A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES TRANSITIONING

FROM THE SEX TRADE TO LEGAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

A Dissertation

by

SHANNON KNIGHT DEER

Submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Chair of Committee, Lisa M. Baumgartner
Committee Members, Jill Zarestky
                    Valerie Hudson
                    Nancy Plankey-Videla
Head of Department, Fredrick M. Nafukho

May 2017

Major Subject: Education Human Resource Development

ABSTRACT

Law enforcement, the media, and the public have given recent attention to the

sex trade in conjunction with an increased focus on combatting sex trafficking.

However, little is known about women's experiences transitioning out of the sex trade,

especially related to learning and finding economically sustainable employment. The

purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of women transitioning out of

the sex trade, especially related to finding legal employment. Transitional learning

theory, experiential learning theory, and a general transition model formed the

conceptual framework which guided this study.

Participants included 10 adult English speaking women who engaged in the sex

trade in Texas for at least 1 year, and who exited the sex trade at least 3 months before

being interviewed. Data collection involved two semi-structured interviews composed

of open-ended questions and probing questions. I used the constant comparative coding

method for data analysis.

Respondents described the challenges, supports, and types of learnings used

throughout their experience transitioning from the sex trade. The participants'

experiences were categorized into (a) employment related challenges, (b) managing

mental health and emotions, (c) navigating basic life skills, and (d) building, rebuilding,

and managing relationships. Themes related to women's supports include (a) how

women found support, (b) the importance of support providers conducting a needs

assessment with women, (c) the supportive relationships women experienced, (d) the

necessity of holistic support, and (e) the support women felt was missing while they transitioned. Finally, themes related to women's types of learning included (a) experiential learning, (b) social learning, (c) the role of survivor leaders in power and policy, and (d) the need to treat survivor leaders as experts and teachers. I organized the findings into a model to describe women's transition process. The findings have implications for practice—by organizations, employers, and law enforcement—as well as policy and future research.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to those individuals who are currently in or were formerly in the sex trade, especially the participants in this study. You are the most resourceful, genuine, and caring women I have ever met. Your journeys inspire me daily. Thank you for taking the time to share your stories. I especially want to encourage the survivor leaders who are working as adult educators, helping others with the wisdom they have learned through the years.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

you for what you have done for me throughout this journey. The best I can do to say

thank you is to pay it forward to those coming behind me and to the students who I

mentor as a faculty member.

CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

Page

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

People have long traded sex for money or other material goods (Dank et al., 2014; Davidson, 1998). The sex trade is illegal in most countries, but the underground sex trade exists even in areas where some forms of sex trade are legal. It is therefore challenging to quantify the industry's economics and workers (Okech, Morreau, & Benson, 2011). Recently, researchers have attempted to quantify the sex trade, such as one study commissioned by the U.S. Justice Department and conducted by The Urban Institute. The data analyzed was from 2003-2007 and represented eight U.S. cities (Dank et al., 2014), estimating the "underground commercial sex economy (UCSE)" (p. 1) at a total of approximately $2 billion in those eight cities. The economy in the cities ranged from $39.9 million in Denver to $302 million in Miami. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that approximately 4.5 million individuals are enslaved for sexual exploitation internationally (International Labour Organization, n.d.), 98% of which are estimated to be women and girls (United States Agency for International Development, 2013).

Perhaps more relevant than the statistics are the individual experiences of those engaged in the sex trade. Women enter the sex trade for varying reasons and under varying circumstances. Some women enter underage, many of whom are runaways seduced by a boyfriend who became their pimp (Annitto, 2011). Women who enter later in life may believe they have few other options to provide for themselves or families;

they may be addicted to drugs and need money to support their habit (Bernstein, 1999; Dalla, 2000; Exner, Wylie, Leura, & Parrill, 1977; Love, 2006; Sharp & Hope, 2001). Others come into the sex trade through forced trafficking, kidnapped, or coercion into traveling with a trafficker under false pretenses. Some individuals are sold into the sex trade by family members and some are trafficked across borders. Such women may be beaten, raped, and/or drugged until they participate in prostitution without resistance (Kotiswaran, 2011; Kristof & WuDunn, 2009). Scholars have found that some women are attracted to sex work, especially high-end sex work, by the pay and flexible work hours (Lucas, 2005). In addition to variance in method of entry, researchers have shown great variations in individuals' experiences once in the sex trade based on their location (Bernstein, 1999; Kotiswaran, 2011), race (Wahab, 2004), and personality traits (Exner et al., 1977). Additional variation occurs based on where women engage in the sex trade – private settings (Lucas, 2005), brothels, or on the street (Kotiswaran, 2011). Some women make a great deal of money (Lucas, 2005), and some only trade sex for drugs (Bernstein, 1999; Chapkis, 1997).

Other variations in the sex trade exist based on the legal environment in which women work. Laws are written and enforced differently across the world and even in neighboring counties. In most locations, prostitution is illegal. In some locations, such as Australia (Bilardi et al., 2011; Seib, Dunne, Fischer, & Najman, 2012), Amsterdam, (Harcourt & Donovan, 2005), and several Nevada counties in the U.S. (Dunn, 2012), prostitution is legal and regulated in licensed brothels.

The United Nations (U.N.) brought increased attention to the sex trade by adopting trafficking in persons (TIPs) as an issue on which they focus. In 2000, the U.N. adopted a new protocol called "Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children" (United Nations, 2004). During the same year, the United States adopted similar legislation called the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA 2000) (U.S. Department of State, 2000). In the U.S., the application of TVPA and the legal frameworks adopted vary by county. The impact of legal frameworks specific to Texas, where this study was conducted, will be discussed in the participant selection section of Chapter III. In this study, I focused on women's experiences *exiting* the sex trade, rather than their time in the sex trade. In the following discussion, I will provide more insight into existing literature related to women's experiences after exiting.

Researchers have focused on how and why people enter the sex trade, as well as what characteristics and experiences women in the trade share, but investigation into women's transition out of the sex trade has been neglected (Mansson & Hedin, 1999; Sanders, 2007). Most participants included in existing research related to transitioning out of the industry exited with the assistance of nonprofit organizations (NPOs). Women use the assistance of such organizations either by choice or due to legal action taken. State-run programs aiding women in exiting prostitution, called prostitution diversion programs, are available in cities in thirteen U.S. states (Roe-Sepowitz, Hickle, Pérez Louber, & Egan, 2011). The state-run programs partner with local NPOs, which are tasked with rehabilitating women who otherwise would face jail time for prostitution.

The services provided vary by organization. Such programs evidence the evolution of the legal system in many states from treating women in the sex trade as criminals to treating them as victims to better serve women prosecuted for prostitution related crimes (Mueller, 2012).

Most organizations, whether state-run or NPO, provide drug rehabilitation programs, psychological counseling, and housing. The programs frequently teach women basic life skills and new behaviors (Oselin, 2009). Some provide job training from sewing to machine work (Thistle Farms, n.d.). The numbers of women in the sex trade and who exit the sex trade are unknown as these numbers are difficult to measure. Scholars have conducted limited research to investigate women's experiences exiting with the assistance of organizations (Oselin, 2009; Wahab, 2004) and even fewer have investigated how women leave the sex trade without the assistance of organizations, because accessing such women is challenging.

Women exiting the sex trade are faced with a significant transition impacting many aspects of their lives. As Merriam (2005) stated, transitions require new learning "new skills, behaviors, and social roles" and developing "significant change in one's perspective or process of meaning making" (p. 12). Transitioning and learning are therefore intertwined. Given the interrelated nature of transition and learning, women exiting the sex trade is an interesting transition experience through which researchers can explore women's learning. I found no existing studies related to women's transition experiences out of the sex trade and investigating women's associated learning experiences.

Most researchers focused on learning and transition performed studies in the field of chronic illnesses, such as HIV (Baumgartner, 2002), breast cancer (Rager, 2003), prostate cancer (Rager, 2007), Rheumatoid arthritis (Dubouloz, Laporte, Hall, Ashe, & Smith, 2004), stroke (Kessler, Dubouloz, Urbanowski, & Egan, 2009), end-stage renal disease requiring dialysis (Keeping & English, 2001), primary immunodeficiency (Jackson, 2006), and transitioning into other chronic illnesses while attempting to maintain normalcy (Kralik, 2002). However, these researchers largely focused on transition *into* chronic illness, rather than learning and transitioning *out* of a phenomenon. In contrast, I investigated moving out of a stigmatized role rather than into such roles.

Transitional learning theory, which I will discuss later in this chapter and in Chapter II, provided a useful model for investigating the role learning plays in women's work transitions. Stroobants, Jans, and Wildemeersch (2010) developed the model through qualitative interviews with women making work transitions. The purpose of the model is to identify how individuals learn to transition into new work opportunities in the context of personal factors and structural factors present in the market. The model provides a useful framework to evaluate women's learning specifically in the context of finding work after exiting the sex trade. I used this model to investigate the strategies that women employ to learn, grow, and adjust to meet market demands in addition to their own needs. Studies connecting learning and work transitions are limited in any context, and even less is said about finding work after exiting the sex trade.

Existing studies related to learning and work transitions include Brown's (2015) investigation of how learning supports radical mid-life career changes. Brown found that career reframing occurs from three perspectives: "reframing as a process of identity development, as a form of relational, emotional, practical and cognitive development and taking place within particular opportunity structures" (p. 289). Though Brown noted the role of career guidance and counseling during career transitions, he largely ignored the role of learning in transition and focused more on why people transition from one lawful career to another. For example, one participant transitioned from an executive director to a greens-keeper. Although the shift was unconventional, neither job is socially stigmatized the way the sex trade is stigmatized.

In summary, learning in transitions have been explored in the context of chronic illnesses; however, few researchers have sought to investigate how women transition from one career to another; I located only one study on learning during work transitions. The contributions of Stroobants et al. (2010) to women's learning during work transition through the transitional learning theory could have significant implications for this study, but has been under-researched. Scholars have made connections between work transitions and learning (Brown, 2015), but have not investigated how people learn and change during such transitions. No scholars have evaluated how women learn to *leave* a stigmatized career and transition to a legal career. Scholars have not investigated the role learning plays in such transitions. While the studies referenced in this section are related, they still leave a gap in existing literature which I will discuss in the next section.

Statement of the Problem

The sex trade remains a serious issue across the world, and specifically in the United States. Efforts to help women exit the sex trade have increased significantly, especially related to trafficked women because of TVPA 2000. For example, law enforcement agencies have implemented task forces specifically trained to identify trafficking and rescue trafficked women (Cavalieri, 2011). The legal system has evolved from addressing women in the sex trade as criminals to treating them as victims (Mueller, 2012), which has led to an increase in state-run programs and NPOs focused on rehabilitations and treatment. Focusing more on rehabilitation and treatment has created new programs focused on women learning new skills and behaviors after the sex trade.

Despite these efforts in policy and practice, little is known about women's transition experiences out of the sex trade (McCray, Wesely, & Rasche, 2011; Oselin, 2009; Roe-Sepowitz et al., 2011; Sanders, 2007), including what types of learning occurs in the transition programs. Very few scholars have evaluated the sex trade in the context of work (Lucas, 2005), and none have specifically investigated women's experiences transitioning from the sex trade to legal, sustainable employment. Current researchers studying women's transition from the sex trade have not investigated the job skills learned in diversion and rehabilitation programs. These scholars also did not investigate how women learn new job skills or their career trajectories following vocational programs. Yet, income is a factor for women pulling them into or keeping them in the sex trade (Bilardi et al., 2011; Lucas, 2005; Seib et al., 2012); women

frequently reenter the sex trade despite attempts to exit in part due to income (Dalla 2000, 2006; Sanders, 2007). Despite the limited research on the sex trade, the topic remains of significant concern to many constituents.

Purpose

Sex trafficking is in the forefront of political, media, and public attention. The sex trade has long been a concern from a law enforcement and a human rights perspective. The number of organizations with a mission to stop trafficking, rescue sex workers, and/or provide training in new job skills have increased significantly (Deer & Josefy, 2015). These factors create a need to better understand how women exiting the sex trade cope with the transition to legal, sustainable employment, how they learn new job skills, and what alternative economic opportunities are available to them. Learning a new skill after exiting the sex trade could impact a woman's professional trajectory for life and reduce likelihood of her reentry into the sex trade. The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of women transitioning out of the sex trade, especially related to finding legal employment. I conducted this study in multiple counties in Texas.

Research Questions

In this study, I explored the following research questions related to women's transition out of the sex trade to address the study's purpose, which was to investigate the experiences of women transitioning out of the sex trade, especially related to finding legal employment.

RQ1: What challenges do women face while transitioning out of the sex trade?

RQ2: What supports help women transitioning out of the sex trade?

RQ3: In what types of learning do women engage and in what context(s) do women learn while transitioning out the sex trade?

Significance of the Study

Conducting a study focused on how women transition in the context of work was significant because it has the potential to provide additional insight into sustainable, useful, and appropriate ways to assist women in their transition out of the sex trade when that is their desire. Discovering more about how women learn and transition in the context of work could lead to improvements in current transition programs, which currently seem to not prioritize obtaining legal employment to replace the income generated in the sex trade. In this study, I sought to provide additional insights into how a specific marginalized and stigmatized population learns and develops during a transition.

The women's experiences can also influence public policy related to prostitution diversion programs and prostitution laws. Very few empirical contributions have been made to research on sex trafficking, sex work, and prostitution (Dank et al., 2014). Most scholarly work in the area is limited to opinions and theories. As will be discussed further in later chapters, in this study, I moved beyond extant literature by exploring women's transition experience in the context of work and learning. Existing literature provides perspectives on women's exit experiences, but the transition experience occurs long after exiting. Additionally, existing studies do not provide insights into women's

learning experiences and lack details related to women's experiences finding legal work after exiting, which are contributions this study makes.

Further, in this study, I present women's perspectives in the findings, which can be used by educators who may be assessing the needs and skills of individuals in illegal careers who are often living in the margins. I can also use the study to contribute to learning theory, including transitional learning theory. Related to learning theory in general, the study can contribute new understanding to learning in transition by investigating how women transition *out* of a stigmatized role into a legal career. Specific to transitional learning theory, I investigated how women transition from illegal work to legal work in this study, something previously not considered in transitional learning theory.

Conceptual Framework

In the following section, I will describe the conceptual framework used in this study, which includes four theories. The theories' intersection provided a unique approach to addressing the gap identified in existing literature. The first theory is transitional learning theory, a relatively new adult learning theory seeking to describe how "women learn to live with work" and make meaning of their work in the context of their life experiences (Stroobants et al., 2010, p. 115). The second is Bridges's (1991) general transition theory. The third is experiential learning theory, according to Jarvis's (1987) model. The fourth theory is social cognitive theory as defined by Bandura (1986), which emerged as a useful theory during data collection. I will describe the

theories used in the conceptual framework and their intersection in more detail in the following sections.

Transitional Learning Theory

Despite the paucity of research utilizing transitional learning, the theory provides an essential focus on making meaning of the connections among transitions occurring in life experiences, work experiences, and society (Stroobants et al., 2010). Transitional learning adopts a life course approach, recognizing that individuals' development is molded by their relationships with others, society, and their own unique experiences (Stroobants et al., 2010). Specifically, the theory describes and explains women's learning process "related to work and their participation in adult education initiatives" (Stroobants et al., 2010, p. 116).

