prostitutes, drug addicts, women and the homeless” (www.geocities.com/waabzy1/quilt.html).

Frequently the language used at public forums to discuss prostitution descends to vilification and abuse: women are referred to as “scum” and “filth to be cleared off the streets” (www.walnet.org/csis/groups/nswp/europap.violence.html).

I look at the picture, then stop to read the caption: “Vancouver’s prostitutes keep showing up dead in trash compactors, notes activist Jamie Lee Hamilton.” The photo is a flattering shot of Hamilton, leaning up against a dumpster. A pair of mannequin’s legs, one foot in a high-heeled shoe, sticks out of the corner of the bin. Letter to Xtra! West. (www.walnet.org/csis/groups/swav/letters/grayce_letter.html).
“The message the court sent out to the public in this case,” says Rachel West, spokeswoman for US PROS, “is that prostitute women’s lives have little or no value and are not worthy of protection” (http://allwomencount.net/EXC%20Sex%20Workers/bokin.html).

As poetically stated by SWAV’s Andrew Sorfleet, a sex worker advocate:

We’re not disposable like an old pair of mannequin’s legs thrown in the trash. A dumpster is not a grave (www.walnet.org/csis/groups/swav/letters/grayce_letter.html).

Aboriginals, however, have historically been dehumanized as people, not only as women or prostitutes.

The implications of the lesser verdict of manslaughter in this case are far beyond conveying a simple insidious message that (prostitute) women, especially Aboriginal women, are disposable. Letter to House of Commons, Ina George (www.walnet.org/csis/groups/swav/letters/pam_letter.html).

Similar to sex worker advocacy texts, news media articles “Preying on Weak Makes Serial Killers Hard to Detect,” “If the Girls Had Been Dogs the Police Would Have Done More,” and “All Victims of Murder Should Be Treated Equally” (The Vancouver Sun, The Guardian and The Independent) imparted the societal constructions of prostitutes as disposable:

A standard report form used by the major crime section of the investigation division includes space in which to enter the number of “female victims” and “male victims” and a third category: “prostitutes.” Critics say the form reflects the police view of prostitutes as disposable human beings (www.guardian.co.uk).

“Most of the victims of serial killers would fall within what I would define as ‘the less dead,’” said Egger. “The prostitutes, the homeless, the vagabonds, people with not a lot of power and prestige” (http://www.canada.com/vancouver/vancouversun/).

Death comes equally to us, as John Donne said. That is true, but even in death people are not equal. In the public domain, there are only certain murders that really count....Your general man in the street, I think, doesn’t care if a prostitute gets murdered (www.theindependent.co.uk).
The following statements, of a mother of a victim, and a sex worker advocate, outline the consequence of the “dispensability” of prostitutes, especially, perhaps when they are Aboriginal:

The implications of the lesser verdict of manslaughter in this case are far beyond conveying a simple, insidious message that women, especially Aboriginal women, are disposable. Indeed, should this verdict remain unchallenged, that message becomes case in legal precedent. http://walnet.org/csis/people/pam_george/mj_letter.html

When women’s lives are dispensable, then the likes of Gilbert Paul Jordan and Robert William Pickton can come out and perform without fear of any consequences. www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca/issues/eastside_women02.html

As demonstrated in the subsequent statements by advocates and journalists in the texts of SWAV and First Nations’ Drum, the actions of serial killer mirror this societal attitude. His disposal of the prostitutes’ bodies express this. They are treated as expendable objects, and are typically disposed – as garbage.

In 1992, a dear friend, and colleague of mine was murdered, her body dismembered and thrown in garbage bags in a dumpster (www.walnet.org/csis/swav/letters/tonner_letter3.html)

“She was posed, with her skirt over her head and her panties at her ankles,” rages Anastasia Kuzyk of Sex Workers’ Alliance. “Dumped like a sack of garbage” (www.walnet.org/csis/swav).

They wrestle some more and Johnson gets Candace into a headlock. He mounts her from behind, choking her as he rapes her. Candace gasps loudly for breath and then stops as he crushes her windpipe. Her body expires...Johnson takes his tools with him in the washroom. He begins the job of chopping it up. Then he starts stuffing garbage bags, wrapping her body parts with bits of her clothing and then in bag over bag. Then, having to make several trips as inconspicuously as possible, he carries the bags one after another out to the dumpster behind his apartment building (www.walnet.org/csis/groups/swav/letters/grayce_letter.html).

The driver of the giant compactor disposal truck slid the forks of his behemoth into a dumpster filled with construction waste and raised it high. Something fell off the container, landing with a thud beside the truck...What he found was a small duffel bag, stuffed and crammed with
the body of a young native prostitute woman, chin crushed into her knees, wrapped in a cotton comforter, her hair pulled up in a ponytail (www.firstnationsdrum.com/fall2000/cult_missing.htm).

The Serial Killer: The Socially Constructed Patriarchal Zealot

It was found that there was a scarcity of information provided by the texts on the serial killer himself. However, quintessentially, it was found that the serial killer is socially constructed as a creation of his civilization – a participant in patriarchal, male culture. As depicted by the NSWP, Real Change News, and First Nation’s Drum, the serial killer is a representative of the broader category of men, or at least men living within a patriarchal culture. Though it is not implied by these texts that all men are serial killers, all are portrayed as having this potential, as all men are portrayed as having the potential to inflict violence against women.

In eight of 16 cases, the men convicted had previous convictions for violence, including murder, manslaughter, rape and assault. This suggests that men who murder women or girls involved in prostitution frequently have a past history of violence against women (www.walnet.org/esis/groups/nswp/europap.violence.html).

“There are so many guys capable of this, it’s mind-boggling. It’s not like we’re lacking suspects.” This raises the equally horrifying prospect that there are multiple killers preying on vulnerable women” (www.realchangenews.org).

That made them targets for predatory and misogynistic men (www.firstnationsdrum.com/fall2000/cult_missing.htm).

As Jenkins (1994) contends in his chapter on femicide in his work Using Murder, feminists locate male violence against women in the realm of the political. “It expresses not purely individual anger and frustration but a collective, culturally sanctioned activity” (1994: 159). Only 10% of response values for sex worker advocacy texts conveyed a message that “the tenets of misogyny are accepted and legitimized by society” however. The wider context that makes possible brutal killings, is from a feminist perspective, one
of widespread misogyny and a culture that encourages and supports a male sexuality based on violence and aggression towards women. This argument is conveyed by SWAV, NSWP, First Nations' Drum, and The Independent:

It is certainly true with all the assaults and even heinous murders, that sex workers are targeted victims of violent crimes, obviously motivated by hate. Hate, that seems to be, socially sanctioned (www.walnet.org/csis/groups/swav/letters/tonner_letter3.html).

Collusion with such attitudes (reference to prostitutes as “scum”) on the part of policy makers and public servants gives permission to those who hate and fear women to vent their aggression on sex workers (www.walnet.org/csis/groups/nswp/europap.violence.html).

Prostitutes are vulnerable to the continuum of misogynist violence inherent in our culture. As one 31 year veteran of the Vancouver Police put it, the maliciousness and viciousness of some of the sexual assaults and murders is “beyond belief.” He described the behaviour of many of the men who assault prostitutes as “very physical... very intimate... and designed to hurt” (www.firstnationsdrum.com).

A popular Christmas present for many young men this year was a video game called Grand Theft Auto, in which part of the fun to be had includes picking up virtual prostitutes, and then, to increase one’s score, killing them. There is said to be a choice of weapons, from chainsaw to screwdriver to baseball bat. Apparently the images include those of blood spattering from the body of the female victim on to the male figure, the player, as he beats the woman to death (www.theindependent.co.uk).

At the same time, while only 10% target misogyny, looking to social norms, institutions, and ideologies, 31% of sex worker advocacy and news media texts construct the base of serial murder of prostitutes upon the patriarchal foundations of society. Both sex worker advocacy (40%) and news media (50%) texts, primarily constructed the serial murder of prostitutes as political - the “sex” in sexual murder of prostitutes is precisely this patriarchal, fundamentally political, sex. Hence, the serial murder is essentially

\[16 \text{ See Appendix G (VI)}\]
constructed as crimes of sexual/political – essentially patriarchal – domination. This is evidenced in the statements made by advocates, sex workers, friends of victims, and concerned citizens in the texts generated by the discussion forum, www.pub.alxnet.com/guestbook. It is also the position of the Vancouver Rape Relief and Women’s Shelter:

None of this had to happen, but it did. The reason it did is because our society is still running around with Victorian attitudes about sex. And women. I wonder what would have happened if these were 50+ missing men? (http://pub.alxnet.com/guestbook).