I used transitional learning theory to uncover how individuals think and act at the intersection of their life course and a transforming context. The theory provides a basis for analyzing how women cope with transitioning from the sex trade to legal, sustainable employment as well as how they perceive their learning experiences during the transition. Further, through the life course approach, transitional learning theory seeks to explore the role lifelong learning can play in improving individual's life chances, especially those who are less advantaged (Evans, Schoon, & Weale, 2013). Thus, this theoretical perspective further buttresses the need for viable alternatives and the role lifelong learning can play in an individual discovering those alternatives. Transitional learning theory's focus on meaning making during women's transitions in life related to

their work (life course) and changes in society (transforming context) seems to encourage a qualitative study using women's narratives (Stroobants et al., 2010). I used transitional learning theory to explore women's experiences with work transitions. One dimension of transitional learning theory relates to a woman's perception of her ability to "influence or change arrangements and structures (e.g., a distribution of opportunities) within a particular field of life [e.g. work] and within society at large" (Stroobants et al., 2010, p. 118). The recognition of women's need to challenge oppressive structures shows the model allows for a feminist perspective. As previously noted, feminist debates have had a critical impact on the sex trade discourse, policy, and rehabilitation practice; thus, this model's allowance of a feminist perspectives was critical for this study. Given transitional learning theories specific orientation in work transitions, I used Bridges's (1991) transition model to allow for evaluation of women's broader transition experience. I will describe Bridges's transition model in more detail in the next section.

Bridges's General Transition Theory

As with transitional learning theory, transitions and learning are interconnected (Merriam, 2005). As Merriam (2005) stated, "Learning during transition can be additive, as in learning new skills, behaviors, and social roles. The learning can also be developmental, involving significant change in one's perspective or process of meaning making" (p. 12). Bridges provided a well-known model for evaluating transition experiences. The model includes three phases: *endings, neutral zone*, and *new beginnings*.

Bridges's (1991) model starts with *endings*, which involves "letting something go" (p. 5). Bridges cited routines, relationships, or components of one's identity among things people may have to let go during a transition. Bridges's endings phases is consistent with existing literature demonstrating women must let go of many things as they transition out of the sex trade.

Bridges's (1991) second phase, called the *neutral zone*, encompasses the time period when an individual is in between two stages. During this phase, an individual may not be comfortable with the new yet, but is no longer living in the old. This phase may encompass an uncomfortable period for those in transition.

In the final phase, *new beginnings*, one makes a conscious choice to think and act differently (Bridges, 1991). In this phase, an individual is more comfortable with the new transition and identifies more closely with their life after a transition. Bridges's model provides additional insight for this study in the broader context of women's transition experience outside of the work transition. In the following section, I will address how I used experiential learning to frame the analysis of women's learning experiences.

Experiential Learning Theory

I specifically used experiential learning theory to investigate the types of learning in which women engage during the transition experience to learn. Per experiential learning theory, learning takes place through our daily experiences, even in informal settings. Past experiences influence current learning through the connections people make, and people use experiences to test what they have learned in the past (Merriam &

Bierema, 2014; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). According to Dewey (1938), "miseducative" experiences can negatively impact our learning (p. 13), and require unlearning to move forward with new learning (Merriam & Bierema, 2014).

Kolb (1984) developed the first experiential learning model, demonstrating the process for converting experiences into knowledge. This study relied upon Jarvis's (1987) revision of Kolb's model. Per Jarvis (1987), an individual brings biographical history to a potential learning experience. The experience can inspire active experimentation (practice) and reflection. The individual internalizes learning through evaluation of the experience, resulting in a more experienced person. Women's learning experiences were supplemented through an additional learning theory – social cognitive theory – which will be described in the following section.

Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive learning theory, originally named social learning theory (SLT), is used to explain learning through observation (Bandura, 1971). Schunk (1996), noted social cognitive theory can be used to explain the acquisition of "knowledge, rules, skills, strategies, beliefs, and attitudes" through observation in social settings.

Using social cognitive theory, Bandura (1986) claimed an individual could observe others perform an action and learn from the observed consequences without directly experiencing the behavior and outcome. Bandura (1986) is credited with establishing social cognitive theory and linking an individual, their behavior, and environment through a theory called triadic reciprocity. Bandura used triadic reciprocity

to demonstrate the three components – individual, behavior, and environment – could influence and change each other.

Together, transitional learning theory, Bridges's (1991) transition model, experiential learning theory, and social cognitive theory provided a conceptual framework for evaluating women's transition experiences out of the sex trade and into legal employment. In keeping with the research questions, Bridges's model provided additional insight into the general challenges and supports women experience during the transition process. Transitional learning theory provided insights into a specific context of learning – learning for work transitions. Experiential learning theory and social cognitive theory provided a lens to investigate the learning women experience during the transition process. In the following section, I will provide critical definitions for terminology used throughout this study.

<div align="center">**Definitions**</div>

The following are operational definitions of terms that I used throughout the study.

Aftercare. Aftercare follows drug treatment programs. Aftercare allows recovering addicts to transition gradual providing them with housing and requiring they have a job as they continue to recover and reintegrate back into society.

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). This program refers to a 12-step recovery program for alcoholics.

Andragogy. Andragogy is based on a set of assumptions about the adult learner including: that adult learners are independent and capable of determining what they

should learn. Additionally, the theory posits that adult learners' experiences are critical in their learning (Knowles, 1980).

Exiting. I used the term exiting frequently throughout the study to refer to women who have discontinued their involvement in commercial sex.

Experiential learning. According to experiential learning theory, learning takes place throughout life, not only in classrooms but also through our daily experiences. People connect what they learn today with past experiences and use current experiences to test what they learned in the past (Jarvis, 1987; Kolb, 1984). According to Dewey (1938), experiences vary in how they contribute to our learning. Dewey identified "mis-educative" experiences, which have "the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience" (p. 13).

The Game. The game is an older term for referring to the sex trade.

The Lifestyle. Lifestyle was the most frequently used term by participants in this study to name their time in the sex trade. When asked what they called their time in the sex trade, and given prompts such as sex work, prostitution, hustling, and turning tricks, participants most frequently said they used the terms *the life* or *the lifestyle*. More details are provided in Chapter IV as to what terms participants used to name the sex trade. The participants used the term life/lifestyle to encompass all aspects of the sex trade, including what I referred to in this study as the lifestyle mindset—working for a pimp, using street language, addiction, dress, and behavior.

Narcotics Anonymous (NA). NA is a 12-step recovery program for drug addicts. Many participants referenced NA as playing a role in their addiction recovery.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is often experienced by women who have exited the sex trade (Farley, Baral, Kiremire, & Sezgin, 1998). Symptoms of PTSD, and specifically complex PTSD, include anxiety, depression, fear, nightmares/flashbacks, anger, withdrawal, negative self-perception, and shame (Farley et al., 1998; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2016).

Prostitution. Prostitution is a term used by abolitionists (Desyllas, 2007) for trading sex for money or material goods (Dank et al., 2014; Davidson, 1998). Abolitionists, many of whom are feminists, believe prostitution is a human rights violation and that in many, if not most cases, the choice to work as a prostitute is not made freely (Barry, 1995; Hughes, 2008; Jeffreys, 2009; MacKinnon, 1983).

Prostitution Diversion Programs (PDP). Prostitution diversion programs are designed to help women exit and stay out of prostitution. The organizations may be affiliated with a prostitution specific court.

Prostitution Rehabilitation Program (PRP) or Prostitution Help Organizations (PHO). PRP and PHOs are non-profit organizations, sometimes affiliated with prostitution courts, which assist women in their transition out of the sex trade (Oselin, 2009; 2010). Organizations may accept women on a voluntary basis or work with the criminal justice system to provide an alternative to jail (Oselin, 2009), much like state run diversion programs (Wahab, 2004).

Relapse. The term relapse, as used in this study, refers to returning to the sex trade after an attempt to exit. Sanders (2007) uses the term "yo-yoing," as defined

17

below. Relapse is also often used in the context of drug addiction, but specifically refers to returning to the sex trade in this study.

Sex work. Sex work is a term used by liberal feminists (Desyllas, 2007) for trading sex for money, material goods (Dank et al., 2014; Davidson, 1998). Liberal feminists argue that sex work is a viable employment option if someone should choose sex as work (Desyllas, 2007).

Sex trade. Sex trade is the term used in this study to capture the trading of money, material goods (drugs, food), or anything of value (a shower, a place to sleep), other than love, for sex. The term sex trade includes sex trafficking or sex traded without the presence of obvious force, fraud, or coercion.

Sex trafficking. As defined by TVPA 2000, sex trafficking is "the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act" (U.S. Department of State, 2000, section 103-9). Sex trafficking is considered a severe form of trafficking when the individual trafficked is a minor or when a "commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion" (U.S. Department of State, 2000, section 103-9). For an act to be considered sex trafficking movement across a border (state or federal) is not necessary. Sex trafficking can occur without the movement of an individual, and without obvious coercion. Force, fraud, or coercion are only necessary to be considered a severe form of sex trafficking. Sex trafficking is a crime against an individual (Grover, 2015).

Smuggling. According to the U.N.'s Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants (United Nations, 2004), smuggling is "the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or

indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident" (pp. 54-55). In other words, smuggling is the illegal movement of an individual across a border at the request of the individual. Smuggling is a crime against a country or state, not an individual. Smuggling and trafficking are often confused, but the distinction is force, fraud, or coercion, which is present in trafficking situations, but not smuggling situations (Grover, 2015).

Social cognitive theory. Social cognitive theory, originally named social learning theory, puts observation at the center of learning. Borrowing from both behaviorist and cognitivist perspectives, social cognitive theory explains learning through observation and refinement of expectations about expected outcomes of an individual's actions based on observing consequences experienced by others (Bandura, 1971).

Transitional learning theory. Transitional learning theory focuses on meaning making during women's transitions in life related to their work (life course) and changes in society (transforming context; Stroobants et al., 2010). Researchers use transitional learning theory to explore women's experiences with work transitions and strategies employed to navigate work transitions.

Transitioning out. This term is used throughout this study to specifically reference transitioning from the sex trade to other societal roles and/or legal employment. Transitioning out is like the term exiting, but can include the longer journey beyond the point of exiting.

Yo-yoing. This term refers to someone who has attempted to exit the sex trade, but despite efforts to exit has returned back to the sex trade (Sanders, 2007). This study does not adopt the term yo-yoing, but relapse, as defined above.

<div align="center">

Limitations and Delimitations

</div>

As with all studies, there are some factors over which a researcher does not have control, considered limitations. This study's limitations included that data collected were self-reported and sometimes of a personal or sensitive nature. Participants may not have fully shared all relevant information due to the sensitivity of the data. In addition, the participants are primarily White, despite efforts to recruit racially diverse participants. The organizations assisting women exit the sex trade are primarily run by White women, which may result in a higher population of White women finding support in the organizations. I used contacts I had in organizations, all White, to recruit participants. Additionally, as a White researcher, participants of color may not have felt comfortable participating.

I have also chosen some boundaries for this study, considered delimitations, which I will attempt to use to enhance the research, including that the participants include only women. The perspective of men, transgendered individuals, and minors were not investigated. Women make up about 80% of those arrested for commercial sex in the U.S. (Dennis, 2008). Other scholars have investigated men and transgender individuals' experiences in the sex trade. Alternatively, I focused on women's experiences in the context of women and their work transitions.

The participants specifically include women who have traded sex for money, material goods, or something of value. This excluded other venues for the sex industry, such as exotic dancers. The participants only included women who have already exited the sex trade and remained out for at least 3 months. Therefore, the research I conducted did not provide any insight into how women remaining in the sex trade learn to transition or improve their work environment without exiting. Likewise, I did not capture the experiences of women who have exited more recently than 3 months.

The organizations connected with this study were all religiously-affiliated organizations. As Worthen (2011) found, organizations helping women exit trafficking situations in Nepal have different frameworks: a prostitution framework and a labor framework. The prostitution framework aligns closely with the abolitionist feminist perspective and the labor framework with the liberal feminist perspective. The organizations in this study are most closely aligned with the prostitution framework, because their goal is to help women exit. Organizations associated with the labour framework likely do not have the same mission of aiding women in exiting. Other women (three of the 10 participants) who exited independent of an organization affiliated with the study are included as participants, so their perspectives were represented.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of women transitioning out of the sex trade, especially related to finding legal employment. In this chapter, I included an introductory background, statement of the problem, purpose,

research questions, significance of the study, conceptual framework, definitions, and

limitations and delimitations. The next chapter will include an integrative literature

review, followed by methods chapter, findings, and discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER II

INTEGRATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of women transitioning out of the sex trade, especially related to finding legal employment. Three research questions guided the study: (a) What challenges do women face while transitioning out of the sex trade? (b) What supports help women transitioning out of the sex trade? (c) In what types of learning do women engage and in what context(s) do women learn while transitioning out the sex trade?

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the sex trade in the U.S., including several legal frameworks—prohibition, abolition, and legalization—impacting the sex trade, in order to provide a background and context for the study. Following the overview of the industry, I will discuss the methodology that I used to conduct the integrative literature review. Last, I will present the findings from the integrative literature review, which includes literature pertinent to transition theory and learning theories in the context of the sex trade, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Overview of the Sex Trade

The sex trade is complicated and involves debates about morals, human rights, and feminist issues. Liberal feminists, who call the sex trade *sex work*, believe sex work is a legitimate employment option and advocate for safe working conditions in the sex trade; some even claim that sex work can be empowering (Desyllas, 2007). Conversely, abolitionists, many of whom are feminists, call the sex trade *prostitution* and believe

prostitution is a violation of human rights; these advocates believe a woman's choice to enter prostitution is rarely a free choice (Barry, 1995; Hughes, 2008; Jeffreys, 2009; MacKinnon, 1983). Kristof (2013) provided insight into the debate by saying women in the sex trade are often:

> ...homegrown girls who flee troubled homes and end up controlled by pimps. Of course, there are also women (and men) selling sex voluntarily. But the notion that the sex industry is a playground of freely consenting adults who find pleasure in their work is delusional self-flattery by johns. (p. 1)
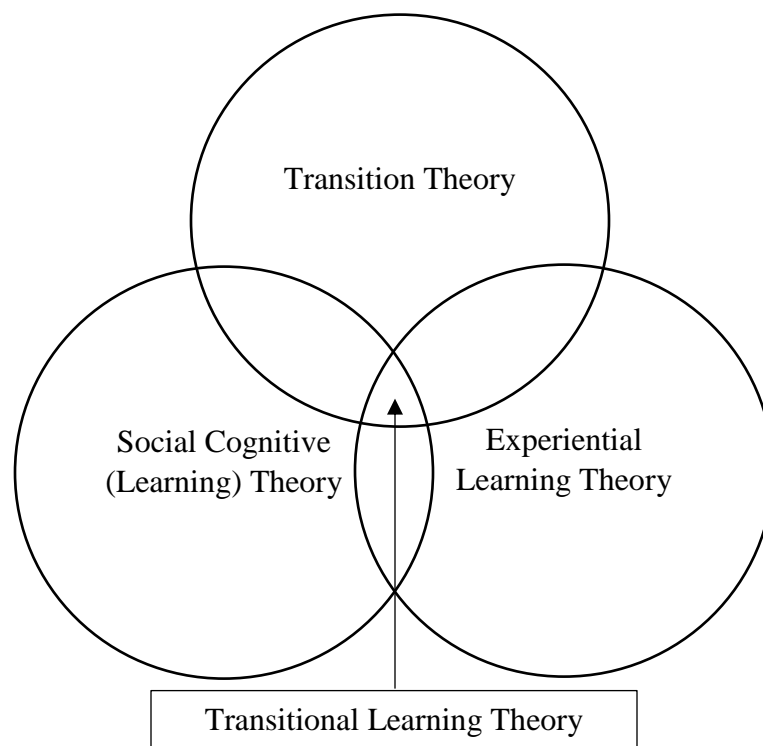
Figure 1. Literature review themes.

Varying philosophical perspectives about sex work, prostitution, and trafficking for sexual exploitation have significantly influenced policy. In the following section, I will discuss the three main legal frameworks for addressing the sex trade globally: prohibition, abolition, and legalization.

Prohibition, Abolition, and Legalization Frameworks

Under both prohibition and abolition, the goal is to end and prevent prostitution, but the approach to doing so differs based on fundamental philosophical differences between the two methods. In nations adopting a prohibition approach, prostitution is strictly illegal in all forms—in brothels, on the street, and in private residences. All parties involved in commercial sex, including prostitutes, johns, pimps, and madams, are considered criminals (Hughes, 2008). Prohibition focuses on reducing supply by criminalizing those selling sex in addition to those purchasing sex.

In contrast, an abolitionist approach focuses on reducing demand from johns— buyers of sex—through legal consequences and education about the impact of commercial sex on women selling sex (Cho, Dreher, & Neumayer, 2012). Unlike prohibition, individuals who sell sex are not treated as criminals under an abolition model (Demleitner, 2005), which means that the women can pursue rehabilitation without consequences. Under abolition, the prostitute is considered a victim, rather than a criminal (Hughes, 2008).

The philosophical difference manifests itself in the legal system through arrest of sex workers and prostitutes. In prohibitionist legal systems, prostitutes, especially street prostitutes, are arrested more frequently than johns, pimps, or madams, because they are

25

the most visible (Kristof, 2013). In contrast, abolitionists consider all prostitutes victims, because many women enter the sex trade through force, coercion, or desperation, with little choice or agency (Hughes, 2008). Prohibition is criticized for criminalizing sex workers and prostitutes who get ensnared by the legal system rather than receiving rehabilitation. Okech et al. (2011) brought to light another critique about prohibition, stating that the strict illegality makes identifying victims of sexual exploitation challenging, by driving the sex trade further underground, and preventing the potential for implementing interventions to help victims.

In 1999, Sweden adopted an abolitionist approach, known as the Swedish law or Nordic model (Carvajal, 2015; Cho et al., 2012). Sweden criminalized the purchase of sex and decriminalized the selling of sex by an individual. Pimps, madams, and traffickers are still prosecuted under the Swedish model. Sweden also denounced prostitution as exploitative and discriminating against women and girls, who are most often sold for sex (Cho et al., 2012). This acknowledgement makes the law abolitionist rather than selective decriminalization. Several countries have moved toward the Swedish model, including Northern Ireland and Canada. Other countries including France, England, and Ireland are considering implementing similar legislation (Carvajal, 2015).

Under legalization, or a legal-but-regulated approach, commercial sex is treated as an industry subject to government regulation. This includes regulations such as zoning laws, which restrict commercial sex ventures to certain areas as well as health and safety laws, which require condom use and regular health exams with sexually transmitted

disease screenings (Bilardi et al., 2011; Seib et al., 2012). Support for legalization

frequently stems from liberal feminist philosophies. From this perspective, feminists

advocate for sex work as a viable work option and for sex workers rights through safe

working conditions. Seib et al. (2012) claimed that legalizing sex work protects

women's rights; "There is little doubt, for example, that sex workers in legally regulated

brothels are safer and healthier than those who work in illegal indoor venues or on the

streets" (p. 980).

Australia recently adopted a legal-but-regulated policy (Seib et al., 2012). The

sex trade is legal-but-regulated in Nevada (Dunn, 2012), Amsterdam (Harcourt &

Donovan, 2005), Germany (Danailova-Trainor & Belser, 2006), and Taiwan (Kuo,

Yamnill, & McLean, 2008), with variation in the degree of regulation. Amnesty

International recently revealed that they are considering advocating for decriminalization

(Carvajal, 2015), which is vehemently opposed by abolitionists. In the following

section, I will specifically describe the legal environment surrounding the sex trade in

the U.S.

The U.S. Legal Framework

In practice and policy, the lines between sex work/prostitution and sex trafficking

become very blurred. In practice, it is difficult to differentiate between individuals who

enter the sex trade through forced trafficking from those who entered the sex trade with

more control or choice. Those who purchase trafficking victims use physical violence,

drugs, and psychological tactics to break women's spirits until they participate in sex

with customers. Once engaged in the sex trade, women who have been trafficked may

27

be found soliciting business alongside women who entered under more voluntary

circumstances (Kristof & WuDunn, 2009).

As mentioned in Chapter I, the U.S. adopted TVPA 2000 to protect trafficked

individuals. The legislation was drafted under both the Bill Clinton and George W.

Bush eras, but implemented under George W. Bush's leadership. TVPA 2000 defined

sex trafficking as "the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a

person for the purpose of a commercial sex act" (U.S. Department of State, 2000, section

103-9). The definition did not include any mention of force or movement across a

border; it has sparked debate on how the legislation would impact sex workers and

prostitutes who had not crossed a border or who had not been forced into the sex trade.

Bush's conservative views aligned closely with those of abolitionists', whose

goal was to end all prostitution, regardless of whether the individual entered the sex

trade through trafficking or other force. In an effort to end prostitution, any language

about force was excluded from the proposed legislation. Liberal feminists effectively

lobbied to add this same language (Desyllas, 2007). Initially, the legislation would have

covered all forms of commercial sex as severe, which abolitionists still support. The

final legislation ultimately defined the most severe forms of trafficking as "sex

trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in

which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age" (U.S.

Department of State, 2000, section 103-8). As it stands, however, the policy considers

sex work through trafficking or through a pimp trafficking, which covers many forms of

engagement in the sex trade. With the adoption of TVPA, the U.S. demonstrated a move

toward a perpetrator-centered approach, showing support for the tenets of abolitionism at the federal level (Hughes, 2008).

Divergence at the state level in the U.S. At the state level in the U.S., most jurisdictions have continued to take legal action more consistent with prohibition. Nevada, which has adopted a legal-but-regulated approach in some counties, is the only exception. Most states have exhibited a prohibitionist orientation by continuing to prosecute individuals selling sex and placing the burden of prosecution of pimps and traffickers on those exploited for commercial sex.

More recently, some states have developed approaches which are more consistent with abolition by providing convicted prostitutes with rehabilitation services as an alternative to jail time. These programs demonstrate a shift in states' views from prostitutes as criminals to prostitutes as victims. I will discuss the types of rehabilitation services available in the findings from the integrative literature review related to the role organizations play in assisting women in exiting. Prostitution courts, implemented at the county level, are offered in 12 states (Mueller, 2012); these are another example of policy and practice consistent with the abolitionist views of prostitutes as victims instead of criminals. The following cities have prostitution courts: Dallas, TX; Philadelphia, PA; Pittsburgh, PA; Chicago, IL; Wilmington, DE; Columbus, OH; Minneapolis, MN; New York City, NY; and Las Vegas, NV. In addition to the cities listed, the following jurisdictions have prostitution diversion programs without prostitution courts: Detroit, MI; Portland, OR; Phoenix, AZ; and Baltimore, MD (Mueller, 2012). Prostitution courts designate staff to hear only prostitution cases. The staff understand the sex trade and its

associated terminology, relevant laws, and trauma. In ideal programs, women are

assigned advocates who understand the housing system, substance abuse issues, and the

need for counseling. The adoption of prostitution courts by only 12 states shows

different implementation and possibly even philosophies related to prostitution across

states within the U.S.

These differences across states create differences in rehabilitation programs and

prostitution courts. For example, Chicago has a model prostitution court and

rehabilitation program, but Illinois is very aggressive with prostitution charges. In most

states, prostitution charges are a misdemeanor for the person selling sex and a felony for

pimps. In Illinois, however, a second offense can be upgraded to a felony. Women with

felony charges are not eligible for rehabilitation programs in Illinois. In most other

cities, multiple prostitution charges are still tried as misdemeanors. In those states,

women with multiple offenses are still eligible for rehabilitation programs. In some

cities such as Dallas, even first-time felony offenders are eligible for rehabilitation

programs (Mueller, 2012). In the following section, I will provide more details about the

evolution of U.S. policy related to prostitution across time.

Potential trends in U.S. policy. Across many states, individuals associated with

the industry have noticed a trend toward more aggressive implementation of prohibition

oriented policies exercised by law enforcement, especially on street prostitution. Dank

et al. (2014) reported about "law enforcement crackdowns that are pushing sex work off

the streets to new and potentially isolated areas and online. Street-based sex work, in

particular, has become more dangerous, more prone to detection, and less lucrative" (p.

246). Based on this statement, the focus in law enforcement has remained heavily on the women selling sex, which is prohibition oriented. An abolitionist approach would attempt to avoid further disenfranchising women through fear of legal retaliation.

Some jurisdictions are shifting their focus away from the women engaged in prostitution and focusing more heavily on traffickers, pimps, and johns. Although most states consider prostitution a misdemeanor, pimping is a felony in all states. Across the nation, Dank et al. (2014) reported that pimps are recognizing the shift in focus from women selling sex to the pimps controlling them. Prostitution courts and rehabilitation programs also demonstrate individual jurisdictions' efforts to move to a more abolitionist approach by reducing the legal consequences to women involved in commercial sex.

Variation in the legal environment contributes to variation in women's experiences in the sex trade. As discussed, variation in policy and implementation exists at the county level. The counties within Texas relevant to this study associate with the prohibitionist legal perspective regarding the sex trade, which is focused on criminalization of all parties involved. As I will discuss in Chapter III, counties across Texas have similar policies and practices related to prostitution, which effectively controlled for the impact of the legal environment on participants' experiences. Through the following integrative literature review further, I will investigate women's experiences exiting the sex trade with a particular emphasis on learning.

Integrative Literature Review Methodology

I performed an integrative literature review to identify all literature relevant to women transitioning from the sex trade to legal employment. The purpose or conceptual structure of the integrative literature review was to develop a research agenda for this study, supported by existing findings and new findings discovered through critiquing and synthesizing the existing literature (Torraco, 2005). I also used the critique and synthesis to analyze the methodology adopted in existing empirical studies, identify the scope of related literature, identify gaps and contradictions in existing research, and report such findings.

The integrative literature review is significant, because it was used to critically analyze existing understandings about women's experiences transitioning from the sex trade to legal employment. These findings were important in developing the research agenda for this study, because I used the existing literature to investigate how women in a marginalized and stigmatized population transition from illegal employment to legal employment, how they learn new job skills, how they perceive their future plans, and the role work transitions play in women's successful transition out of the sex trade. In the following sections, I describe the methodology used in the integrative literature review, including databases searched and search terms used, inclusion criteria for existing studies, analysis procedures, and common findings, before delving into the findings for transition theory, experiential learning theory, social cognitive theory, and transitional learning theory.

Databases and Search Terms

I used only peer-reviewed scholarly articles as a source for all literature reviewed. Given the interdisciplinary nature of research about the sex trade, I searched a wide variety of databases accessed through the electronic library at Texas A&M University. The databases searched were focused on the disciplines most active in research related to sex work and prostitution, such as women's studies, public health, mental health, and criminology. Additionally, I searched all databases available through Texas A&M University related to education and vocational training. Databases used included: *Academic Search Complete, Criminal Justice Abstracts with Full Text, Education Full Text, Education Source, Education Administration Abstracts, ERIC, Gender Studies Database, Health Source – Consumer Education, Health Source: Nursing/Academic Edition, Human Resources Abstracts, Humanities Full Text, Humanities Source, Legal Collection, Legal Information Reference Center, MEDLINE, MEDLINE Complete, Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, PsycINFO, Social Sciences Full Text, SocINDEX with Full Text, TOPICsearch, Urban Studies Abstracts, Violence & Abuse Abstracts, Vocational and Career Collection, Vocational Studies Complete,* and *Women's Studies International*. I utilized the following search terms: sex work and transition, prostitut* (the asterisk allowed for different endings of the word – plural, past tense – to be included in the search) and diversion program*, prostitution and rehabilitation, and prostitution and vocational training. The search was focused on literature published from the year 2000 to present. I used the year 2000 to capture current studies and to consider the impact TVPA 2000 may have had on

women's experiences. I located additional sources in the literature cited in articles

discovered in the initial search.

The 2000 criteria only applied to studies specific to the sex trade. Original works

were included to provide theoretical background related to theories discussed in the

integrative literature review – transition theory, social cognitive theory, experiential

learning theory, and transitional learning theory.

Inclusion Criteria

To locate the most relevant sources specific to the sex trade, I filtered these

results through the review of titles and abstracts to include articles with a primary focus

on transitions out of the sex trade in the U.S. I made an exception for one article from

the UK (Sanders, 2007), based on how frequently it was cited in other works included in

the criteria. Sanders (2007) developed three typologies, which several U.S. scholars

found applicable to the women exiting the sex trade in the U.S. These methods resulted

in eight articles selected for this work.

Analysis

To analyze and synthesize the work, I used an integrative literature review matrix

with the following points for evaluation: problems investigated, research questions,

direct and/or indirect ties to theory, methodology and procedures (participants,

participant selection, limitations, instrumentation, appropriateness of methodology, and

reliability/validity), and results (evaluated for support from data, implications,

applications, connection with my research, opposing perspectives, and potential future

research). I used the analysis of existing studies' methodology to evaluate the validity

and authenticity of existing studies' findings, key ideas, theories, and models (Torraco, 2005). I used the matrix to evaluate the literature's common themes and subthemes. The eight studies are included in Appendix A, with a summary of the most relevant data from the matrix.

Findings

      Common findings. There were some common findings across all studies, such as methodology used. All researchers employed qualitative research methods to collect data, most commonly including semi-structured interviews. One scholar also conducted an ethnographic study, in addition to using interview data. I will address concerns about studies' reliability and validity throughout the following critique. In one study (Sanders, 2007), the researcher used a small pilot study to aid in the development of the broader study presented in the article, but did not provide details. In general, no other researchers disclosed their efforts to ensure reliability and validity (or trustworthiness and credibility).

      Beyond methodology, there were common themes identified across all studies. In summary, the critical conclusions from the themes identified through the integrative literature review are as follows: (a) transition theory is critical to understanding women's transition out, (b) social cognitive theory may relate to the identity transformation women experience after exiting, (c) learning theory is neglected in the literature as existing studies are focused on rehabilitation through counseling and not on learning experiences, and (d) the role of work in women's transitions out is also largely not investigated in extant literature, despite the need for legal alternatives to the sex trade. I

35

will elaborate upon these conclusions in the following section as they relate to each theme identified.

Structure of detailed findings. The findings from the integrative literature review are organized into two themes: transition theory and learning theory. Transition theory was clearly found throughout the articles reviewed. A connection can also be made between social cognitive theory and some of the theories explicitly explored throughout the articles reviewed. I identified a gap in the integrative literature review as no articles reviewed discussed experiential learning or transitional learning theories directly or indirectly as the articles did not explore how women learn in organizations designed to assist in exiting. The more detailed findings will be organized in a section associated with each theme. Within each section to follow, I will first provide a background on the theory in general and then discuss the related findings from the integrative literature review.

<div align="center">

Transition Theory

</div>

Background for General Transition Theories

Adult education researchers have been specifically interested in adult development (Merriam et al., 2007), including how transitions impact development and learning (Merriam, 2005). As Merriam (2005) stated, "Learning during transition can be additive, as in learning new skills, behaviors, and social roles. The learning can also be developmental, involving significant change in one's perspective or process of meaning making" (p. 12). Adult education theory related to transition provided support for

investigating women's learning processes as they transitioned from the sex trade to legal, sustainable employment.

According to Merriam (2005), two well-known models explaining adults' transition process are Bridges's (1991) model and Schlossberg's model (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2012). *Endings* are the first phase in Bridges's (1991) model and involve "letting something go" (p. 5), which may include a routine, relationship, or components of one's identity. Bridges characterized the second phase, the *neutral zone*, as an intermediate stage when the new is not yet comfortable, but the old is no longer present. The final phase, *new beginnings*, includes a conscious choice to think and act differently (Bridges, 1991).