I will not be marginalized, minimized, and told to go away by a society that has bigotry, hate, sexism as “THEIR” so-called moral agenda (http://pubalxnet.com/guestbook).

This message is for the 50 bravest souls in this world and on the planet and for every female that is going to tear this grotesque male-dominated society with all your double standards and disgusting ethics. Who do you think put these women in this position in the first place? (http://pubalxnet.com/guestbook).

After all, it seems predominantly the males who perpetrate these crimes against humanity (http://pubalxnet.com/guestbook).

Certainly the numbers of missing women from the downtown core has increased alarmingly in the past few years. These attacks are primarily about sexism. It is not the men who are disappearing in droves from the streets of downtown (www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca/issues/eastside_women04.html).

They are attacked mostly because they are women (www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca/issues/eastside_women04.html).

**Sex Worker Advocacy**

According to social problems theory, “while the identification and acknowledgement of problematic conditions is a necessary element in the process of defining social phenomena, it is not a sufficient element: the symbolic task of any movement is to construct new meanings and values” (Best, 1995:104). Representatives of the prostitutes’
rights movement have developed a critique of societal constructions of prostitution by challenging historically developed and contemporary images of prostitution, while at the same time, putting forth a new image of the prostitute.

New images of the prostitute as a “legitimate worker”, a “woman”, and “equally human,” have been constituted within the organization of the electronic sex worker advocacy movement to challenge and deconstruct traditional societal views of prostitutes as “sexual outlaws,” and counter the subsequent societal devaluation of prostitutes as “disposable.” Organizations, included in the study, that were found to champion these new images of prostitutes included the websites of sex worker’s rights activist groups, victim support groups, and memorial pages.

**Sex Worker’s Rights Activist Groups**

A classified source of sex worker advocacy, sex worker’s rights activist groups – SWAV, CSIS, NSWP and the English Collective of Prostitutes – consists of national and international organizations of sex workers, advocates and other members. Their common interest is to promote prostitutes’ legal rights, undertaking actions such as protests, public speeches, and press conferences to construct a new image of prostitutes as legitimate workers.

Sex workers and activists are challenging traditional views of prostitutes as social misfits, in attempting to change the discourse of prostitutes as “sexual outlaws.” For example, “Myths about Prostitution: Separating Fact from Fiction,” is a hyperlink on the SWAV website, utilized to counter images of prostitution historically associated with sin, crime and illicit sex. It seeks to replace the master concept of deviancy as the fundamental stance of society towards prostitution. A new image of prostitution has been constructed within the sex rights activist movement, redefining prostitutes as autonomous workers.
As stated by Jenness (1990) in the literature, “From Sex as Sin to Sex as Work”, as advocates of the position that sex workers are labourers, the sex worker's rights movement is based upon participation and input from sex workers who are currently working or who have worked in the sex industry. They advocate better conditions for those who continue to work, as demonstrated by Jamie Lee Hamilton and Andrew Sorfleet. Jamie Lee Hamilton is a long time social activist and former sex trade worker, and she is a transsexual candidate in 1996 for Vancouver city council and park board. Hamilton asserts that in framing the social problem of prostitution as licit or legitimate, the activities of sex worker advocacy seek to take “ownership” of the problem of prostitution away from traditional experts. They do so by disavowing prostitutes’ deviant status, and legitimating the work of prostitutes:

Any proposal to license prostitutes as street vendors is significant in that it redefines the prostitute as a licensed worker and would require legitimizing the activities surrounding prostitution (www.walnet.org/csis/news/vancouver_97/xtrawest_970710.html).

Andrew Sorfleet is a former prostitute and activist in the AIDS and gay movements, and a spokesperson for Sex Workers Alliance of Vancouver (SWAV). Sorfleet situates the image of prostitution firmly in the discourse of work, choice and civil rights, emphasizing that prostitutes are not victims, but autonomous workers, and hence, agents of their own sexuality.

If Inspector Ken Doem sees sex workers as “already being victimized,” then he is denying the reality that most of us are capable and competent to make a conscious decision to work in the business(www.walnet.org/csis/groups/swav/letters/pimp_letter.html).

To be a pro you gotta have confidence – you can handle it; you can handle yourself; you know it. You’re on top. But the truth is that prostitutes have never had the right to work free of prejudice, of hatred, of violence – and of fear. We’re expected to take it with the job... Well, we’re not going to take it with the job. We will not stand by and let you
murder our colleagues, our lovers and our friends. It does not come with
the territory. And may we never stop fighting until we can all work in
safety – free of violence, of hatred, of prejudice, and most of all, fear
(www.walnet.org/csis/people/grayce_baxter/index.html).

Victim Support Groups
A second source classifiable as sex worker advocacy, is that of Vancouver Rape Relief
and Women’s Shelter, a women’s support group consisting of organizations of feminist,
volunteers, sex workers, advocates and other members. Their common interest is to
advance prostitutes’ rights to safety and protection from violence. As outlined in its texts,
the Vancouver Rape Relief undertakes actions such as protests, marches, memorials and
press conferences to construct prostitutes as women. This is evidenced in a statement
issued by the Downtown Eastside Women’s Centre made at a press conference, and
posted on the website of Vancouver Rape Relief and Women’s Shelter.

We want to point out that these women are women. They are women as
much as the woman who shops on South Granville; the woman who goes
to classes at UBC; the woman who walks the picket line for her union
(www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca/issues/eastside_women04.html).

An article entitled “A Working Girl’s Nightmare: the Murdered and Missing Women of
Skid Row” published on the website of First Nations’ Drum, emphasizes the construction
of prostitutes as women, and not merely as drug addicts or prostitutes in media coverage
of the Vancouver murders.

Buried in the massive coverage of the Ridgway arrest are file
photographs of the women victims. Mercifully, they have not always
been mug shots; more often they’ve been family photos of smiling
women accompanied by respectful stories about the longstanding pain of
those who loved and miss their daughters and sisters
(www.firstnationsdrum.com).

Often, the point of these memorials and vigils is this: It could have been
one of our own. It was one of our own, or dozens of our own women
murdered or disappeared from Pacific Highway South in 1982-84, 45
women currently missing from the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, B.C. (www.firstnationsdrum.com).

Similarly, in “Privatized Justice, No Justice for Women,” the Vancouver Rape Relief and Women’s Shelter constructs prostitutes as women, challenging traditional societal perceptions of prostitutes as “expendable objects.” This serves to legitimate prostitutes as worthy or “true” victims.

I ask you – what has brought these women to the streets of the downtown eastside? Can we, as a society, blame these women for their drug addiction? Can we write them off because they were prostitutes? www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca/issues/eastside_women02.html).

Alternatively, in “Privatized Justice, No Justice for Women,” the Vancouver Rape Relief constructs the image of prostitutes as “women” by incorporating the serial murder of prostitutes into the construction of institutionalized violence against women.

Anti-violence feminists have an agenda of making the state accountable to the public and our agenda is political: women’s rights (www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca/issues/eastside_women05.html).

My organization, Vancouver Rape Relief and Women’s Shelter has not been reticent about the case of the missing women. We’ve spoken publicly, rallied, organized, criticized, held press conferences, provided services and performed advocacy work that has saved women’s lives since and before 1984. Canadian feminists organized transition houses and rape crisis centres a decade earlier. Callers, residents and workers in these centres continue to include prostituted women. We are intensely affected by the missing women case (www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca/issues/eastside_women05.html).

**Memorial Groups**

The third source of sex worker advocacy is Vanished Voices, a memorial site for the missing and murdered women of Vancouver created by family members and friends of prostitute victims. Vanished Voices and its discussion forum link, www.pub.alxnet.com/guestbook, construct prostitute victims as people, as humans.
Here too there is a conscious and concerted effort to counteract societal constructions of prostitute women as disposable. In so doing, these texts designate the deaths of prostitutes as a significant loss of human life.

I have prayed. I have begged. I have pleaded. To be seen and heard. As a human. As a life. As a person (www.vanishedvoices.com/Missingwomen.html).

If anything good comes out of this, I honestly hope that the general public will develop a more constructive level of compassion for people in the sex trade as human beings – with family, friends, feelings, dreams and disappointments (www.pub.alxnet.com/guestbook).

These are our Canadians that are being slaughtered and we should be ashamed of ourselves (www.pub.alxnet.com/guestbook).