An example of a transition outlined by Bridges's (1991) model could be someone experiencing a divorce. The endings phase requires letting go of an old relationship, and may be accompanied by denial, anger, and stress (Bridges, 1991). The individual may still think about themselves as a married person. In the neutral zone phase, the individual's routines may start to change, but they may not yet be comfortable with being single. The individual may be experiencing a range of feelings, from skepticism to acceptance (Bridges, 1991). In the new beginnings phase, they will consider themselves single, adopt new routines and activities as a single person, and experience emotions of hope and enthusiasm (Bridges, 1991).

Schlossberg's model and associated adult transition theory were first presented in 1981 and used for counseling adults in transition. Schlossberg and associates since applied the model and theory to work transitions (Anderson et al., 2012). The model

describes types, perspectives, contexts, and impacts of transition, as well as a transition

process model. Schlossberg's transition process involves three phases: moving in,

moving through, and moving out.

Schlossberg's *moving in* phase involves moving into a new situation, which

requires navigating a new organization's written and unwritten rules, expectations, and

cultural norms (Anderson et al., 2012). While moving in, adults have to learn to balance

their work transition experiences with their other responsibilities. Finding support

during the moving in phase is also critical. While *moving through,* adults become more

comfortable separating from their old environment, but have not yet established

themselves in a new environment. Someone in the moving through phase of a work

transition may seek a new network while trying to learn a new routine and assuming a

new role. Finally, Schlossberg's model includes the *moving out* phase, which may

include mourning an old lifestyle while starting a new lifestyle. Many changes may

occur while moving out, including establishing a new career. There is significant

overlap with Bridges's and Schlossberg's theories and models specific to transition from

the sex trade. Both theories have relevance for women transitioning out of the sex trade,

which will be discussed further after reviewing critics of the general transition theories.

Criticisms of transition theory. One shortcoming in Bridges's (1991) and

Schlossberg's model (Anderson et al., 2012) related to transitioning out of the sex trade

is their lack of consideration for reentry into the phases, which will be discussed in the

following section as common for women exiting the sex trade. Bridges and Schlossberg

both emphasized that their models' phases were not intended to be sequential.

Therefore, the models may allow for individuals to readdress a phase, but the models do not explicitly capture the temptation to return to old habits and routines. Despite this shortcoming, Schlossberg's model is particularly useful to the current study due to its application to work transitions.

Schlossberg's transition theory focuses on the process of transition and the resources utilized in transition, but does not explicitly focus on the learning and education utilized in transition (Anderson et al., 2012). Learning and education during transition may be considered support resources described by Schlossberg, but Schlossberg's theory needs to be supplemented with learning theories to provide a better foundation for evaluating learning during work transitions in this study. I used transitional learning theory to supplement Schlossberg's theory, which I will discuss in the learning theory section to follow.

Findings from Integrative Literature Review

Findings from the integrative literature review related to transitioning are organized into two subthemes: the role of organizations for women exiting the sex trade and a critique of several models describing the transition process. In addition to synthesizing the existing literature, I will identify any gaps and provide my criticism of existing studies, including issues with methodology and theories adopted as conceptual frameworks. Finally, I will describe how the findings contributed to the development of my research agenda.

Organizations assisting in exiting. The integrative literature review revealed a common theme across the research on transition, which was that scholars have

overwhelmingly studied women who exit with the help of an organization. One reason for only focusing on women receiving support from an organization is exiting without assistance is less common and very challenging, because of the large amount of support needed by women exiting (Dalla, 2006). Another reason for studying women using an organization's assistance is that the organizations often assisted scholars in accessing participants. Assistance in finding participants was critical due to the underground nature of the sex trade (Oselin, 2010; Sanders, 2007) and it appears difficult to locate women who exited without the help of an organization.

Some organizations assisting women in exiting the sex trade are affiliated with the criminal justice system, such as state run prostitution diversion programs. Diversion programs use "the authority of the court to reduce crime by providing treatment instead of punishment" (Wahab, 2004, p. 68). States with prostitution diversion programs are in the minority. In 2012, Mueller and the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless found 19 existing programs and one pending prostitution diversion program in the U.S. non-profit organizations (NPOs) also provide services to women exiting the sex trade. Scholars have referred to such programs as prostitution help organizations (PHOs) or prostitution rehabilitation programs (PRPs; Oselin, 2009; 2010). Organizations may accept women on a voluntary basis or work with the criminal justice system to provide an alternative to jail (Oselin, 2009), much like state-run diversion programs (Wahab, 2004).

Two scholars noted some concern about the organizations serving former sex workers and prostitutes. First, Wahab (2004) expressed concern about the organizations' ability to truly meet the root problems facing the participants:

> While [the former sex workers] greatly appreciated and benefited from the
> opportunity to support and care for one another as sex workers, their most
> pressing needs (other than dealing with the criminal justice system due to their
> prostitution charge) revolved around issues of poverty, health, substance use, and
> dealing with sexism and misogyny. (p. 90)

Wahab believed the program reviewed did not did not prioritize meeting these needs as primary objectives of the program.

Additionally, Oselin (2009) recognized the significant influence organizations have over their participants. Organizations have been noted to have different orientations, such as victim-focused versus criminal-focused (Wahab, 2004) and prostitution orientation versus labor orientation (Worthen, 2011). Oselin (2009) demonstrated the significant impact organizations and their orientations have on women's transition experiences and identity. Based on these orientations, some organizations may exercise more control over women and enforce greater restrictions. Oselin (2009) stated, "As a total institution, the PRP appears to exert more influence over identity formation than other, less rigid contexts" (p. 383). Later, the author expressed concern about the influence the organizations had over directing women toward a specific identity:

> Although it is not explicitly stated, it seems the roles encouraged by the PRP are
> characteristic of the ideal American middle-class lifestyles: holding a steady
> (legal) job, being financially responsible, maintaining sobriety, remaining out of

prostitution and street life, cultivating non-abusive, supportive intimate

relationships, acquiring a place to live, and so on. (Oselin, 2009, p. 387).

I evaluated the role of these programs in women's transitions out of the sex trade along

with the studies critiqued in the following sections.

      Transition process. There are several influential studies where authors

proposed models of the transition process. Mansson and Hedin (1999) produced an

exiting model that influenced more current models developed by Sanders's (2007) and

Baker, Dalla, and Williamson's (2010) discussed later in this section. Mansson and

Hedin's (1999) study was published prior to the search date, of 2000, utilized in the

integrative literature review I conducted. However, since the study influenced the

creation of other models included in the literature review, it is necessary to briefly

summarize their model and how it relates to the more recent models. Mansson and

Hedin conducted life-story interviews with 23 women in Sweden. The women exited

primarily street prostitution with most working more than 5 years in the sex trade.

Mansson and Hedin created an exit model using the data collected. Mansson and Hedin

(1999) identified four challenges women encountered after exiting: first, women were

"working through and understanding the experiences of life in prostitution" (p. 67),

characterized by emotional reactions such as anxiety, regret, and self-hatred. Second,

women were "dealing with shame," which was the strongest feeling the scholars

identified (Mansson & Hedin, 1999, p. 67). The women described shame as socially

stigmatizing. Third, women were "living in a marginal situation," which involved

experiencing isolation, insecurity in their identity, and self-consciousness about no

42

longer being a prostitute, but not yet having a new identity (Mansson & Hedin, 1999, p. 67). Fourth, women were "dealing with intimate and close relationships," which included navigating a sex life with a partner after prostitution (Mansson & Hedin, 1999, p. 67).

In the exiting model, Mansson and Hedin (1999) identified structural, relational, and individual factors influencing women's exit from the sex trade. Structural factors included resources available and known to the women, such as "work, housing, education and welfare benefits" (Mansson & Hedin, 1999, p. 73). Other structural factors included policy related to the sex trade and employer relations, which included workplace discrimination experienced by many of the women interviewed in the study, due to their employers' knowledge about their past. In addition to mentioning workplace discrimination, Mansson and Hedin also noted that the women in their study who transitioned out in the 1990s had a much harder time finding alternative work than those who left in the 1980s. They attributed the additional challenge to a recession in the 1990s similar to the current recession, which started in 2008. Despite the reference to workplace discrimination and the difference in ability to find alternative work, Mansson and Hedin did not include any specific findings about how the women transitioned or learned to transition from the sex trade to alternative work options. The scholars also did not report the types of careers women assumed after the sex trade or their economic viability.

Sanders (2007) developed transition typologies for exiting the sex trade, which are widely used as a model for transitioning out. Sanders (2007) criticized Mansson and

Hedin (1999) for their conclusion that "emotional commitment" of an individual is the most significant factor impacting women's motivation and ability to exit the sex trade. Sanders (2007) believed that the findings placed responsibility on women and their emotional commitment, which has influenced United Kingdom (UK) policy. UK policy requires individuals to get themselves out of the sex trade or participate in programs offered by the criminal justice system (Sanders, 2007).

In developing her model, Sanders interviewed 30 women in the UK: 15 with experience in street prostitution and 15 who were indoor sex workers. The indoor sex workers either worked in a sauna, which sold sex to customers, or as a private escort. All women had attempted to transition out of the sex trade, and all but three had exited the sex trade for between 3 months and 7 years. The three women still engaged were included in the study to capture what Sanders (2007) described as "yo-yoing" (p. 81).

Yo-yoing, one of four transition typologies Sanders (2007) identified, is characterized as a cycle of exiting and returning to the sex trade. The three other transition typologies discovered by Sanders include "reactionary," "gradual planning," and "natural progression" (p. 81). Reactionary transitions often are triggered by a life event, such as a new relationship, pregnancy, or experience with violence. Gradual planning for indoor sex workers might involve preparing for an alternative career; many spoke about retirement plans involving financial preparation to leave the sex trade. For street workers, gradual planning might be triggered by events such as engagement in a drug treatment program, counseling, or receipt of welfare. For street workers, the natural progression from the sex trade might also be triggered by the desire for a safer,

sober lifestyle or concern about working conditions. Age and disillusionment about working conditions were examples of triggers for indoor workers naturally progressing out of the sex trade. Sanders found that yo-yoing is triggered by criminal justice involvement or failed drug treatment for street workers. For indoor workers, triggers include psychological strain, a temporary career break, or an unplanned exit for other reasons.

Sanders (2007) focused on triggers and barriers to exiting. This author provided a unique perspective by interviewing both street workers and indoor workers. Sanders identified separate findings for each group based on their varying experiences, which acknowledged the different experiences of women based on the methods in which women engage in the sex trade.

Sanders (2007) did not focus on women's transition to legal work, which is a contribution I strove to make with this study. Sanders provided discussion about women's capability to work in legal careers, which will be useful to this study. Further, Sanders (2007) disputed Sharp and Hope (2001), who found that individuals engaged in one deviant behavior will replace the behavior from which they disengage with a different deviant behavior, due to a general lack of self-control. Sanders (2007) also disputed Love's (2006) correlations found between illicit sexual behavior and low self-control. In contrast, Sanders (2007) stated, "Involvement in sex work as a means of earning money does not fit into the low self-control explanation, as for many respondents, their involvement in a deviant activity was framed as 'work' rather than gratification or gain" (p. 89). Given some women's involvement in the sex trade as

work, Sanders clearly identified a key role finding work after exiting might play in transitioning out. However, Sanders did not focus on the role of work in the transition process, which is a gap in existing literature filled by the current study. Sanders (2007) identified careers and educational opportunities women pursued after exiting as follows:

> The ex-indoor workers were currently employed in a range of occupations including media, office work, counseling, graphic design, teaching, researching, and social services, and 3 women were taking higher degrees. The ex-street workers had moved into mainly unskilled or manual jobs, typically shop work and office work, whereas several women were taking college courses in subjects such as information technology, beauty therapy, hairdressing, and access to higher education. (pp. 79-80)

Sanders did not discuss the experiences of women transitioning to these new opportunities, how women learned new skills, or how legal work impacted women's transition experiences, which was the focus of the current study.

Dalla (2006), whose work led to another extensive exiting model, provided the most in-depth evaluation of women's employment opportunities after exiting or attempting to exit. Dalla interviewed 43 street prostitutes "regarding their developmental experiences, including prostitution entry, maintenance, and exit attempts" (2006, p. 276). Three years later, Dalla conducted follow-up interviews with 18 women from the original participants. Among the 18 participants re-interviewed, only five had not returned to prostitution. The five who did not reenter cited significant events triggering their exit. Four of the five described "hitting bottom" as motivation for exiting

(p. 280). Dalla found formal support services and women's informal support networks were critical to exiting successfully, but "the ability to legally earn a living wage was paramount to sustained withdrawal from the sex industry" (p. 282). Dalla described women's first jobs after exiting as entry-level positions, such as fast food, but noted progression in 3 years. For example, one woman went from working in a fast food restaurant to managing a gas station. Dalla found that economic viability allowed women to provide for their basic needs without returning to sex work and improved their self-confidence.

Dalla (2006) found that the five women who remained out and the 13 women who reentered sex work did not have trouble securing legal employment, even after an extended period away from the legal workforce. Eleven of the 13 women who returned found legal employment since the first research interview was conducted. Compared to the five who remained out, the others who obtained legal employment demonstrated difficulty sustaining jobs for varying reasons. Such reasons included dissatisfaction with the work, an inability to get enough hours, or inconvenience based on location. The 11 women typically sought temporary work. Additionally, some of the 11 women continued to engage in criminal activity to quickly meet their financial needs, if not prostitution then theft. Dalla provided some insight about the differences in the type of work obtained by women who remained out and women who reentered, but did not document women's transition experiences related to work. Through review of Dalla's study, I found evidence of a gap left in Dalla and others' research, which I addressed in this study by documenting women's transition to legal, sustainable employment,

including their feelings about transitioning and learning through the transition process. In the findings from this study, I also expanded on Dalla's findings related to the interplay of work and self-confidence.

Dalla used the knowledge gained from these interviews to build an exit model, described in a later publication along with Baker et al. (2010). Baker et al.'s exit model attempted to integrate Sanders's (2007) four typologies with Mansson and Hedin's (1999) stages from entry to exit. Baker's model shows individuals moving through the following stages: immersion, awareness, deliberate planning, initial exit, and final exit. Reentry can occur after initial exit. The model considered the individual, relational, and structural factors identified by Mansson and Hedin. The model of Baker et al. (2010) adds to the previous models by considering societal factors, such as stigma and discrimination. The model acknowledges these barriers may impact all stages prior to final exit.

The model also borrows from two other transition models, not specific to the sex trade. Ebaugh's 1988 transition model describes transitions from stigmatized roles or careers (Baker et al., 2010). Prochaska, DiClemente, and Norcross's (1992, as cited in Baker et al., 2010) model describes how individuals change destructive behavior, specifically related to addiction. Mansson and Hedin's change model was highly influenced by Ebaugh's role-exit theory (Mansson & Hedin, 1999).

Since the exit and transition models were presented, other scholars have recognized the importance of the role social interaction has on women's identities as

they transition out. In the following section, I will critique studies in the context of social cognitive theory, after providing necessary background related to theory.

Learning Theories

I used three learning theories to support this study: social cognitive theory, experiential learning, and transitional learning. As illustrated in Figure 1, transitional learning theory acts as a bridge between adult transition theories, social learning, and experiential learning. In the following sections, I will present an overview of each learning theory followed by findings from the integrative literature review for each theory. Since learning theories were only referenced in one study related to transitioning out of the sex trade, I used the findings sections related to the three learning theories to speculate about how the learning theories might apply to this study's population before conducting data collection.

Background for Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive learning theory, originally named social learning theory (SLT), explains learning through observation in social environments (Bandura, 1971). According to Schunk (1996), social cognitive theory:

> …stresses the idea that much human learning occurs in a social environment. By observing others, people acquire knowledge, rules, skills, strategies, beliefs, and attitudes. Individuals also learn from models the usefulness and appropriateness of behaviors and the consequences of modeled behaviors, and they act in accordance with beliefs about their capabilities and the expected outcomes of their actions. (p. 118)

Social cognitive theory is rooted in "elements from both behaviorist and cognitivist orientations" (Merriam et al., 2007, p. 287), but originated as a challenge to traditional behaviorism. Using social cognitive theory, Bandura (1986) claimed that an individual does not need to engage directly with a reinforcement to learn, as was true of behaviorism. Individuals could observe others perform an action and learn from the consequences of their behavior.

Bandura (1986) is credited with establishing social learning theory, which he later renamed social cognitive theory. The theory relies on triadic reciprocity to explain a linkage between an individual, their behavior, and environment. All three change as a result of interaction with each other. An individual's behavior influences its environment as much as the environment influences the individual. Bandura acknowledged the possibility for learning through direct experience, which he believed was largely behavioral, and through observation or vicarious learning, which was cognitive.

Self-efficacy is another concept central to social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977), which refers to an individual's perceived ability to perform an action. Bandura acknowledged the role of both outcome expectation—the expectation that a certain action will lead to an outcome—and self-efficacy—an individual's belief that her or she is capable of an action. If an individual has a positive outcome expectation, but lacks the self-efficacy or belief that he or she is capable of the action needed to activate the outcome, then the individual may not pursue the action. Self-efficacy impacts and is impacted by motivation and performance achievement (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy

differs from self-esteem or self-confidence in that self-efficacy is task or situation specific. Self-efficacy can also apply to an individual's beliefs about their ability to perform at work (Lent, 2016). Sherman, German, Cheng, Marks, and Bailey-Kloche (2006) evaluated job self-efficacy in a training program for women working in the sex trade in Baltimore. I will discuss this study, along with other sex trade specific studies with potential connections to social cognitive theory, after evaluating criticisms of the theory.

Criticisms of social cognitive theory. Social cognitive theory does not receive wide criticism, as a generally accepted learning theory. Some have criticized social cognitive theory for being too simplistic and for trying to quantify factors that are not measurable (Staddon, 1984). Additional criticism relates to the source of Bandura's theory. Bandura's theory was developed through a study of childhood aggression as a result of viewing a violent stimuli, called the Bobo Doll study (Hart & Kritsonis, 2006). Despite the overall rigor of the research design, the study had some flaws, including a lack of diversity in the participants. The researchers selected participants from a nursery at Stanford University, meaning the children's demographics were skewed as their parents were scholars, middle-class, and White; thus, extrapolation to other populations may not be accurate. Additionally, some scholars have questioned the cause-and-effect relationship of the stimuli and behavior, citing that other variables could impact behavior, for which the researchers did not control (Hart & Kritsonis, 2006).

Additional criticism has been focused on Bandura's self-efficacy theory (Biglan, 1987; Tryon, 1981). The theory was developed through laboratory studies, which some

51

scholars have claimed may have skewed the findings and not accounted for a variety of variables. The skewed findings result from lab participants typically being less negative about their abilities than in an uncontrolled environment (Biglan, 1987; Tryon, 1981).

Social cognitive theory may not account for all learning, such as learning that occurs without a model to observe. Additionally, social cognitive theory is criticized for not taking into account nature, or biological influences of learning, such as cognitive ability or inherited behavior (McLeod, 2016). Criticism of social cognitive theory never gained much traction due to the usefulness of the theory. The theory's usefulness can be extended to the context of women transitioning out of the sex trade. Despite no explicit references to social cognitive theory in literature specific to the sex trade, it is possible to connect this to social cognitive theory in existing literature related to women exiting the sex trade.

Findings from Integrative Literature Review

Social cognitive theory was used in one study included in the integrative literature review. However, through analysis of the studies, a connection could be made between social cognitive theory and findings in several studies investigating identity transformation for women exiting the sex trade, which will be discussed further.

First, using social cognitive theory as the basis for their instructional design, Sherman et al. (2006) developed a pilot program called Jewellery and Education for Women Empowering their Lives (JEWEL). The program particularly was targeted toward increasing women's self-efficacy in accordance with social cognitive theory. JEWEL was an HIV prevention program delivered to 54 female drug users in Baltimore,

MD, who had traded sex for money in the past month. The program also taught women how to make and sell jewelry in conjunction with the HIV prevention education. The women kept the profits from their sales (Sherman et al., 2006).

The purpose of the program was HIV risk reduction, not to transition women out of sex work, or to provide jobs skills training. However, the scholars found success in reducing HIV risk factors by incorporating job skills with HIV prevention training. After a 3-month follow-up, 29% fewer women reported engaging in prostitution, 14.5% fewer sold drugs, 21% fewer engaged in daily drug use, and 20% fewer used injection drugs (Sherman et al., 2006). Participants also reported fewer sexual encounters, fewer partners, and increased condom use. Another significant finding in the study related to the women's job self-efficacy before and after intervention. The researchers administered a job self-efficacy survey to gauge the women's confidence in their ability to maintain a legal job on a four-point Likert scale. Three months after intervention, the women's scores increased from 2.4 to 2.9. These findings may link an increase in job self-efficacy and economic empowerment with a change in women's behavior and self-perception created by incorporating business education with HIV education (Sherman et al., 2006). In the following section, I will evaluate several studies investigating women's identity transformation after exiting for application to social cognitive theory.

Identity studies. Several studies related to identity transformation may provide more insight into women's experience with social learning in the context of exiting the sex trade. There is some interconnectivity between social cognitive theory and social learning theory, more importantly there is some evidence of social cognitive theory in

the sex trade specific studies related to identity. The following sections will first explore similarities in the theories and then evaluate existing studies related to identity of women exiting the sex trade.

Both social cognitive theory and social identity theory consider behavior in a social setting. The theories are somewhat interrelated in that social norms, values, and acceptable behavior learned through social cognitive theory is applied to certain social roles as explained by social identity theory. Social identity theory is specifically used to evaluate identity in the context of an individual's behavior within a social role (Stryker & Burke, 2000). An individual may learn social behavior (social cognitive theory), which is then applied to a certain social role (social identity theory). Hunt (2003) summarized identity theory by saying, "identity theory conceptualizes 'identities' as internalized self-designations based on the meanings (role expectations) attached to positions in social structure (role involvements)" (p. 71). According to social cognitive theory, instead of role expectations and role involvements, outcome expectations shape an individual's behavior within a social environment (Bandura, 1986). In both theories, these expectations (role and outcome) shape an individual's behavior in a certain social setting based on learned norms. The meanings (role expectations) may be learned through social learning explained by social cognitive theory.

Additional insights into how social cognitive theory may explain participants' learning could come from sex trade specific studies exploring identity transformation. Oselin (2009) interviewed eight women transitioning out of street prostitution and three PRP staff, and conducted observations. The PRP is an independent, non-profit,

nongovernmental, organization providing services to women who are either trying to avoid jail time or enrolled voluntarily. Oselin identified how alignment between participants' talk, called role embracement, and behavior, called biographical re-construction, impacted women's identity transformation as they exited the sex trade.

Oselin (2009) described three phases of transformation: rookie, in-between, and expert. The PRP provided more structure and required participation in programing from rookies. For example, the staff members monitored rookies' phone calls and restricted contact with individuals outside the PRP. However, experts—individuals who mastered the PRP style of talk and behavior—were allowed to self-monitor. For example, experts could leave the PRP premises and were permitted to miss meetings for other obligations, such as work. Related to social cognitive theory, the better women were at learning the social norms, the more freedom they were awarded within the PRP. Specifically, women had to master talk and behavior consistent with that of the PRP staff, likely through observing the PRP staff and other participants who had already achieved the expert role.

In addition to evidence of social learning theory, Oselin's (2009) phases of transformation also align closely with Bridges's (1991) and Schlossberg's (Anderson et al., 2012) transition phases identified in the transition section above. The *rookie* phase aligns closely with Bridge's ending phase and Schlossberg's moving in phase. Oselin's (2009) second phase, *in-between*, specific to sex workers and prostitutes is very similar to *moving through* (Anderson et al., 2012) or Bridges's (1991) *neutral zone*. Oselin's

(2009) third phase, *expert* is comparable to Schlossberg's *moving out* phase (Anderson et al., 2012) and somewhat comparable to Bridges's (1991) *new beginnings* phase.

Oselin (2009) described the importance of individuals assume a new routine and assuming a new identity in order to move through the phases during transition. Social cognitive theory could play a critical role in women learning the rules, strategies, and norms of their new lifestyle throughout the transition experience. Applicable to this study, achieving the expert phase may be particularly challenging as the norms may vary dramatically between the sex industry and legal work.

Additionally, an expert may sound like someone who has mastered the transition, but Oselin described an expert as someone who mastered preferred talk and behavior inside a PRP. Again, the mastery of talk and behavior, especially talk and behavior *preferred* in a specific social setting, can be explained by social cognitive theory. Vicarious, or observational, learning and learning through direct experience could provide women with the information they need to anticipate a preferred outcome of their behavior. Knowing the preferred outcome would then allow them to modify their behavior to result in the preferred outcome. In the context of the PRP, women who moved to the expert phase were given additional independence and freedom, which might be the outcome women sought. In the current study, I sought to provide additional insights into the period after the in-between phase, as women navigate life after exiting an organization similar to a PRP. After leaving the organization, participants still must learn how to navigate legal employment, possibly for the first time, and relationships

outside the PRP, which they are beginning to do by being given more freedom. These

aspects of life after leaving the organization are not captured in Oselin's (2009) study.

McCray et al. (2011) provided similar insights, which may be applicable to social

cognitive theory. McCray et al. interviewed 10 women formally engaged in street

prostitution who were also drug users. The women were receiving services from an

NGO providing "women with at-risk behaviors…with housing, legal assistance, life

coaching, and healthcare referrals" and a drug rehabilitation program (p. 748). McCray

et al. found women were successful in shifting their identities when they adopted role

embracement and biographical re-construction, as defined by Oselin (2009). Role

embracement, through change in talk, was achieved when women viewed themselves as

"sober empowered individuals" (p. 763). Biographical re-construction, through change

in behavior, was achieved when women "re-framed their prostitution as addiction-

driven" (p. 763), making suspending addiction a necessary element to suspending

prostitution.

Social cognitive theory could also apply to the findings of McCray et al. (2011)

and Oselin (2009). Role embracement (talk) and biographical re-construction (behavior)

were likely learned through observation. Social networks such as AA and NA may

create an environment where addict behavior is accepted, even when behavior in the sex

trade is not. Learning talk and behavior, through social cognitive theory, may be an

easier and more natural transition for women in social networks targeting addiction than

more mainstream social settings. For example, women exiting the sex trade may feel

more comfortable at an NA meeting than at church, because the behavior observed

seems easier to learn in the NA setting than in a church setting. In summary, learning to adapt to a social environment accepting of addiction may be an easier transition for women exiting the sex trade.

In their work on transitioning out, Mansson and Hedin (1999) also mentioned identity. Specifically, the scholars identified a unique challenge women exiting the sex trade may face related to identity. During the exiting process, women are in limbo between two identities, which contributes to feelings of isolation and insecurity. Women are no longer engaged in the sex trade—an identity they assumed before exiting—but they also have not yet assumed a new identity. Lacking a clear identity may also provide a link to social cognitive theory. Isolation and insecurity could result from low self-efficacy and from a lack of understanding about the rules, norms, and behaviors rewarded in a new social environment. The limbo, or in-between phase (Oselin, 2009), may be disorienting as they are learning new social norms.

Unfortunately, the stigma associated with women's old social environments and behaviors, in the sex trade, may prevent them from developing these new social networks. The quandary may explain why women so frequently yo-yo back into the sex trade, as found by Sanders (2007), despite their efforts to exit. Women exiting may particularly struggle with navigating a new social environment due to the stark contrast between their former environment in the sex trade and the environments in which they are trying to assimilate. A woman's ability to master social learning, as explained by social cognitive theory, may impact their success in transitioning from an old identity to a new identity. As women are utilizing observation, central to social cognitive theory,

58

they may experience a period of difficulty before the social norms, attitudes, and behaviors feel natural. Navigating the learning period could explain the challenges outlined by Mansson and Hedin (1999) from and identity perspective. In the following section, I will provide a background of experiential learning and potential connections between experiential learning theory and women's experiences transitioning out of the sex trade.

Background for Experiential Learning

John Dewey was one of the first and most influential contributors to provide understanding about and give significance to the connection between experience and learning (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Lindeman (1926), an early adult educator who was greatly influenced by Dewey, claimed learners' experiences are the "resource of highest value in adult education" (p. 9) and "experience is the learner's living textbook" (p. 10). Following Lindeman, and through his influence, Knowles (1980) positioned experience as a central tenet of andragogy. Andragogy is a set of adult learning concepts named by Knowles recognizing adults as independent learners with extensive prior experiences. According to Knowles, educators should utilize and call upon experience in learning situations (Merriam et al., 2007). Knowles also recognized experiences as a stimulus for learning, because approaching new experiences often requires new learning (Merriam et al., 2007). Later, Kolb (1984) developed an experiential learning model, which was expanded by Jarvis (1987).

According to experiential learning theory, learning takes place throughout life, not only in classrooms but also through our daily experiences. Individuals connect what

they learn today with past experiences and use current experiences to test what they learned in the past (Merriam & Bierema, 2014; Merriam et al, 2007). Per Dewey (1938), experiences vary in how they contribute to education. Dewey (1983) identified "mis-educative" experiences, which have "the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience" (p. 13). Like Dewey, Knowles recognized that experiences can be a barrier to learning based on the biases, habits, and assumptions created by past experience. Learning acquired through past experiences may need to be unlearned for someone to move forward in new learning (Merriam & Bierema, 2014).

To further explain experiential learning, there are several frequently used models. Kolb (1984) first developed an experiential learning model, which exhibits the process of transforming experience into knowledge. The learning process starts with a concrete experience, such as trying to learn how to use a new smart phone. The learner then observes and reflects on the experiences. Observation and reflection may involve watching other people use the device, watching a video about how to use the device, or thinking about how one used the device previously and what worked and didn't work. Observations and reflections are transformed into abstract concepts. The abstract concept could be grasping the general techniques for using the device, which lead to new actions tested by the learner. Such actions would include testing the techniques learning through observation and reflection to see if they work with the device (Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainernelis, 1999).

The learner travels around the outside of the learning cycle, but not all learners can effectively master all four stages. Most learners choose one stage, between the two

60

opposing stages, situated on opposite sides of the cycle: concrete versus abstract and reflection versus action. Kolb et al. (1999) called the way one resolves the conflict between these opposing stages learning styles. The learning styles—diverging, assimilating, converging, and accommodating—are situated inside the model. Two learning styles are associated with each stage in the cycle and two stages are associated with each learning cycle as positioned in the model.

Jarvis (1987) later revised Kolb's (1984) model. In addition to criticizing the simplicity of Kolb's model, Jarvis criticized Kolb's model for dichotomizing concrete from abstract and reflection from action. Jarvis's model demonstrated the reinforcement and revision of action occurring through reflection. Jarvis also added to Kolb's model by acknowledging additional factors influencing experiential learning. First, Jarvis recognized learning through observation. Jarvis also incorporated the role socio-cultural influences play in an individual's experiences through their biographical history. In this model, Jarvis, also differentiated between nonreflective learning, such as memorization or learning basic skills, and reflective learning.