Never mind those idiots that think that because they were street workers that they didn’t matter – people just don’t realize that they are people (www.pub.alxnet.com/guestbook).

Yet with this grief, anger and remorse comes a community that will hopefully come together and get stronger for the rights of women of all walks of life (www.pub.alxnet.com/guestbook).

Are not all humans equal? (http://pub.alxnet.com/guestbook).

**Electronic Sex Worker Advocacy – The Political Stance**

In replacing the traditional societal constructions of prostitutes with new images that legitimate prostitutes, electronic sex worker advocacy groups struggle towards the goals to gain support and change policy around the issues surrounding prostitution.

Sex worker rights activist groups, in constructing the image of prostitutes as legitimate workers, aspire to promote the legal rights of prostitutes. SWAV draws on the shared sexual deviant status of prostitutes and homosexuals as “sexual outlaws.” It seeks to establish a parallel between the goals of sex worker rights activists, and those of the gay activist movement. It is the achievements of legal protection and social acceptance attained by the gay and lesbian movement for which sex workers continue to struggle.
After decades of struggle for sexual self-determination, gays and lesbians, though still an oppressed group, enjoy far more legal protection and social acceptance than before. Evidence of this rise in social status was the impressive list of openly gay or lesbian candidates running for Vancouver city council and park board in 1996 (www.walnet.org/csis/news/vancouver_97/xtrawest_970710.html).

Many of my friends found tears welling in their eyes and remembered a special friend or co-worker who was killed or hurt during the course of working. Anyone who has worked in the trade knows this reality. It is that experience of loss and fear that has made many prostitutes want to work to change the laws and the way society sees us (www.walnet.org/csis/groups/swav/letters/pam_letter.html).

The legal status of prostitution is now a focus of political and legislative concern. This is evidenced in Miss Libby Davies’ (Vancouver East, NDP) motion that recommends “a special committee of the House be appointed to review the solicitation laws.” This motion seeks to improve the safety of sex trade workers and sex worker communities implicitly through full decriminalization of prostitution and changes to reduce the exploitation and violence in the sex industry.

It was because of some of the underlying issues around the role the Criminal Code plays in the laws pertaining to solicitation, around criminalization of sex trade workers that I brought forward the motion. I believe we need a review of the federal laws pertaining to solicitation that put so many of these women on the street at risk. It is important that we not only try to improve their safety and reduce violence and exploitation but that we also try to improve their safety and reduce violence and exploitation but that we also try to improve safety overall in the community. To a number of cities in Canada, there is a lot of evidence and reports that have shown the federal soliciting laws are actually putting a lot of women on the street at risk (www.parl.gc.ca).

As outlined in “Recent Legislative Developments” (Juristat: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics) and section 210 to 213 of the Criminal Code, the quasi-legal status of prostitution is defined.

Until the early 1970s, prostitution was treated as a “status” offence associated with vagrancy; that is, a prostitute found in a public place who
could not provide a satisfactory reason for being there could be arrested. In contrast, the soliciting law, introduced in 1972, focused on behaviour by prohibiting individuals from soliciting others in a public place for prostitution. In the early 1980s, the federal government established the “Fraser Committee” to assess the adequacy of the laws related to prostitution. Following these consultations, the “communicating” law replaced the soliciting law in December 1985. The purpose of the communicating law, which remains in force today, is to maintain public order by making prostitution less visible, and therefore less of a nuisance, to the general public. Although the laws does not make the act of prostitution itself a crime, it is illegal to communicate with another person in public to buy or sell sexual services. The legislation applies to both prostitutes and clients of either sex (Juristat, 1999).

The relevant section of the Criminal Code (sections 210 through 213) target only activities associated with sex work, including: keeping or being found in a common bawdy house (s.210), procuring or living off the avails of prostitution (s.212), communication in a public place for the purposes of prostitution (s.213), and purchasing sexual services from someone under 18 years of age (s.212(4)) (Lewis and Maticka-Tyndale, 2000: 439)

Street work is very dangerous, and only rarely does policing and “management” of street soliciting focus on the safety of women. According to the advocacy group NSWP, policing focuses on the illegal nature of prostitution, pooling its resources into the harassing strategies and arrest of prostitutes: “Police forces are encouraged to focus resources on the offences that women are committing, usually soliciting or loitering, which are not even imprisonable offences (www.walnet.org/csis/groups/nswp/europap.violence.html).” Sex worker advocacy texts from the English Collective of Prostitutes, and Vancouver Rape Relief and Women’s Shelter, First Nation’s Drum represent approximately 40% of sex worker advocacy texts. The texts criticize police hostility and harassment of prostitutes, especially the tactic of street-sweeping as this practice forces prostitute women into dangerous situations.

Street sweeps also make it more dangerous for women to work by driving women into unfamiliar neighborhoods where they are less able to protect themselves and each other (http://allwomencount.net).

The police have responded not with protection of women, but with street sweeps - stepping up the arrest of working women and clients (http://allwomencount.net).

At least six women have been murdered this year in the Midlands and North of England - four have been labeled as prostitutes by the police. The police have responded not with protection of women, but with street sweeps, stepping up the arrest of working women and clients (http://allwomencount.net).

Street working women take clients to dark, out-of-the-way places, to avoid attention of police: it is at this point that most attacks take place (www.walnet.org/csis/groups/nswp/europap.violence.html).

The police’s harassing strategies have been part of the problem. In fact, tactics like harassing street addicts by doing “sweeps” forces addicted women into unsafe situations where they are often hidden from the safety of the public eye. The police, by harassing and bullying prostituted women instead of going after the men who participate in the buying and selling of women reveals that their priorities come at the expense of keeping women safe and free from male violence (www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca/issues/eastside_women03.html).

Professor John: “The police and the politicians actively created the problem they are now trying to fix. The rhetoric of the ‘80s and early ’90 was: ‘We’ll get rid of the prostitutes.’ The idea of eliminating prostitution in Vancouver has translated tragically into REALLY getting rid of prostitutes. We chase them from one area to another. They find themselves in dark streets in defenceless situations. They get into strangers’ cars. There are no eyes there. But there ARE men who get off on violence. They see the women’s vulnerability (www.firstnationsdrum.com).

These texts support the position advanced by NSWP, that:

Public policy regarding prostitution must further recognize and address sex workers’ rights to protection under the law. Since it is clear and evident that current policing strategies neither eliminate prostitution nor protect the safety of those involved, a major review of such strategies is needed (www.walnet.org/csis/groups/nswp/europap.violence.html).
Thirty-one percent of sex worker advocacy texts, as stated by International Prostitutes Collective and the English Collective of Prostitutes, promote decriminalization of prostitution across national jurisdiction:

The chapter based on an interview with a member of the San Francisco Task Force on Prostitution examines potential strategies and draws distinctions between different policy options. For example, it discusses decriminalization, legalization, and zoning – supporting the first option but opposing the latter two on the grounds that they will be used to control women (www.bmj.com).

We support the decriminalization of prostitution, because we believe that if soliciting was not a crime, the disappearance of each and every one of these women would have been taken seriously from the beginning (www.allwomencount.net).

“There is widespread support for prostitution to be decriminalized. Women know that none of us is safe if prostitute women aren’t safe” (www.allwomencount.net).

SWAV (the Xtra West article) and a concerned citizen on the Vanished Voices discussion link support legalization or licensing of prostitution as a viable solution. This position is advanced in 20% of the sex worker advocacy texts analyzed in my study. Most favoured decriminalization, not licensing.¹⁸

“A grass-roots based alliance of sex workers and their supporters contend that prostitutes are not criminals, but agents of their own sexuality. They are “autonomous workers” who require workplace safety” (http://walnet.org/csis/news/vancouver_97/xtrawest-970710.html).

“If we had to be licensed we should be licensed by a worker’s union or a professional association of our peers...the discussion about prostitution does not belong in the arena of criminal courts and social services but rather in the sphere of the workplace” (http://walnet.org/csis/news/vancouver_97/xtrawest 970710.html).

While we’re at it, since the sex industry is just that, a huge industry, legalize it and tax it. This would provide a safe place for people who choose to make their living this way (www.pub.alxnet.com/guestbook).

¹⁸ See Appendix G(VII)
City Council's role, aside from providing licenses which impose some control on street prostitutes, would be, "to ensure safety in the streets, in the parks, and throughout our communities" (http://walnet.org/csis/news/vancouver_97/xtrawest-970710.html).

The English Collective of Prostitutes argues that the legalization and decriminalization of prostitution would promote the safety and protection of prostitutes from violence, an argument outlined in Davies' motion discussed above:

These serial murders are quickly becoming another Ripper case. In order to save the lives of many women, we demand: an end to street sweeps against prostitute women and clients; a change in police priorities - money and resources which are being used to arrest prostitute women must be turned over to catching violent men, women's safety must come first; an end to criminal charges aimed at forcing prostitute women out of premises which are safer to work from (http://allwomencount.net).

We are urging MPs, Police Committees, Community Affairs Committees in areas where the murders have taken place, the All Party Parliamentary Group on Prostitution, and Church leaders to support our call for action which targets the murderers, not prostitute women (http://allwomencount.net).

The mandates posted on the websites of NSWP, SWAV, CSIS, and the English Collective of Prostitutes reflect the aims of sex worker rights activism to advocate for the protection of prostitutes' rights as legitimate workers. This is only possible if and when prostitution is legalized. As the following quotations demonstrate, sex worker advocates have been working towards this goal for more than a decade.19

The NSWP was founded in 1991 as an informal alliance of sex workers and advocates which participates in independently financed projects in partnership with member organizations and technical support agencies. An interim board has been established to take the network to its next stage as a legally constituted international organization to promote sex workers health and human rights (www.walnet.org/csis/groups/nswp.html).

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19 Since the birth of the international prostitutes' rights movement in the 1970s, sex workers' rights advocates have consistently promoted strategies of decriminalization rather than legalization. While decriminalization entails only the removal of criminal penalties for sexual commerce, legalization implies state regulation of the trade. (Legalization, Regulation, and Licensing)
The Sex Workers Alliance of Vancouver (SWAV) was founded in 1994 to fight for sex workers’ right to fair wages and to working conditions that are safe, clean and healthy. Its members are people who work or have worked in the sex industry, and our friends. We meet informally to develop and implement ways to make the sex trade a safer and healthier occupation (www.walnet.org/csis/groups/swav.html).

CSIS is not an agency of the government, nor does it receive any government funding. This site is maintained by generous donations and the labour and love of volunteers. CSIS networks with the Sex Workers Alliance of Vancouver as well as other sex-worker groups in Canada and abroad, so we can serve the most up-to-date and comprehensive information about the sex trade and prostitutes’ rights (www.walnet.org/csis.html).

We (the English Collective of Prostitutes) are in touch with sex workers and/or women who work with sex workers in many countries: Hong Kong, Japan, Sierra Leone, Thailand, Trinidad & Tobago, Uganda...Although each situation is different, we all face poverty, lack of economic alternatives, criminalization and abuse of power by the authorities (http://allwomencount.net/EWC%20Sex%20Workers/IPCpage.htm).

The sex worker’s rights activist websites of SWAV, CSIS, NSWP and the English Collective of Prostitutes provide information around sex work as it relates to laws, sexual health, and commerce. These websites are an essential tool in dispersing and supporting the constructed image of prostitutes as legitimate workers, and therefore as worthy citizens with legal and human rights.

**The Victim Stance**

Countering ‘free’ and ‘autonomous’ workers is a construction of prostitute women as victim of their circumstance, as poor women. As argued in the article “Stop the Serial Killer/s – Stop Police Sweeps,” by the English Collective of Prostitutes, many women suffer poor economic conditions, with little opportunity for economic gain. Hence, the claim advanced in *Prostitutes, Punters, and the Police* (Sharpe, 1998) contends that

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women are often forced into prostitution by extreme economic necessity or deprivation.

Given the difficult economic pressures and circumstances faced by women, prostitution is
a reasonable option" (1998: 85). This argument of economic duress counters and
undermines images of prostitution as freely chosen and legitimate activity. It reminds us
of the contradictory and tenuous status of this field of work and of the challenges of
politics aimed at significant change.

Like homeless people who are forced to beg, women who work on the
streets may have no other means of making a living – the need to put
food on the table is more urgent than the fear of death. Government
figures show that the number of people living below the poverty line has
more than doubled since 1979 and that there are more than 76,000
teenagers in Britain without any income. A Birmingham Councillor is
quoted as saying that half the people in Birmingham area live on or
below Income Support level. Black women and women with disabilities
who have the lowest wages and the least employment opportunities, are
often forced to work as prostitutes (http://allwomenscount.net).

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(www.allwomenscount.net).

Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter attribute the economic vulnerability of
women primarily to the cuts in government supports and funding, as these cuts jeopardize
the availability of services and supports for those women in need. Again, there is a sense
that prostitution is not entirely a “free” and morally sound choice.

As we sit her and remember all of these atrocities, we are being
bombarded by some very extreme, very drastic cuts to programs and
services of all sorts in this province – the slashes to healthcare and social
services; the lifting of the freeze on tuition fees; the move towards
privatization, in the name of saving
(www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca/issues/eastside_women02.html).
Making matters worse is the B.C. provincial government’s cynical cuts to welfare, education, health services and legal aid – critical strands of the social safety net that can make a life or death difference to women (www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca/issues/eastside_women05.html).

As we sit here and remember all of these atrocities, we are being bombarded by some very extreme, very drastic cuts to programs and services of all sorts in this province – the slashes to healthcare and social services; the lifting of the freeze on tuition fees; the move towards privatization, in the name of saving (www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca/issues/eastside_women02.html).

Cuts will increase the vulnerability for women. When we have no access to education, there is no way to escape from poverty. When there is only $510 per month for rent for a single mother of two, prostitution, despite the dehumanization of these acts, become very tempting (www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca/issues/eastside_women02.html).

Vancouver Rape Relief can also foresee that the Liberal government’s proposed cuts to welfare will push more women into prostitution and into danger. We call on the provincial government to reconsider the welfare cuts that will push more women onto the streets (www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca/issues_women01.html).

I say that the Campbell government is constructing a recipe for much more of the same. His cuts will increase the levels of vulnerability for women. When we have no access to education, there is no way to escape from poverty. When there is only five hundred dollars per month for rent for a single mother of two, prostitution, despite the dehumanization of these acts, becomes very tempting (www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca/issues/eastside_women02.html).

They are more vulnerable to attack because they are poor and addicted. They are more vulnerable to attack than other women in part because housing, money and other social supports are less and less available to them (www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca/issues_women04.html).

In constructing prostitutes as women, and not as drug addicts and moral degenerates, the Vancouver Rape Relief Shelter promotes the provision of social supports aimed at the betterment of the economic conditions of all women. This is demonstrated in its mandate, and in statements issued in press conferences:
Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter was opened in 1973 by two women. Over the past 30 years, we have grown into a volunteer feminist collective joined together in the fight to end violence against women. In the fall of 1981, we opened a transition house because we wanted a place to offer more of what women actually need to resist – more safety, more time to organize their lives, a place to dream and scheme together (www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca).

They agree that safe houses, or transition houses and harm reduction centres would assist those who wish to get off the street (www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca/issues_women02.html).

We need access to safe housing, adequate healthcare, educational and job opportunities and other social supports (www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca/issues_women04.html).

**Memorial Groups – the Human Stance**

Vanished Voices engages in advocacy actions, such as letter-writing campaigns that portray prostitutes as equally human. These are directed to police and government officials in order to raise awareness and bring about change around the unjust treatment of prostitute victims, and to prevent further loss of human life.

When our daughter vanished under suspicious circumstances November 20, 1998 I was at a loss of what to do. The feeling of helplessness and frustration was overwhelming at times. To comprehend what happened I began my own investigation from my home and began to read media archives about the downtown eastside. I began collecting data, and made numerous long distance phone calls. To my shock I found out there were many women that have and continue to disappear from the eastside of Vancouver. I have learned during this tragedy discrimination, status issues and racism flourishes in our country. These were things our middle class family would never have fathomed until a crime touched our souls severing all normality in our lives. It brought into focus how we view society issues such as equality. I quickly learned not all missing people are treated the same way as someone in a higher social status. Not all people are treated the same as other individuals. The color of skin, where people reside, habits the person may have are all contributing factors of how the system views a person. As a result of Angela's disappearance I have become an advocate for missing people and am trying to help other families find closure. These events prompted me to develop a website for Angela (daughter) and the missing women from the eastside of Vancouver (http://www.vanishedvoices.com/Myquest.html).
Summary and Conclusion of Findings

The goals of sex worker’s rights activist to attain legal rights for prostitute women, victim’s support groups to attain better conditions for women, and memorial groups to recognize prostitute women’s inherent humanity come together in the book review of Some Mother’s Daughter, one of two texts posted on the BMJ website that are part of my data set.