Criticisms of experiential learning. Specific criticisms of Kolb's (1984) model of experiential learning include the model's failure to recognize the influence of context on experience and reflection. Additionally, some critiques argue the stages presented in the model are too rigid, as some individuals could move through the stages out of order (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Jarvis (1987) critiqued Kolb's model (1984) for being too simplistic, which he addressed along with the lack of context and order in his model. Jarvis resolved the issue of order with fluidity between active experimentation,

reflection, and evaluation. In response to criticisms about the lack of context, Jarvis considered all situations to be socio-cultural-temporal situations. Jarvis claimed that all situations are given meaning by the person experiencing the situation. Situations have no meaning on their own. No one person would interpret a situation the same as another, because each person's interpretation is shaped by their unique past experiences. Despite Jarvis's clear incorporation of context, through multiple interpretations based on unique biographical histories, mechanisms available to researchers for measuring the role context plays in experience are still undeveloped. Unlike Kolb's model, by recognizing socio-cultural and temporal influences on people's interpretations of experiences, Jarvis's model somewhat acknowledged the impact of power and marginalization on experiential learning. Power and marginalization are incorporated in the model, since socio-cultural influences impact the biographical history an individual brings to an experience. However, the influence of power and marginalization is not further incorporated into the model's other states. For example, Merriam and Bierema (2014) stated that everyone may not have the same ability or opportunity for reflection implied by the model due to marginalization. Additionally, some critics have expressed concerns about educators having too active a role in managing learners' experiences and reflection. Specifically, educators can determine what constitutes an experience, a mechanism for exercising power and leading to marginalization (Fenwick, 2001).

Le Cornu (2005) presented additional criticisms of Jarvis's experiential learning model. Both Kolb (1984) and Jarvis's (1987) models are presented as a progression through an experiential learning process. Experience is the starting point, which

connects each learning experience with a beginning and end represented as a "single-stranded" or linear process; one experience leads to one outcome. Jarvis (1987) also conceptualized non-learning in his model. Le Cornu (2005) posited that non-learning was only possible if experiential learning was viewed as single-stranded with a specific outcome. Alternatively, all experiences could contribute to learning, just not the learning outcome measured or captured by the model. Le Cornu proposed revising Jarvis's model by situating the stages within each other to demonstrate the interactivity of the learning process and eliminate a clear beginning and end. Additionally, rather than reflection being a stage in the process, Le Cornu recognized reflection's centrality to the entire learning process and proposed representing reflection as an overarching component over all stages. Despite these criticisms, Le Cornu recognized the usefulness of the models in simplifying and conceptualizing learning from experience (Le Cornu, 2005). Given the models' usefulness, experiential learning played a critical role in my study.

Findings from the Integrative Literature Review

Unfortunately, no studies on the sex trade have been conducted using experiential learning as a theoretical framework or as part of a conceptual framework. However, several scholars have investigated women's experiences in PRPs, also called prostitution help organizations (PHOs) and prostitution diversion programs (McNaughton & Sanders, 2007; Oselin, 2009, 2010; Sanders, 2007). These scholars have not framed their studies in the context of a learning experience, but as women transition from the sex trade they are learning and developing through the help of these

63

programs. Since no researchers have specifically explored women's experiences in

PRPs from a learning perspective, I will speculate how the experiences documented in

studies investigating PRPs may link to experiential learning.

Merriam et al. (2007) summarized five experiential learning perspectives:

(a) Reflecting on concrete experience (constructivist theory of learning); (b)

participating in a community of practice (situative theory of learning); (c) getting

in touch with unconscious desires and fears (psychoanalytic theory of learning);

(d) resisting dominant social norms of experience (critical cultural theories); and

(e) exploring ecological relationships between cognition and environment

(complexity theories applied to learning). (p. 160)

Women in the exiting organizations likely experience learning from most of these

perspectives.

From the constructivist perspective, women likely implement reflection-through-

action by reflecting on and learning from past experiences in group and individual

counseling sessions. Reflection likely also occurs during informal conversations in the

housing provided where women live together. Other reflective practices have not been

investigated in existing studies, but in the current study, I provided additional

understanding about how process their experiences through experiential learning.

From a situative perspective, learning occurs in a community of practice. A

community of practice is a group of individuals learning together through experience

and practice (Merriam et al., 2007). Women exiting the sex trade through an

organization are a community of practice working together toward a common goal –

exiting the sex trade. Together, a community of practice—which in this study's context are women participating in the transition program—develops, refines, and discards practices as necessary based on whether those practices are useful or dysfunctional (Merriam et al., 2007). From the psychoanalytical perspective, women may use counseling and rehabilitation services to work through any psychological conflicts to their learning and progress. Critical cultural perspectives challenge hegemony in experiences and existing social structures and complexity theory recognizes the structural relationships in complex systems. These approaches have not been documented in existing studies, but were adopted by some participants in the current study. In the previous sections, I discussed how experiences positively impact learning. In the following section, I will discuss how experiences may interfere with learning.

Dewey's (1938) concept, miseducation, could have interesting implications for my study as well. If women have experienced stigmatization and marginalization their job self-efficacy could be low. Facilitating activities for unlearning low personal perceptions, although unexplored in research, could be a critical role organizations play or could play in helping women exit the sex trade. Women may be less successful in finding sustainable work for reasonable pay if they do not have confidence in their ability to both secure and maintain employment outside of the sex industry.

Since this study was specifically focused on women's experiences transitioning from the sex trade to legal, sustainable employment, I supplemented experiential learning theory with transitional learning theory, which I will explore in the following section. The goal is to explore both the role of experience and work transitions on

learning. Transitional learning theory is specifically oriented toward learning for work transitions.

Background for Transitional Learning Theory

Transitional learning theory was adopted to investigate transition experiences related to work, which require women "to (learn to) anticipate, handle and reorganize these changing aspects in life. This situation triggers a continuous process of constructing meaning, making choices, taking up responsibilities and dealing with the changes in the personal and societal context" (Stroobants et al., 2010, p. 117).

There is a lack of empirical research utilizing transitional learning theory. Scholars who have written about transitional learning theory have done so from a theoretical rather than empirical perspective. Therefore, through this study, I sought to make an empirical contribution to the theory.

One instrumental theoretical piece was contributed by Stroobants et al. (2010). The researchers conducted narrative interviews with eight women, experiencing life transitions related to work. The women expressed the significance of adult and continuing education's contributions to their learning experiences during work transitions. Using the data collected in the interviews, Stroobants et al. developed a transitional learning model adapted for Figure 2.

The transitional learning framework (Stroobants et al., 2010) was developed to explore ways in which women "and social (actors) think and act within the context of a particular field of life (in our case the fields of work, training and education) against the backdrop of dynamic societal developments" (p. 117). The framework is situated on two

dimensions: horizontal and vertical. The horizontal dimension represents "reflection and

action dealing with tensions between societal demands and personal demands"

(Stroobants et al., 2010, p. 117). The tension lies in convergence and divergence of

societal and personal needs as personal needs may be sacrificed for societal criteria in

decision making. The vertical dimension captures an individual's perceptions about the

adaptability of the environment in which they live or the "possibilities and limitations to

influence or change arrangements and structures (e.g. a distribution of opportunities)

within a particular field of life and within society at large" (Stroobants et al., 2010, p.

118).

Societal Demands ← → Personal Demands	
Resistance	*Distinction*
Adaptation	*Growth*

(Vertical axis label: Unchangeable ← → Changeable)
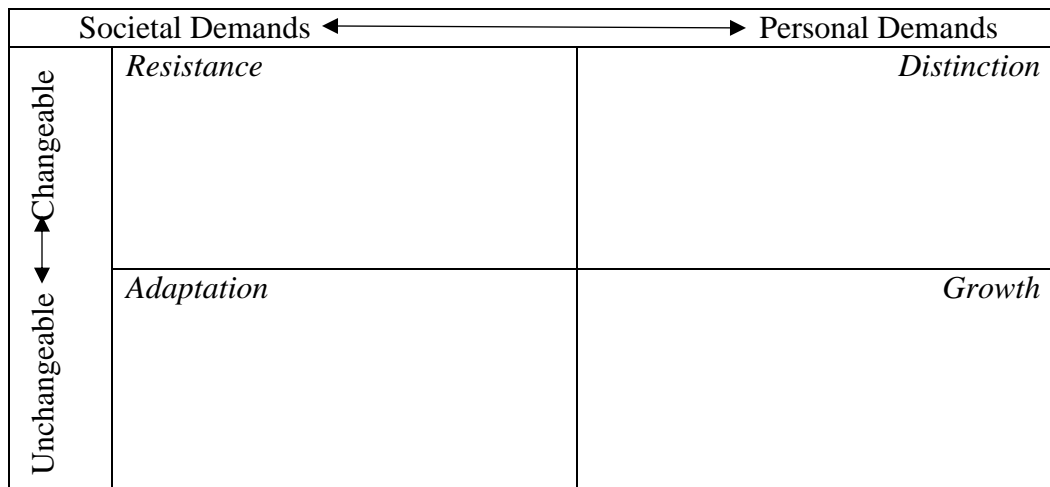
Figure 2. Transitional learning model (Stroobants et al., 2010).

Adaptation, *growth*, *distinction*, and *resistance* are four strategies of meaning

making identified by Stroobants et al. (2010), which lie on different spectrums within the

model's two-dimensions. A woman who identifies with *adaptation* prioritizes societal

demands due to a lack of flexibility in employment opportunities. Therefore, her

learning goals may be oriented toward acquiring skills to meet and cope with market demands.

Growth, like adaptation, occurs in a social structure that is perceived to be unchangeable. However, growth is oriented toward meeting personal needs rather than societal. Meeting personal needs involves "developing all aspects and potentialities of the whole person and in the sense of caring for the well-being and recovering of the self in order to personally cope with the society-in-transformation" (Stroobants et al., 2010, p. 118). Such development may be accomplished through counseling and therapy in addition to skills training in a new field personally appealing to the individual. *Distinction* involves efforts to meet personal demands as a "way out of societal demands which are experienced as oppressive" (Stroobants et al., 2010, p. 118). Finally, *resistance* occurs when market conditions are perceived to be changeable and an individual attempts to adjust social structures for the benefit of society and not just personal demands.

In an example, Stroobants et al. (2010) illustrated each strategy in the model. The researchers described a woman who became a nurse because employment was readily available to women in the field (adaptation). The woman disliked nursing and learned to cope with her situation through therapy (growth). She started taking courses at night to learn new skills (growth). The classes make her happy and balance out the frustration she is experiencing in her job as a nurse (distinction). The woman decided to become a cab driver to prove she could do a man's job (resistance). In the example, the

four strategies seem to be presented as distinct strategies. However, Stroobants et al (2010) claimed that the four strategies are oriented on a spectrum.

Most individuals will not orient toward the extreme or pure forms of each strategy. The strategies much be considered on a spectrum with women experiencing tension between the model's components and "an ever-changing mix of strategies…depending upon a mixture of present competencies and of perceptions of the context—is applied so as to achieve meaningful connections" (p. 119). Therefore, Stroobants et al. presented four combined strategies for meaning making, which lie between the four strategies previously discussed. A*ctivation* is a combination of adaptation and growth, *challenge* combines resistance and distinction, *redesign* combines growth and distinction, and *(re)construction* combines resistance and adaptation.

Stroobants et al. (2010) provide a valuable summary of transitional learning's usefulness in investigating how women transition through the labor market by saying:

> We began to understand that the real 'job' women perform, during their life and by telling their life story, is the (re)construction of their self in relation to society. In this process of searching for and developing the self, work does represent a possible and desirable way for women to structure and make sense of their life and to widen their action space in society. However, finding a job attuned to their own capacities and personal and social aspirations on the one hand and to the demands and structures of the labour market on the other hand, is not taken for granted. We interpret the work women do, while trying to give a justifiable shape

69

and meaning to labour in relation to their self and the current evolutions in society, as processes of transitional learning, aimed at bringing about meaningful connections between individual life and social reality.

Criticisms of transitional learning. The primary criticism I identified for transitional learning theory is the lack of empirical research testing the theory. To date, scholars have only theorized about transitional learning and have not published work from an empirical perspective. Given the limited testing of the theory, developing other criticisms is challenging, but I have identified a few.

The distinction and resistance orientations, presented by Stroobants et al. (2010), recognized power as it relates to women's efforts to use work to adjust societal demands and social structures. However, the model seems to suggest the spectrum from changeable to unchangeable markets will impact everyone similarly, since the spectrum is market based and not personal. It is known that markets do not treat everyone equally. For example, on average, women receive less pay than men (American Association of University Women, 2016) and opportunities may not be available to women because of biases about what roles women can play in the workplace (Moser, 1991). The model does an excellent job of recognizing the role of gender on work transitions, as previously show in the example of the women who moved from nursing to eventually become a cab driver. However, the model does not explicitly discuss social factors other than gender. The model clearly considers a woman's gender, but her race, class, and other intersectionalities would also have played a role in how she experienced each strategy or whether each strategy was available to her.

A person with less power may not be able to meet their personal demands, but they also may not be successful in meeting societal demands. Moving from nursing to cab driving is dramatically different from moving from the sex trade to legal, sustainable employment. Adaptation does recognize the market and societal restrictions of an individual's employment choices. The model may be flexible enough to recognize the degree of restriction will be different for everyone, so I believed that the model would hold up for studying women's transition from the sex trade. I considered this limitation when conducting the research for this study, especially when women entered the industry under the most oppressive conditions, such as through forced trafficking. A related issue is the model clearly addresses transition from one legal job to another legal job and not from an illegal job to a legal job. Again, based on the model's flexibility and consideration of societal demands, the model was likely to be able to accommodate the transition from illegal employment, but the issue was not specifically addressed in the model.

Findings from the Integrative Literature Review

In this study, I used transitional learning theory to investigate how women transitioning from the sex trade to legal employment make meaning of their lives in a work context. The arrow in the figure representing this study's conceptual framework, at Figure 1, situates transitional learning theory at the intersection of adult transition theory, social cognitive theory, and experiential learning theory.

Specifically, each strategy in the Stroobants et al. (2010) model has application to women in the sex trade. Women oriented toward adaptation may include women who

are forced out of sex work and into a recovery program, for example, by the criminal justice system. They may believe there are very few opportunities available to them and may be participating in the program to meet societal demands and not their own.

Women oriented toward growth may or may not have been forced to exit sex work, but have personalized the transition as an opportunity for development. They may still believe there are very few legal, sustainable employment opportunities available, but plan to adapt to an unchangeable market. Counseling may have helped women increase their confidence in transition and inspired them to find legal employment. Distinction could be an important orientation for women who consider the sex trade oppressive and as a result are choosing to exit. Markets are changeable and their action and reflection is oriented toward personal demands. Distinction may be a more likely orientation for high-end sex workers who have more agency in their work and skills to apply to a legal career than do street workers.

The concept of resistance from Stroobants et al. (2010) connects nicely to Moser's (1991) research on effective development initiatives. Moser claimed that most development programs only meet women's basic needs and personal demands (distinction and growth), such as providing food and clothing for their family demand. Moser challenged development initiatives to move beyond women's basic needs to meet their deeper needs of adjusting gender biases to provide them opportunities to overcome poverty and oppression. The example that Stroobants et al. (2010) provided of the woman transitioning from nursing to driving a cab was very similar to Moser's (1991) suggestion to meet women's strategic needs by teaching them traditionally masculine job

72

skills. In the example of Stroobants et al. (2010), a woman was motivated to prove she could excel in a traditionally male-dominated job. Resistance and Moser's strategic needs are both oriented toward adjusting societal demands, either naturally or through education, which may require a dynamic job market to be successful. Specific to research on the sex trade, Dalla (2006) identified the need for women to have sustainable, alternative work opportunities outside of the sex industry in order to exit successfully.