It is a concise and inspiring record of the work by some women prostitutes to “strengthen the position of all women in the industry to defend ourselves against rape, murder and violence.” The urgency of this work cannot be denied. As I write this review, yet another woman in Glasgow has been attacked and is currently in intensive care (www.bmj.com).

The central themes that recur throughout the texts center around societal and institutional neglect, legislative injustice and societal denial of prostitute women’s worth and humanity. Surprisingly, all sources concur with what I have named a macro-analysis of the phenomenon. The probable “insanity” of the perpetrator pales in comparison. It emerges as an uninteresting detail. The crux of the “problem” is society’s denigration of sex work and sex workers.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

Historically, the phenomenon of the serial murder of sex workers never achieved the status of a social problem, as its only claims-makers were sex workers themselves. The social stigma relating to women who work the street – the “whore stigma” – not only warranted male violence against sex workers, but it further marginalized these women politically and socially, disqualifying sex workers as legitimate claims-makers. As a group, sex workers were oppressed, structurally restricted to marginalized discursive styles and fated never to be heard.

**Emergence of the Social Problem of Serial Murder of Prostitutes**

Only recently has the career of the social problem of the serial murder of sex workers been launched. This emergence has coincided with the development of sex worker advocacy groups and their efforts to achieve a licit political status for prostitution and related activities. This is to say, the social problem of sex workers has emerged through the efforts of sex worker advocacy groups to collectively define criminalization, not prostitution, as the problem. Although they acknowledge that some women and children are forced into prostitution, advocates stress that existing laws perpetuate violence against sex workers.

**Decriminalization of Prostitution**

Criminalization, as proposed by sex worker advocates, “entrenches rather than reduces prostitution and is detrimental to the control of violence in society in that it takes money and officers away from controlling serious crime” ([http://www.walnet.org/csis/papers/tableofcontents#tableofcontents](http://www.walnet.org/csis/papers/tableofcontents#tableofcontents)). Criminalization encourages the belief that violence is acceptable in certain
circumstances. Hence, eliminating laws against prostitution is the primary goal of the sex worker advocacy movement. Sex worker advocacy groups promote decriminalization and/or legalization as they foresee its potential to protect and prevent violence against sex workers.

Prostitutes' rights organizations use the term decriminalization to mean the removal of laws against prostitution. "Decriminalization is usually used to refer to total decriminalization, that is, the repeal of laws against consensual adult sexual activity, in commercial and non-commercial contexts" (Benson, 1995: 398). Prostitutes' rights advocates call for decriminalization of all aspects of prostitution resulting from individual decision. Decriminalization is the approach most favoured by feminists as it eliminates state interference into and control of the affairs of the prostitute. "From the sociological perspective, the term legalization usually refers to a system of criminal regulation and government control of prostitutes, wherein certain prostitutes are given licenses which permit them to work in specific and usually limited ways" (Benson, 1995: 396)

**Legitimization**

Completing the first stage of emergence, the social problem of the victimization of sex workers has entered the second stage of legitimization. It has achieved social endorsement and respectability in the arenas of public discussion, as evidenced in the news media and even more importantly on the Canadian Parliament website. This social problem has been brought to national attention through numerous news conferences and newspaper articles, as well as through social actions of protests, memorial services, and motions in parliament.
**Mobilization of Action**

In the third stage of its career – ‘the mobilization of action’- the definition of the problem became an object of controversial discussion, primarily between police and advocacy groups. Police discussion has revolved around the serial killer at large, making only glancing mention of the murdered sex workers. Advocacy groups criticized police neglect of these victims, and are focusing their discussion on the rights to safety and protection of sex workers as worthy equal citizens. It appears that the social problem of the serial murder of prostitutes resides in this stage as there is no official plan of action – ‘official’ meaning that of a legislative or governmental level.

At present, there is no serious movement to change the Criminal Code. For example, a Working Group on Prostitution was established in 1992 by the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Deputy Ministers responsible for justice with a mandate to review legislation, policy and practice concerning prostitution-related activities and asked to bring forward recommendations. The Working Group was made aware of many innovative responses by communities in partnership with police agencies to address the problems of street prostitution. Although early results of many of these measures were promising, the Working Group believed further research on the impact of these strategies is required before definitive conclusions can be drawn. (http://canada.justice.gc.ca/en/news/nr/1998/toc.html). Virtually, there is no movement, merely proposed motions that do not gather enough support or momentum to be put into action.

There is, however, evidence that the career of the social problem is advancing with the formation of an official plan of action at an institutional level. There are examples of plans of action being formed within Canadian police institutions. The
Vancouver Police Department and the RCMP joined forces in April 2001 to review all the reports of women missing from the Vancouver downtown eastside to look for any information or common link that may assist in discovering who was responsible for their disappearances. In the province of Ontario, “the Halton Regional Police Service has formed a Joint Forces Operation in response to a series of violent crimes targeting sex trade workers within the city of Hamilton and the city of Burlington” (www.hamiltonpolice.on.ca/crimefil/Project/Advocate/Advocate.htm).

“In the fourth stage, the official plan that is enacted constitutes in itself the official definition of the problem; it represents how the society through its official apparatus perceives the problem and intends to act toward the problem” (Blumer, 1971:304). It is necessary to consider the formation of a police taskforce as an official plan of action. Both Vancouver and Hamilton police departments formed its taskforce in response to the high rate of victimization of sex workers and public criticism. It seemingly appears that this police action defines the social problem by the reputation and vested interests of the police force. If this is the case, the safety of sex workers will not be promoted in practice. However, as stated by a representative of Halton Regional Police: “Following the principles and recommendations of Justice Archie Campbell, and the Ontario Major Case Management Manual, we have formed this JFO”20 (www.hamiltonpolice.on.ca/crimefil/Project/Advocate/Advocate.htm). This demonstrates

20 The Integrated Justice Project, of which the “Campbell Project” is a part, is the result of the 1996 Bernardo Case Enquiry of Mr. Justice Archie Campbell. P. Bernardo was a serial rapist and killer who was only arrested after committing criminal acts for several years because of systemic weaknesses and the inability of the different law enforcement agencies to pool their information and co-operate effectively. The first, most basic and most significant recommendation was to implement a province-wide unified IT system. Secondly, the need for a powerful and integrated case management system which would enable all law enforcement agencies to access and search all available databases for relevant information and to share this information simultaneously across the entire province and across several concurrent cases (www.globalgraphics.com/news/ggpress.nsf/PressReleasesPublishedCurrent).
change at the administrative level of police organizations indicating a commitment to the safety and protection of sex workers.

The career of the social problem of the serial murder of sex workers is gradually working through its early stages. Yet its immobility in the final stages of its career as a social problem raises questions to that of Blumer’s model. Specifically, it raises questions about what affects the mobility of a social problem through the five stages of its career? My research on the social problem of the serial murder of sex workers informs Blumer’s model in several respects. This case demonstrates how sex worker advocacy groups and similarly marginalized claims-making groups disadvantaged due to their inferior power, finances, status, organization, technology and lack of access to the mass media, can exert influence to make their claims emerge into social discourse, appear legitimate, and mobilize action aimed at the formation of official plans of action. The emergence of serial murder of sex workers is significant in that sex workers are given a “voice.” This legitimizes and empowers them as social actors. Sympathetic publics, however, have not joined with sex workers to legitimate their work. Only their victimhood is legitimized. Consequently, while the problem of the serial murder of sex workers has given sex workers a forum in which and through to advocate for change, the changes they seek remain elusive. This is directly related to public responses to the problem of prostitution in Canada.

Public Response to the Social Problem of Prostitution and Violence

As evidenced in the data-set, the claims of sex worker advocates has on some level been touched and received by the minds and hearts of the public. Concerned citizens throughout North America and Western Europe have voiced their outrage at

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the injustices experienced by prostitutes at the hands of police, judicial and community systems. Moreover, the public has expressed sympathy and understanding for the terror and violence many prostitute women are forced to live by sadistic serial killers. The literature, however, evidences that these words of outrage and sympathy do not necessarily represent the true public standpoint towards prostitution. Public rhetoric drastically alters when community members are faced with the decriminalization or legalization of prostitution. "Not in my backyard" is the typical sentiment voiced by the majority of the citizens when confronted with the prospect of prostitutes working in their own communities.

Street prostitution is a controversial issue with legal, social, health, economic and criminal implications. "Each prostitute is like a broken window that says no one cares" (Brock, 1998: 120). Citizens have protested that street prostitution decreases property values, is responsible for increased traffic and trespassing problems. "Residents claimed that they were being 'held hostage' by prostitutes and their clients, and that the streets were now dangerous because of the type of people who had been attracted to the area" (Brock, 1998: 122). They stated that inadequate police control of a neighbourhood heightened anxieties among residents. The perception arose that the area was fair game for criminal activity. Further, such visible prostitution gave local young people a bad example. Residents claimed there was a decrease in police authority and an increase in crime and violence. "Finally street prostitution was detrimental to local businesses since sex shops, strip clubs, and related businesses were moving into the area. This ultimately led to the disintegration of the neighbourhood and the declining morale of its residents" (Brock, 1998: 125).
The public rhetoric in some jurisdictions, however, has been more accepting of sex work in terms of decriminalization, licensing and legalization. “In some Canadian municipalities (for example, Winnipeg, Windsor, Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver) certain forms of sex work such as escort services, exotic dancing, and massage parlours, are regulated by municipal licensing and zoning policies” (Lewis & Maticka-Tyndale, 2000: 439). Municipalities regulate who can work as an escort or open an agency in their city by imposing restrictions on who can be licensed. Initially, escort licensing produced a sense of legitimacy and empowerment among escorts. “Local agencies, the city, and the police worked together to frame a bylaw that provided greater autonomy and respect for the human rights of escorts. The city clerk made it clear to city council, the police and the community that escorts were to be treated as any other person of business” (Lewis & Maticka-Tyndale, 2000: 446). The designation of specified areas away from residential streets (zones of tolerance) is another approach that has been piloted abroad, particularly in Holland. By providing an “acceptable space” where women can work, this option claims to offer a manageable setting in which the trade can operate, leaving the police to spend a larger proportion of their time and energy on more ‘serious’ offences. The role of the police is limited to providing protection from the women from dangerous clients, rather than arresting them for soliciting and loitering.

**Licensing and Legalization of Prostitution**

“Licensing” of individual prostitutes is embraced by some as an alternative to assist in “professionalization” and destigmatization of those in the trade. Although the official recognition of escort work as a legitimate business can be seen as a healthy public policy, increasing escort’s sense of safety and security on the job, there are
also disadvantages to licensing. One disadvantage is the creation of a record who works in the industry. Although this record is not available to the general public, it is available to government organizations, such as taxation and social services. A second disadvantage is the control that is imposed by specific bylaw provisions. Although legalization can also imply a decriminalized, autonomous system of prostitution, in reality, in most "legalized" systems the police are relegated the job of prostitution control through criminal codes. Laws regulate prostitutes businesses and lives, prescribing health checks and registration of health status (enforced by police and, often corrupt, medical agencies), telling prostitutes where they may or may not reside, prescribing full time employment for their lovers, etc. “In countries where prostitution is either formally or informally decriminalized, authorities often attempt to maintain control over the sex trade through registration of prostitutes” (Chapkis, 1997: 160). Sex workers insist that registration can negatively affect their mobility, future employment options, and social status. Municipal licensing also appears to increase police presence in the lives of escorts and to disempower escorts and their employers from taking action to enhance health and safety. “From the women’s perspective, licensing makes policing of escorts easier, gives police one more thing (loss of license) to “hold over their heads,” and facilitates police harassment (through “outing”)” (Lewis & Maticka-Tyndale, 2000: 445).

Sex worker advocates want decriminalization yet they are opposed to state-regulated legalization, because often women must be registered and assigned to a brothel, thus losing autonomy and freedom of movement. “For example, in Nevada and Northern Europe (Germany), state-regulated brothels often allow prostitutes no choice in clientele, no right of refusal, and no right to a fair share of earnings. They
also entail forced isolation and forced overwork” (Simmons, 1998: 134). Legalized brothel prostitution is under the control of the brothel owner, not the individual prostitute. “Evidence from abroad also indicates that the creation of ‘zones of tolerance’ produces more problems than it solves. Rather than providing protection for the prostitutes, violence against prostitutes in these zones is reported to be common” (Benson, 1995: 397). Indeed, they have acted as a magnet for a range of illegal activities that have then reportedly over-spilled from these zones into surrounding areas.

**Patriarchal Law**

In the advocacy view, the state is a creation of men; men produced it with men’s lives in mind. Therefore, any laws that men made about women reflect men’s experiences and representations of women, not women’s experiences and representations of themselves. Being subject to such laws is alienating for women because the laws do not reflect women’s standpoints. “Existing regulatory schemes such as zoning and licensing of prostitution businesses traditionally have been implemented without attention to worker’s interests, while protecting the interests of clients, owners, and local municipalities” (Chapkis, 1997: 160). The absence of a sex worker perspective in the implementation of regulatory policies is particularly striking in the only legalized brothel system in the United States in the state of Nevada:

Under the Nevada system, prostitutes employed by one of the states’ thirty-two licensed brothels do not even enjoy the status and rights of a worker. Brothel prostitutes are required to register with police, and once hired, they are required to live on the premises while working. Confinement to the brothel serves two ends: first it reassures local residents concerned about the impact of the presence of prostitutes on their community by ensuring little or no contact with the women working
in the trade; and second, it facilitates surveillance of an ever-available workforce (Chapkis, 1997: 162).

This is protection and control from the perspective of the community, the owner and the client, but, once again, not from that of the worker.

**Proposals and Recommendations**

In *Prostitution Policy*, Lenore (2002) proposes that “government grants must be provided to encourage the development of prostitute unions and professional associations or guilds for those who wish to enter or to remain in prostitution. These women must have the opportunity for their voices to be represented” (2002: 312). Laws that allow prostitution are not written from a woman-centred perspective. Sex worker advocates want to participate in writing new laws about prostitution so that these new laws will give women more control over their work and sexuality. Policy recommendations need to delineate what sex worker advocates believe is the best approach to prostitution at this time.

Secondly, Lenore (2002) recommends that:

The establishment of governance boards to recommend appropriate regulations, government services and practices directed at increasing the well-being of prostitutes and the community at large. Such boards must include a preponderance of female members; significant representation of current and past prostitutes and prostitutes’ advocacy groups, representing both prostitutes’ rights and prostitute-victim organizations. This board must also include feminists concerned with the impact of any policy on the larger community of women (Lenore, 2002: 314).

Similarly, *the Prostitution Act of 1996* states that there shall be a Board called the “Prostitution Consultation Board,” which shall consist of six members appointed by the Attorney General whom at least half shall be current or former sex workers, the majority of whom shall be women. The function of the Board is to ensure that services offered by brothels and escort agencies are of high professional standards. “Prostitute work primarily
in sex business, so the necessity remains to give them the same protection as other professionals” (www.bayswan.org/decrim.html).

The specifics of how to create successful policies surrounding prostitution is in keeping with the larger objectives of this thesis – the goals put forth by sex worker advocacy texts: to give voice to sex workers. Through my research, I have read and analyzed the emotionally laden words of sex workers and advocates to describe their experiences of terror and violence. I honestly cannot imagine that these words will invoke an immediate upsurge of societal support and understanding of the surrounding issues of prostitution. However, I have also heard empathetic statements voiced by concerned citizens of the community. I am persuaded by the preliminary evolvement of public sentiment that in the near future society can be brought to support the healthy solutions proposed by sex worker advocates to prostitution policy. Although these concerned citizens represent the voice of a small minority’s public rhetoric, it is evidence that the voices of sex workers has been heard. I believe that in the days to come, the voices of sex workers will be amplified.
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123

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Vanished Voices


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Mayhem.Net


Sabrina Speak


Parliament Canada

APPENDIX A

Protocol
PROTOCOL

Case Number _____
Medium (web address) ________________________________________________

1. Date of Text ________________
2. Year ________________
3. Page and Section of text in webpage ____________________
4. Location of “serial murder of “sex workers” (or synonyms e.g. killer, prostitutes, victims)
   a) text
   b) headline/subhead/opening
   c) other ________________
5. Length of text (number of words)
   a) under 500
   b) 501 to 1,500
   c) 1,501 to 3,000
   d) 3,001 or more
6. The author:
   a) journalist (media)
   b) family member (of victim)
   c) friend (of victim)
   d) sex worker advocate
   e) sex worker
   f) feminist
   g) academic/researcher
   h) concerned citizen
   i) other ________________
7. Source(s) of information:
   a) media
   b) police
   c) government officials
   d) politicians
   e) lawyers
   f) families/friends
   g) sex workers
   h) sex worker advocates
   i) public
   j) academic/researcher