Using transitional learning theory in this study allowed me to fill a critical gap in the existing literature related to how work influences women's transition experience. Additionally, this study should contribute empirical research to the currently under-researched theory. My primary criticisms and concerns related first to a lack of empirical evidence supporting the model in any context. I was also concerned about the model's ability to capture the experiences specifically of women exiting the sex trade. The model was developed with empirical evidence, but not in the context of my study. I believe the model is flexible enough to capture the extent to which societal demands are oppressive to some women, but my study tested the theory empirically.

Additional Contributions

As outlined in this chapter, some scholars have conducted studies about women's transition experiences out of the sex trade. However, as Sanders (2007) stated, what is known "about how women leave the sex industry is patchy, largely based on the street market, and rarely the main focus of research" (p. 75). Still, little is known about what happens after women exit the sex trade (Manopaiboon, 2003). Specifically, little is

73

known about women's work transitions. Scholars who have studied exiting the sex trade did not investigate transitions from a work perspective. Additionally, scholars investigating career transitions focused on moving from one legal career to another. Through my study, I hope to contribute to both areas of research by specifically evaluating the role of work in women's transition experiences from an illegal, and often stigmatized, career to legal employment.

Summary

In this chapter, I first provided an overview of the sex trade, then included an integrative literature review studying literature. The review evaluated literature related to women's transition experiences out of the sex trade, social learning, experiential learning, and transitional learning. The studies investigated showed a need to better understand how women learn and how their identities change as they transition out of the sex trade.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

This study was a basic qualitative study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) conducted in the U.S., specifically Texas. The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of women transitioning out of the sex trade, especially related to finding legal employment. I conducted this study in multiple counties in Texas. As stated in Chapter I, I explored the following research questions related to women's transition from the sex trade to legal employment: (a) What challenges do women face while transitioning out of the sex trade? (b) What supports help women transitioning out of the sex trade? and (c) In what types of learning do women engage and in what context(s) do women learn while transitioning out the sex trade?

The following describes the research design and why the design was selected to address the questions asked in the study. I use the research design to frame discussions regarding participant selection, data collection, and data analysis. Finally, I describe my own biases and how trustworthiness and credibility were achieved.

Design of Study

The research questions, designed to address the study's purpose, are guided by my epistemological framework and methodology. Through the research questions, I showed my epistemological assumption that reality is constructed and socially situated for women exiting the sex trade. As a result, participants' identities may also be situational and evolving, all of which is consistent with a constructivist epistemology. I

was interested, as Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated about qualitative researchers, "in understanding (a) how people interpret their experiences, (b) how they construct their worlds, and (c) what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 24). Investigating how individuals make meaning of their experiences is also consistent with the conceptual framework used for this study, as described in Chapter I, in regards to transitional learning.

I utilized basic qualitative study research design to address the research questions for several epistemological and practical reasons. A basic qualitative study is justified by an interpretivist theoretical framework, which is the theoretical framework linked to the constructivist epistemological framework (Gray, 2014). The interpretivist theoretical framework allows for consideration of multiple socially constructed realities. The framework is critical for women exiting the sex trade, because their positionalities are so diverse and the framework empowers them as experts in their own lives. Understanding how people interpret and give meaning to their experiences is also consistent with interpretivism (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

In addition to the epistemological rationale for selecting a basic qualitative methodology, there are other practical reasons for its selection. First, a basic qualitative study provided more flexibility than other types of qualitative studies. My goal was to simply "achieve an understanding of how people make sense of their lives…and describe how people interpret their experiences," without a specific purpose to develop theory (grounded theory), describe and interpret a specific phenomenon (phenomenology), understand the interaction of individuals and their culture

(ethnography), or situate the study within a bounded system (case study) (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 15). As stated by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), the other types of qualitative studies listed above have an "*additional* dimension" (p. 15) distinguishing them from basic qualitative studies. To allow for more flexibility in the research design, by not incorporating an additional dimension, and to focus on interpretation of the women's experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), I selected a basic qualitative study.

Participant Selection

Prior to participant selection, the study was approved by the Texas A&M University Institutional Review Board (IRB). All participant selection and recruitment was conducted in accordance with the procedures approved by the IRB. The context for this study were women exiting the sex trade. In the following sections, I will outline the sampling method used, the selection criteria for individual participants, and describe the organizations participating in the study. Finally, in this section, to provide more context related to the organizations, I will provide additional details about the legal environment in the state where the study was conducted.

Sampling Method

Purposive sampling was used to select participants based on the selection criteria outlined in the following section. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), "Purposive sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 96). Purposive sampling is common in qualitative research. All participant recruitment was handled through organizations willing to help connect me to potential

77

participants. Three organizations in Texas helped me identify key participants meeting the selection criteria. The inclusion criteria for organizations was any organization in Texas helping women exit the sex trade. I reached out to between six and ten organizations, one agreed to help and then became unresponsive, several did not respond in time to be included in the study, and one refused because they do not allow researcher interaction with their participants.

The number of respondents grew by adding more organizations through snowball sampling, the specific type of purposive sampling used in this study. Snowball sampling involves asking existing participants for referrals for other participants meeting the selection criteria (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Contacts in participating organizations connected me with other potential organizations.

I never contacted participants directly, but they were given my contact information through the organization leaders, who acted as gatekeepers, to reach out if they were interested in participating. The sections to follow provide additional details related to the selection criteria for participants as well as the organizations used to reach participants.

Participant Selection Criteria

Participant selection was guided by the study's research questions. The participants selected had experiences transitioning out of the sex trade, they faced challenges, received support, and engaged in learning experiences. All experienced these challenges, supports, and learning experiences in the broad context of life skills, and in the more specific context of pursuing legal employment. The specific inclusion

criteria for this study included (a) adult (over age 18 years), (b) English speaking, (c) females, (d) who participated in the sex trade in Texas, (e) for at least 1 year, and (f) who exited the sex trade at least 3 months before being interviewed. I placed no limit on the upper end of age, time in, or time out of the sex trade. The rationale for each criterion are outlined in the following paragraphs.

Adult education was the focus of this study, therefore, the selection criteria required participants to be adults upon exiting. Additionally, I sought English-speaking participants as this was my native language and I wanted to be able to personally connect with participants' words and meanings without the use of a translator. All participants were female; although there is a population of men and transgendered individuals in the sex trade, I specifically delimited women as the focus of this study. An additional delimitation was participation in the sex trade in Texas, to eliminate variability due to differing legal environments across states, as discussed in Chapter II. Additional discussion regarding the legal environment in Texas follows in this chapter, after discussing the timing in and out of the sex trade as well as the organizations included in the study.

I sought women with more experience, at least 1 year, in the sex trade to allow for richer data related to transitioning out, as women with longer experience in the sex trade were more established in the routines and mindset of the sex trade. All participants in this study were engaged in the sex trade for at least 3 cumulative years, considered "long-term residents" before exiting (Potterat, Woodhouse, Muth, & Muth, 1990, p. 235).

Additionally, I sought participants who had been out of the sex trade for at least 3 months, which is consistent with timeframes used in a previous study related to transitioning out of the sex trade (Sanders, 2007). The timeframe allowed for women to have developed more learning experiences and time for reflection after exiting than someone who has just exited the sex trade. Despite the 3-month requirement, as I will further detail in Chapter IV, all participants had been out of the sex trade at least 3 years.

I set no limits on the upper end of the selection criteria, because more time in, and more time out added more experiences since exiting to capture women's full experiences. I placed no upper end age limit as women exit the sex trade at a variety of ages, which could add to the depth of experiences included in the study. I made efforts to recruit diverse participants based on race and class, by including organizations in areas with diversity in race and class, and by asking organization contacts to include referrals for women from different races. I tried to ensure language I used in recruiting materials would not preclude individuals of different races and classes from participating. More class diversity was achieved than racial diversity, with two of the 10 participants being underrepresented minorities.

I interviewed 10 women based on the inclusion criteria. I conducted interviews until saturation was reached. Saturation occurs when no new information is provided by additional participants, or the information collected becomes redundant (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I identified the 10 participants who met the inclusion criteria through several organizations assisting women in exiting. In the following section, I will

describe the process for identifying the organizations, as well as the organizations'

characteristics.

Organizations

I conducted Internet searches to find potential organizations to participate in the

study. I made direct contact with leaders in those organizations. I also relied on my

exiting contacts who have worked with organizations helping women exit to connect me

to organization leaders. I expanded the pool of potential organizations through snowball

sampling. Specifically, organization contacts in participating organizations connected

me to others who might be interested in helping with participant recruitment.

The three organizations selected support women. One organization supports

women exiting situations of poverty, incarceration, and addiction (Organization 1). A

second organization helps women exit situations of sexual exploitation, most often in a

specific aspect of the sex industry (Organization 2). The third organization specifically

provides restorative care for female survivors of sex trafficking (Organization 3).

All three organizations were religiously-affiliated. As Worthen (2011) found,

organizations helping women exit trafficking situations in Nepal have different

frameworks: a prostitution framework and a labor framework. The prostitution

framework aligns closely with the abolitionist feminist perspective and the labor

framework with the liberal feminist perspective. The organizations in this study are

most closely aligned with the prostitution framework and were all religiously affiliated.

Six of the 10 participants exited through Organization 1. One woman exited

through Organization 3. Two women found out about the study through their connection

with Organizations 2 and 3, but exited through unrelated court-ordered drug treatment programs. One woman exited through the help of an organization specializing in supporting survivors of sexual exploitation in California. She initially also exited through a court-ordered drug rehabilitation program. The woman qualified for this study, because she participated in the sex trade in Texas and met the inclusion criteria. She was later trafficked to California, where she exited. She was connected to this study through contacts I made in the movement, but not through a specific organization affiliated with the study.

In addition to the organizations specifically participating in this study, women received support from other organizations, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and their sponsors from those organizations. In the following section, I will describe the purpose of selecting participants who engaged in the sex trade in Texas.

Location

All 10 women were engaged in the sex trade in Texas at some point. Additionally, the three organizations specifically associated with this study were in central to south Texas. I selected the sex trade in Texas for the current study due to a large percentage of human trafficking in the U.S occurring in the state, in part due to its proximity to Mexico and access to a port in Houston (Butler, 2012). From a pragmatic perspective, Texas is easily accessible to me as a researcher, and I had contacts in the area who could connect me to organizations and participants.

To further understand the context of the study, it is important to address the legal environment related to prostitution and sex trafficking in Texas. As a state, Texas's laws

related to trafficking map closely to TVPA at the federal level (Texas Legislature, 2015). The implementation of Texas Penal Code Chapter 20A at the state level appears to closely match the implementation of TVPA at the federal level. These laws impact women engaged in prostitution, because force, fraud, or coercion must be established to process their cases as trafficking. The establishment of force, fraud, or coercion impacts whether trafficking charges can be brought against women's pimps at both the state and federal level (Melton, 2016).

Some differences in treatment of women exiting prostitution exists at the country level. Most large cities in Texas—such as Houston, Dallas, and San Antonio—have initiated efforts to combat trafficking and prostitution, which make the area ideal for the study. Harris County especially, which includes Houston, has focused on combatting trafficking in recent years under the leadership of District Attorney Devon Anderson (Whitfield, 2016). Law enforcement in Houston have established an alliance against trafficking, which is a collaboration between state, local, and federal governments to end trafficking (City of Houston, 2014; United States Attorney's Office, 2015). Houston has successfully run a drug court called Success Through Addition Recovery (STAR) Court for some time (Harris County District Courts, 2006). In 2014, a similar court was established for women arrested for prostitution misdemeanors, called Survivors Acquiring Freedom and Empowerment (Safe) Court (Rogers, 2014). This court has faced controversy, however, due to its affiliation with a nonprofit diversion program called "We've Been There Done That" (Ludwig, 2015).

Other counties in Texas have started similar courts. San Antonio also started a prostitution court called the Esperanza Court, in 2014 (Romero, 2016). The program has approximately 30 women participating and is experiencing success, despite the difficulties of connecting women with resources like clothing, housing, and jobs (Rummel, 2016). Dallas was the first in Texas to establish a prostitution diversion program, which is run through nonprofit organizations in the area, and a prostitution court (Mueller, 2012). The Dallas felony prostitution court is called Strengthening, Transitioning, and Recovery (STAR) Court (Tsiaperas, 2015).

None of the participants in this study exited through a prostitution specific court or legal program. Three women exited through court-ordered drug rehabilitation programs: two in Texas and one in California. Through the drug rehabilitation programs, two of them were referred to other organizations to address the sexual exploitation they experienced.

Data Collection

The data collection procedures, and specifically the interview protocol, were supported by the methodology and directly connected to the research questions. I conducted the data collection portion of the study in 2016 from May to September. To collect data, I conducted a semi-structured interview with 10 participants, focused on women sharing their lived experiences transitioning out of the sex trade. I designed the initial interview to gather information about women's experiences using open-ended questions, as recommended by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) for qualitative studies. Before starting the open-ended questions, I asked the women to state what they call their

previous work—sex work, prostitution, or another term. I then adopted the participant's language to label their work throughout the interviews. Following the open-ended questions, I asked demographic questions related to age, race, housing situations, marital status, age, criminal history, and drug use.

Participants were provided with an opportunity to participate in a second interview. Nine of the 10 participants were willing for me to reach out to them following the first interview to provide them with the interview transcript and schedule a second interview. One participant chose to remain anonymous and did not want to provide an email address or have additional contact to receive a transcript. I attempted to conduct a second interview with the nine willing participants. Six of the nine participants completed a second interview. I designed the follow-up interview to ensure that each woman's voice was accurately represented in the first interview's transcription. The women had an opportunity to make any desired changes, make any additional suggestions for organizations supporting women transitioning out, and tell any aspects of their story they may not have included in the initial interview.

Eight of the 10 initial interviews were conducted in person, with two interviews conducted over the phone, based on geographic location. Initial interviews lasted 45 minutes to 2 hours. All second interviews were conducted over the phone and lasted between 5 and 15 minutes each. Throughout each interview, I also took field notes to record participants' body language, (if applicable) to note connections between interviews, to note when participants' tone changed or they seemed uncomfortable. Throughout the research process, I kept a field note journal to document my emotions

and track initial findings, themes, and ideas for adapting the research process. In addition to the field note journal, after each interview, I prepared a memo. The memo provided a rich description of the participant, including their appearance, clothing, attitude, personality, and the interview setting. The memo also included a summary of the key themes from each interview.

Data collection procedures were designed to protect participant identity and to give participants power over sensitive information. Scholars investigating women transitioning out of the sex trade have emphasized the importance of conducting "sensitive and non-exploitative" research (Oselin, 2009, p. 385), empowering women and allowing them to tell their stories (Dalla, 2006; Sanders, 2007).

I adopted additional strategies to maintain a comfortable and empowering environment during the interviews. I used predetermined questions to guide the interviews, but flexibility was critical to allow participants to share their experiences. I asked follow-up probes based on participants' responses. I placed no time limit on interviews, so participants did not feel rushed in sharing their stories. Participants selected the interview locations and I traveled to participants to increase participants' comfort level in sharing. Participants were encouraged to select private locations, to help ensure confidentiality.

I carefully considered confidentiality in all aspects of the research design. In order to help ensure confidentiality, I used information sheets, rather than consent documents. Information sheets and consent documents are designed to disclose to participants the purpose of the research, any risks related to participating in the research,

and who to contact if research is not conducted properly. A consent form requires participants' signatures. Signatures are not required with an information sheet, which allows participants to remain anonymous. The information sheets were used to make participants prevent any breach of confidentiality from the storage of consent documents with participants' signatures.

I recorded participant interviews. To maintain confidentiality, participants did not use their names in the interviews. Prior to transcribing the interviews, I stored the recordings on a password-protected computer; after transcribing the interviews, I deleted the recordings. I never referred to participants using their real names, whether in recordings or written documents; I used pseudonyms in all cases.