127

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8. Tone of text:
   a) positive – demonstrates support, approval
   b) negative – demonstrates the existence of a problem
   c) neutral – non-judgmental details of an event or person
   d) reflective

9. Emotions describe in text:
   a) sadness
   b) happiness
   c) anxious
   d) calm
   e) loving
   f) hateful
   g) anger
   h) fear
   i) other ___________________________

10. Emotions in response to: (for examples an event, person, etc.)

11. Serial murder of prostitutes is typified by the text as a ________________ issue:
    a) political
    b) cultural
    c) patriarchal
    d) economic
    e) legal
    f) moral
    g) social service
    h) human rights
    i) other ___________________________
12. The text (or source) constructs the serial murder of prostitutes as a result of:
   a) individual frustration or anger
   b) individual need for power and control
   c) lust
   d) patriarchy
   e) hate
   f) societal neglect (e.g. on behalf of the police or judicial system)
   g) delusion
   h) cleansing society
   i) misogyny
   j) a lesson
   k) sadism
   l) revenge
   m) a random vindictive act
   n) thrill
   o) victim precipitation
   p) other

13. Reasons prostitutes are targeted by serial killers:
   a) race
   b) poverty
   c) gender
   d) stigmatization of prostitution
   e) police neglect – lack of safety and protection from police
   f) unsafe working conditions, for example, isolated areas
   g) addiction
   h) runaways/drifters
   i) criminalization of prostitution
   j) other

14. How is the murder rate of prostitutes statistically described by the author?
   a) increasing
   b) decreasing
   c) minimal
   d) extensive
   e) n/a

15. What is the goal of the writer in presenting these statistics?

__________________________________________________________________________
16. The author constructs the serial murder of prostitutes as:
   a) rare
   b) frequent
   c) an occupational hazard
   d) high priority (worthy of attention)
   e) low priority
   f) criminal (immoral, sinful)
   g) warranted
   h) outrageous
   i) normal
   j) condoned
   k) condemned
   l) terrorism
   m) innocuous
   n) reprehensible
   o) victim-precipitated
   p) other ________________________________

17. The text constructs society’s view (including government, police, public, media, politicians) of the serial murder of prostitutes as:
   a) rare
   b) frequent
   c) an occupational hazard
   d) high priority (worthy of attention)
   e) low priority
   f) criminal (immoral, sinful)
   g) warranted
   h) outrageous
   i) normal
   j) condoned
   k) condemned
   l) terrorism
   m) innocuous
   n) reprehensible
   o) victim-precipitated
   p) other ________________________________

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18. The text constructs sex workers’ view of the serial murder of prostitutes as:
   a) rare
   b) frequent
   c) an occupational hazard
   d) high priority (worthy of attention)
   e) low priority
   f) criminal (immoral, sinful)
   g) warranted
   h) outrageous
   i) normal
   j) condoned
   k) condemned
   l) terrorism
   m) innocuous
   n) reprehensible
   o) victim-precipitated
   p) other ________________________________________

Theme: Aspects of Mainstream Society

19. Does the text comment on aspects of mainstream society?  YES  NO
   If so, what aspects?
   a) government
   b) law enforcement
   c) media
   d) judicial system
   e) public
   f) other ________________________________

20. Comments made by:
    a) police
    b) media
    c) government officials
    d) politicians
    e) lawyers
    f) families/friends
    g) sex workers
    h) sex worker advocates
    i) public
    j) other ________________________________

21. Tone of comments:
    a) positive – demonstrates support, approval
    b) negative – demonstrates criticism
    c) neutral – non-judgmental details of an event or person

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22. Description of comments:
   a) misrepresentation – description of victims, prostitutes and crimes
   b) representative – of victims
   c) neglectful – lack of attention to case and victims
   d) diligent – active focus on case and victims
   e) focus and attention on serial killer
   f) hostile – stigmatizing, harassment
   g) high prioritization of prostitute victims
   h) low prioritization of prostitute victims
   i) protective and preventative measures taken
   j) responsive to prostitutes reports of violence
   k) dismissive of prostitutes reports of violence
   l) other

Further description of comments:


23. Response to comments (for example, by police representatives, journalists, judges)


24. The overall response of society to the serial murder of prostitutes is constructed as:

   NEGLECTFUL       RECEPTIVE

25. The message that is conveyed by government, police, media and public negligence or receptiveness of the issue of the violence against prostitutes:
   a) (i) acceptance and legitimization/(ii) intolerance of misogynist foundations
   b) (i) prostitutes are expendable objects (ii) prostitutes are equal citizens
   c) (i) prostitutes are not worthy of protection/ (ii) prostitutes are worthy of attention
   d) (i) women who transgress male’s expectations of femininity will be punished/ (ii) prostitute women will have the same equal rights of freedom as all women, and their male counterparts
   e) (i) victim-precipitated/(ii) accountability of serial killer/responsibility of society
   f) other
Theme: Views on Prostitution

28. Female sexuality is represented by prostitutes as:
   a) threatening
   b) enticing
   c) powerful
   d) hated
   e) feared
   f) submissive
   g) dominant
   h) crossing boundaries
   i) other ______________

29. The text constructs the act of prostitution as:
   a) dehumanizing
   b) desperate
   c) tempting
   d) dangerous
   e) exploitative
   f) positive
   g) materially successful
   h) violent
   i) other ______________

  Constructed by: ______________________________
30. The author constructs prostitutes as:

a) heroes
b) victims
c) social outcasts
d) autonomous, professional workers
e) expendable objects – unworthy of protection
f) equal citizens – worthy of protection under the law
g) passive objects compliant to male needs
h) agents of their own sexuality
i) enticing
j) threatening
k) immoral/indecent
l) women – the same as all women
m) oppressed by patriarchy
n) competent and capable
o) criminals
p) promiscuous – purveyor of disease/destroyer of families
q) image of female sexuality
r) stigmatized
s) pure
t) fallen
u) whore
v) scum (filth to be cleared off the streets)
w) drug addicts
x) transients, runaways
y) other ____________________________

31. The text constructs society’s portrayal of prostitutes as:
(by public, police, media, justice system, politician, other)

a) heroes
b) victims
c) social outcasts
d) autonomous, professional workers
e) expendable objects – unworthy of protection
f) equal citizens – worthy of protection under the law
g) passive objects compliant to male needs
h) agents of their own sexuality
i) enticing
j) threatening
k) immoral/indecent
l) women – the same as all women
m) oppressed by patriarchy
n) competent and capable
o) criminals
p) promiscuous – purveyor of disease/destroyer of families
q) image of female sexuality
r) stigmatized
s) pure
t) fallen
u) whore
v) scum (filth to be cleared off the streets)
w) drug addicts
x) transients, runaways
other ____________________________
32. The text constructs sex workers portrayal of prostitutes as:
   a) heroes
   b) victims
   c) social outcasts
   d) autonomous, professional workers
   e) expendable objects – unworthy of protection
   f) equal citizens – worthy of protection under the law
   g) passive objects compliant to male needs
   h) agents of their own sexuality
   i) enticing
   j) threatening
   k) immoral/indecent
   l) women – the same as all women
   m) oppressed by patriarchy
   n) competent and capable
   o) criminals
   p) promiscuous – purveyor of disease/destroyer of families
   q) image of female sexuality
   r) stigmatized
   s) pure
   t) fallen
   u) whore
   v) scum (filth to be cleared off the streets)
   w) drug addicts
   x) transients, runaways
   y) other ________________________________

Theme: The Victims of Serial Killers

33. Author’s description of victim in the text:
   a) a prostitute
   b) a family member
   c) a friend
   d) remembered as a child
   e) a victim of a serial killer
   f) a person
   g) a woman
   h) a statistic
   i) other ________________________________
34. The text’s construction of society’s (media, police community, judiciary) view of victims:
   a) prostitute
   b) a family member
   c) a friend
   d) remembered as a child
   e) a victim of a serial killer
   f) a person
   g) a woman
   h) a statistic
   i) other _____________________________

35. The text’s construction of sex workers’ view of victims:
   a) a prostitute
   b) a family member
   c) a friend
   d) remembered as a child
   e) a victim of a serial killer
   f) a person
   g) a woman
   h) a statistic
   i) other _____________________________

36. Other victim typologies made reference to in the text:
   a) non-prostitute women
   b) gays/lesbians
   c) Aboriginal People
   d) other minority groups __________________
   e) men
   f) other _____________________________

37. The text constructs the treatment of the prostitute victims of serial killers as:
   a) fair
   b) unjust

38. The serial murder of prostitutes is prioritized by society as:
   
   HIGH           LOW

   What factors are offered (if any) explaining the prioritization?
   ________________________________
   ________________________________

136
Theme: Serial Killers

39. Was the existence of a serial killer acknowledged?

YES  NO

Why/Why not?


40. Serial killer(s) made reference to in the text:


41. The text typifies the serial killer as:
   a) visionary
   b) mission-oriented
   c) hedonistic
   d) power control
   e) other________________________
   f) n/a

Constructed by____________________________________________

42. The serial killer is described as:
   a) insane (attribute actions to psychological dysfunction)
   b) evil
   c) product of social order
   d) patriarch
   e) punisher/oppressor (of female sexuality)
   f) the death sentence
   g) other______________________________

43. Motivation of serial killer:
   a) revenge
   b) power/control
   c) sexual/lust
   d) femicide/misogynist foundations
   e) irrelevant
   f) other______________________________

44. Method of murder
   a) strangulation
   b) stabbing
   c) gunshot
   d) poison
   e) other______________________________
45. List or description of other violent offences against prostitute women:
   a) rape
   b) forcible confinement
   c) incidents with knives, guns
   d) hammer attacks
   e) run down by vehicles
   f) other ____________________________

46. Description of murder (description of body disposal, crime scene etc.)

   ________________________________

   ________________________________

   Theme: Sex Worker Advocacy Groups

47. Sex Worker Advocacy Group(s)

   ________________________________

   ________________________________

48. Actions taken by sex worker advocacy groups in the text:
   a) marches
   b) memorials
   c) public speeches
   d) rallies
   e) press conferences
   f) establishment of transition houses, crisis centres
   g) other ________________________________

   Date: ________________________________
   Location: ________________________________
   Who: ________________________________

49. Agendas of these actions:
   a) take back freedom of prostitutes
   b) destigmatize prostitution
   c) show prostitutes as women, not expendable objects
   d) fight for rights of women, e.g. safety and equality
   e) assert collective strength of women
   f) criticizing officials
   g) correction of laws and policies
   h) preventative solutions
   i) reflection and remembrance
   j) other ________________________________
50. Solutions presented in the text for the serial murder of prostitutes:
   a) arrest and punishment of serial killers and violent offenders
   b) equal rights for prostitutes as citizens
   c) legalization of prostitution
   d) decriminalization of prostitution
   e) licensing of prostitution
   f) active involvement from social systems – police, public, government
   g) other

   Solutions presented by: ________________________________________

51. Consequences of the serial murder of sex workers not being defined as a social issue:
   a) dehumanization of prostitute (and non-prostitute women)
   b) scapegoating: permitting men who hate and fear women to vent their aggression on sex workers – "It is alright to abuse women in the 'whore' category
   c) continuance of male violence against prostitute women, for example, serial killers will continue to hunt prostitutes because there is no fear of punity
   d) violation of sex workers’ rights of equality, safety and protection
   e) the restriction of all women’s freedom
   f) other __________________________

   Photographs and Images
   a) Source: __________________________________________
   b) Date: ____________________________________________
   c) Location: ________________________________________
   d) Size of Photo: _________________________________
   e) Photo Caption: _________________________________
   f) Photo Source: __________________________________
   g) Photo Description:

   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________

   Quotations

   ________________________________
   ________________________________
   ________________________________
   ________________________________
   ________________________________
   ________________________________
   ________________________________
   ________________________________
APPENDIX B

List of Sex Worker Advocacy Groups and their Acronyms

CSIS – Commercial Sex Information Service
ECP – English Collective of Prostitutes
NSWP – Network of Sex Work Projects
SWAV – Sex Worker’s Alliance of Vancouver
VRRWS – Vancouver Rape Relief and Women’s Shelter
VV – Vanished Voice
BMJ – British Medical Journal
APPENDIX C

Listings of Website Homepage Addresses for Sex Worker Advocacy Texts

BMJ (http://bmj.com/)

Commercial Sex Information System (http://www.walnet.org/csis.html)

English Collective of Prostitutes
(http://www.allwomencount.net/EWC%20Sex%20Workers/SexWorkIndex.htm)

First Nations’ Drum (http://www.firstnationsdrum.com/)

Network Of Sex Work Projects (http://www.nswp.org/)

Parliament Canada (www.parl.gc.ca)

Real Change News (http://www.realchangenews.org/issue/current/index.html)

Sabrina Speaks (http://www.sabrinamehra.com/sabrinaspeak.html)

Sex Worker’s Alliance of Vancouver (www.walnet.org/csis/groups/swav.html)

Vancouver Rape Relief and Women’s Shelter
(http://www.rapereleifshelter.bc.ca/index.html)

Vanished Voices (http://www.womensenews.org/)

Women’s E-News (http://www.womensenews.org/)

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APPENDIX D

Listings of Website Homepage Addresses for News Media Texts

CBC News (http://www.cbc.ca/)
The Guardian (www.theguardian.co.uk)
The Independent (www.theindependent.co.uk)
The Peak (http://www.peak.sfu.ca/index.html)
Toronto Sun (http://www.canoe.com/NewsStand/TorontoSun/home.html)
Vancouver Courier (http://www.vancourier.com/)
Vancouver Magazine (http://www.vanmag.com/)
Vancouver Sun (http://www.canada.com/vancouver/vancouversun/)
APPENDIX E

Photographic Images from Texts

“The challenge for qualitative content analysis of news photos is to capture the meaning, essence, organization, and relevance of the photo for the news story. To put it differently, the researcher would prefer to be able to obtain data from a report to document that this is “what the story looked like’’(Altheide, 1996: 56).

It was found that only six of the total thirty-six texts generated by both sex worker advocacy groups and news media integrated visual content (See Appendix).

Prevalent Images

In general, preliminary analyses of visual content indicated that the majority of photos pertained to prostitute victims of serial murder. Three of the photos displayed photos of the missing women from Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside. Two of these images are formatted in a reward poster for $100,000, regarding any information leading to the arrest of the perpetrator.

www.firstnationsdrum.com/fall2000/cult_missing.htm
www.cbc.ca/news/features/be_missingwomen.html

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The photos of the missing women are predominantly mug shots, exhibiting disheveled women with unhappy, unsmiling, scowling faces. One picture in particular, exposes a disturbing image of a woman in which her eyes are rolling back, and her facial expression very ill, appearing that she could barely stand on her feet long enough for her photo to be taken.

The rest of the photos, present a representative image of the victims as “people” rather than criminals, depicting women well-groomed and smiling, seemingly taken from a page of the family photo album.
There was only one photograph of a sex worker advocate. The photo portrayed activist, Jamie Lee Hamilton leaning up against a dumpster, with two mannequin legs sticking out, one foot wearing a high-heeled shoe.

The caption below read: “Matter of Life and Death; Vancouver’s prostitutes keeping showing up dead in trash compactors.” The shock value of this photo was disturbing for some of its viewers, as exemplified in a text generated by CSIS expressing its outrage to the author. Jamie Lee Hamilton, in response to her reader’s disgust, stated: “Well, if this will inspire discussion, it will have been a good thing.” This image not only successfully documents “what the story of the serial murder of prostitutes looks like,” but it acts as a tool to generate discourse on an issue which needs to be discussed, because as the photograph demonstrates, negligence thus far, has only turned up more bodies in the trash.
APPENDIX F

Themes: Findings Flowchart

[The image shows a flowchart of themes related to the social construction of serial killers, including subtopics such as macro-analysis, micro-analysis, and societal modes. The flowchart includes branches related to serial killers, perpetrators, victims, and societal responses.]
APPENDIX G

Bar Graphs

(I)

Text's Constructions of the Serial murder of Prostitutes

(IIb)

Reasons Prostitutes Targeted

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Texts' Comments on Police

Texts' Comments on the Judicial System

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Advocacy Texts' Constructions of Societal Negligence

Media Texts' Constructions of Societal Negligence

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Message Conveyed by Societal Negligence

Typification of the 'Serial Murder of Prostitutes' Issue
Advocacy Solutions presented in Advocacy Texts

Percent of Values

- Equal rights as citizens
- Legalization of prostitution
- Decriminalization of prostitution
- Active police involvement
- Licensing of prostitution

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