Efforts to achieve validity and reliability of the interview protocol, specifically face validity, included my committee reviewing the interview questions prior to data collection. Questions were also reviewed by a woman who have previously exited the sex trade as well as staff members in an NGO helping women exit.

Data Analysis

As suggested by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), data collection and data analysis occurred simultaneously. Simultaneous collection and analysis allowed me and the participants to learn from the findings by testing previously identified themes with each participant (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The learning enhanced data collection throughout the interview process, made data collection more manageable, and added value to the findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Simultaneous data collection and analysis allowed me to identify interconnected meanings more effectively (Moustakas,

1994). Immediately following each interview, I personally transcribed each interview from audio tapes and incorporated information on nonverbal cues from the field notes into the transcription.

I then divided the transcriptions into units, which are any phrase or work with meaning on its own (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Through inductive analysis, I reviewed each unit to identify an appropriate theme, through a process called open coding (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Open coding is used in research when the data is new and anything might be important, as it was in this study. New data, each new unit, was either added to an existing category, used to create a new category, or used to alter an existing category. The categories identified were constantly tested against new data collected, through the constant comparative method. The constant comparative method first proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) is a critical process in grounded theory research, but is recommended for use in basic qualitative research by Merriam and Tisdell (2016). The themes identified in the open coding process were then grouped into common themes or categories through a process called axial coding. Each theme was refined by reanalyzing the data several times. Data was reanalyzed as more interviews were conducted and after all interviews were completed. The themes were refined until clear categories and subcategories were identified.

In addition to the data analysis process, the research journal and research memos referenced in the data collection section, were key components added in the interpretive process. The journal was updated throughout the interview process to discuss issues with which I was grappling and to make connections between data collected. The

memos served a similar purpose in assisting with creating connections between interviews and across determined themes.

As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested for basic qualitative research, the findings are presented in Chapter IV as a rich description of women's experiences and perspectives. The findings include specific descriptions of participants' experiences, relying primarily on quotes and vignettes from the participants, which allows the women's voice to be represented in the findings. Additionally, for each theme, I counted the number of participants who shared a common experience or perspective. This was done in an effort to show readers whether a quote or vignette was indicative of the rest of the data. In addition to the rich description used to present the data analyzed, I have engaged in several methods to help ensure trustworthiness and consistency, which will be described in the following section.

Trustworthiness and Consistency

I utilized the following validation measures recommended for qualitative research (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), including member checks, rich description, keeping a research journal, peer review, and disclosing my biases. I will disclose my biases in a separate section to follow, so readers understand my perspectives. My plans for the remaining validation procedures will be detailed below.

Member Checks

Maxwell (2009) identified member checks as "the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do"

(p. 244). Member checks also allow researchers to continually address their own biases, which may have influenced any misunderstandings. As recommended by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), I conducted member checks throughout the research. During the study, I summarized the important themes from each interview. I had participants review the most salient themes from their interview before we left the interview. I made any adjustments in my misunderstandings of what they communicated and ensured we agreed on the primary themes as the most important points from the interview. I also used any misunderstandings to determine if they were indicative of any of my own unknown biases.

I also provided nine of the 10 participants with a transcript of their interview for their review. One participant chose to remain anonymous and did not want to provide an email address or have additional contact to receive a transcript. As noted in the data collection section, I attempted to conduct a second interview with the nine participants willing to participate. The second interview allowed each participant an opportunity to revise or clarify any statements made in the first interview. Once initial findings were established, I also allowed each participant to review the initial findings and provide feedback.

Rich Description

I also provided rich description of the data collected, including participants' experiences and perspectives. Rich description of the research sites and participants were not provided in an efforts to maintain confidentiality. I present a rich description of the procedures were to give readers a clear understanding of how the study was

conducted and how the participants experienced the phenomenon being studied (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Additionally, I gave a summary of participants' characteristic to aid readers in further understanding the context of the study and protect participants' identities. Rich, thick description was also used to illuminate the quotes used in the findings section of the study. The goal of providing a rich description was to give readers with the information they need to determine if the findings from the current study are transferable to settings relevant to them (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Research Journal

I kept a research journal to document why and how I may have changed research procedures during the study and decisions about categorization of themes. The journal included my reflections, questions, and concerns. The journal provided an audit log, an account of any changes made throughout the research, which I reviewed periodically and shared with my peer reviewer. The purpose of the audit log is to ensure any changes to the research plan were unbiased, considerate of the participants, and in the interest of better research.

Peer Review

I utilized a peer reviewer to provide external input into the research process. After all data was collected and initially analyzed, I used peer debriefing for review of my data and findings. The peer reviewer is another student almost finished with the adult education doctoral program and is also a qualitative researcher. We met to review my procedures for coding transcripts. The individual also reviewed how I coded a participant's statements (the themes assigned for all statements from one participant),

and a list of statements coded for a sample theme (all statements coded to one theme). The individual also reviewed all of the themes to evaluate how all themes were identified and how themes and subthemes were categorized.

Researcher Orientation and Biases

I am a White woman, in my mid-30s, married without children. I am currently middle class and grew up in the middle class. I was fortunate that my family made many sacrifices to pay for my college education. Going to college was never viewed as a choice. It was assumed, by myself and my family, I would pursue higher education.

I graduated from college with a bachelor's degree in business administration in accounting and a master's in finance. I then worked for a few years in public accounting as an auditor at one of the four largest, global, public accounting firms. I planned to stay at the firm and hoped to someday make partner. However, I dreamed of teaching at a university while I was in college. I thought I would make the transition when I retired, but received an opportunity to teach much sooner than expected. I left the firm to teach at my alma mater in a non-tenure track position and serve as assistant department head for the accounting department. I started the PhD program after about 5 years of teaching at Texas A&M.

I was primarily motivated to start the PhD program because I realized the accounting students I taught were highly motivated students from middle to upper class families who would have been successful regardless of how they were taught or by whom. I hope I have an impact on their lives, but I know if I left the university someone else who was well qualified would gladly take my place. I wanted to expand my impact

92

to more marginalized populations, specifically marginalized women. I chose the adult education PhD program after I came across the phrase "emancipatory pedagogy" (Chlup & Baird, 2010, p. 195). I always believed education could empower, but I had never seen the term. I wanted to be a part of freeing people through education. Since starting the PhD program, I now view an educator's role as more of a facilitator. I do not view myself as someone who is going to go in and rescue people and solve all their problems. I now hope to facilitate the empowerment of others to identify and solve their own problems. I believe this can be achieved most effectively by being sensitive to learners' needs and giving them the power to make decisions about their own education.

I have lived in Texas, which is a conservative state, my whole life. My immediate and extended family have fairly conservative political and religious views. I grew up Southern Baptist. Related to this study, we were taught sex was something to be shared between a husband and wife. Sex outside of marriage was considered a sin and emphasized more than other sins. In 2015, I conducted a study on the True Love Waits movement. I participated in the movement as a teenager. The program was an abstinence-only movement where teenagers signed pledge cards stating they would not have sex before marriage. Before conducting the study, I spent several months writing about my own related experiences. The process was helpful identifying my experiences, which may be shared by others.

While this study also relates to sex, I do not have any experiences with or connections to the sex trade. I do believe my conservative upbringing impacts my views about the sex trade. However, as I have grown up and moved away, my views have

become more liberal. I also espouse feminist views and believe in female empowerment and work to disrupt gender biases. I recognize that in many instances, women would not choose the sex trade if other opportunities for equal pay were available. I believe that across the world, women do not have the same opportunities as men to generate income, which is a significant factor in women seeking the sex trade.

Summary

In this chapter, I described the research design, as approved by the Texas A&M IRB. I also provided rationale for selecting a basic qualitative study to address the study's purpose and research questions. I also discussed the study's context, participants and how they will be selected, interview protocol, data collection and analysis. Finally, I disclosed my personal biases and perspectives along with other actions taken to achieve reliability and validity.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of women transitioning out of the sex trade, especially related to finding legal employment. Three research questions guided the study: (a) What challenges do women face while transitioning out of the sex trade? (b) What supports help women transitioning out of the sex trade? (c) In what types of learning do women engage and in what context(s) do women learn while transitioning out the sex trade? I will begin this chapter with a description of the participants followed by findings from the study organized by themes.

Participant Description

Consistent with the inclusion criteria for the study, all participants were women who had engaged in prostitution for more than 1 year and had been out for more than 3 months. In this section, I discuss how women named their experiences and describe the pseudonyms used. I also provide the respondents' demographics information to give the reader a detailed description of the sample, but aggregated the data to protect each individual's identity. Given the sensitive nature of the subject matter, participants' anonymity is of the upmost importance. The summarized demographic information is followed by a brief description of each participant including only non-identifiable details, to give the reader more context for participant quotes included in the findings.

Naming their Previous Experiences

The first question I asked all women was what they called their experiences. In response to the question, most women referred their time in the sex trade as "the life," or "the lifestyle." Women who had been in the sex trade longer used "the game." Other women called the sex trade "hell," "the dark times," and "sex slavery." Throughout their interviews, women occasionally adopted other terms, such as "hustling," "turning tricks," and "prostitution."

No one in the study identified themselves as a sex worker. Gloria said, "I never identify as a sex worker. There is no such thing as sex work. It is not designed to be work. It's designed for an intimate experience between two people." Gloria did say she sometimes referred to women as "prostituted women, individuals in the sex trade," or "exploited individuals." Only one other woman referred to herself as a prostitute. Helena said, "I used to say that I was a call girl, but that was like a fancy version of what was really going on. I think I was a prostitute."

One woman primarily participated in pornography when she was in "the lifestyle," but she also engaged in what she called "free prostitution." She traded sex for a place to stay for the night and a shower, which fits the definition of prostitution—exchanging sex for money, goods, or anything of value. Consistent with Gloria's nomenclature, I will use the term *sex trade* when discussing the industry in general. When referring to women's specific experiences, I will use the term that the participant used.

Pseudonyms

The women who participated in this study were strong and resilient. They frequently referenced their resourcefulness and "hustle," which was evidenced in their many accomplishments. Thus, I selected the pseudonyms from the names of strong women in history, as detailed in Appendix B.

Summarized Participants' Demographics

At the time of the study, as summarized in Table 1, participants ranged in age from 26 to 51 years, with an average age of 39 years, and median age of 38.5. Nine of the 10 participants had completed at least a high school degree, with one completing school through the eleventh grade. Two were pursuing a master's degree and two were pursuing a bachelor's degree. Two other women had already completed bachelor's degrees. One participant took some courses at a 4-year college prior to entering the sex trade, while in the sex trade she completed a vocational training program. Eight participants were White and two were Hispanic.

At the time of the study, five participants were married and living with their spouse. Two other participants were divorced. One participant was married but had been separated from her husband for 2 years, and two women were living with their partners. Eight of the 10 participants were mothers. One participant shared custody with a previous partner and four others did not have custody of their children. Two of them have since reconciled with their adult children. One participant lives with a family member, the remaining women live alone, with their partner, or with their partner and children.

Table 1

Summary of Participant Demographics

Demographic	Years
Age	
Average	39
Median	38.5
Range	26-51
Age of entry	
Average	20
Range	18-25
Time in the sex trade	
Average	11
Range	3-32
Time since exiting	
Average	8
Range	3-20
Mother	$n = 8$
With custody	$n = 4$
Marital status	
Married	5
Divorced	2
Married, but separated	1
Living with partner	2
Education	
Eleventh grade completed	$n = 1$
High school (only) completed	$n = 2$
Vocational school	$n = 1$
Pursuing bachelors	$n = 2$
Bachelors (only) completed	$n = 2$
Pursuing masters	$n = 2$

All participants officially started in the sex trade after 18, with ages ranging from 18 to 25. Participants reported remaining in the sex trade from 3 years to 32 years, and had been out from 3 years to 20 years. Participants had trouble determining a start time and duration for their time in the sex trade. As Sanders (2007) found, women frequently relapse when exiting the sex trade. Several participants had been in and out several

times, so the years reported are the participants' estimates of the cumulative years they were in the trade. Additionally, two participants referenced informally starting the sex trade at very young ages—11 or 12—but reported their official entrance into the sex trade at ages 20 and 21.

Nine of the 10 participants were recovering addicts. I did not ask participants about their mental health or PTSD diagnoses. Three participants specifically self-disclosed having PTSD. Five other participants identified severe symptoms of trauma, such as extreme fear of other people, not wanting to leave their homes, nightmares, and/or heightened anger. Only one participant did not refer to having PTSD or the severe symptoms of trauma, but she did discuss struggling with depression and skepticism about people trying to help her.

Nine of the 10 participants had been arrested, one of those arrested was never charged, one was convicted of only misdemeanors, and the remaining seven were convicted of felonies. Of the women convicted of felonies, one woman's record was cleared without any effort on her part. Two woman had their records expunged, one of whom has been working to have her record retracted. The participants' arrests were not related to prostitution. I did not ask about women's time in the lifestyle, because of parameters I set during the IRB application process. I retained any disclosures women made about their time in the lifestyle, if it added value to the study, but I did not ask any follow-up questions about that period of time. Therefore, I cannot definitively say that no participant had been charged for prostitution, but no one self-disclosed being arrested for prostitution, though they did discuss other charges. For many participants, their

arrests/charges were for drug trafficking/delivery, possession, lewdness, or other undisclosed charges.

All the participants were currently employed, though one was on maternity leave. The participants work in a variety of careers including retail, food services, education, and sales. Two women disclosed owning their own businesses. Three participants currently work for pay or regularly volunteer as survivor leaders in organizations helping women transition out of the industry. Many of the respondents were still engaged more informally by volunteering periodically with organizations helping women exit. The following sections include a brief description of each participant to give context to the findings to follow.

Amelia

Amelia is a strong woman who is not afraid to share her opinions and astute observations. She is incredibly caring and concerned about others. She said she was not always like that, which is very hard to imagine. She was extremely reluctant to accept anything from me – she did not want to accept the gift card for participating in the study. Despite being able to use the money herself, she wanted it to go to someone else who needed it more.

Amelia wants to disrupt the "re-victimization" she experienced while in the sex trade by training law enforcement and healthcare professionals to identify and interact with survivors. Amelia exited through a court-ordered drug rehabilitation program, through which she was identified as a victim of domestic violence. Through counseling for domestic violence, she was able to see her "husband" as her pimp. When Amelia

first exited, she had tattoos on her face, neck, and hands. More recently, she has undergone tattoo removal, because she felt her tattoos and not her felonies prevented her from getting a job. Amelia is working on completing a bachelor's degree. In addition to working part-time, Amelia volunteers with Organization 3, as a mentor for other women just exiting.

Billie

Billie is someone I would love to have on my side in any difficult situation, but would never want to go up against her. She is a trained boxer and she exhibits those skills in her demeanor. Billie exited through a court-ordered drug rehabilitation program, but more recently has received support from Organization 2. After exiting the lifestyle, she continued as a dancer. Billie was very open about the addictive nature of the lifestyle, not only because of the income, but because of the excitement of the lifestyle. Billie currently works in sales. She understands sales, the ability to hustle and resourcefulness she learned in the lifestyle helps her in her job today. She also talked about having mastered the chameleon-like skills necessary to be in the sex trade. For example, Billie has a deep voice, which she changes to be higher when she talks to customers on the phone, because she thinks they will find that voice more appealing. Billie is currently married, but she considers the relationship to be emotionally abusive.

Clara

Clara is so thoughtful and fiercely humble. She has many achieved great things since exiting. She is very self-reflective, she knows the counseling lingo and what work she still needs to do to recover from the traumas she experienced. Clara exited through

Organization 1, which she found out about when she was in prison. Clara worked in the fast food industry when she first exited and hated the experience, including the low income. Clara started school very shortly after exiting. She is currently working on a graduate degree. Clara laughed about some of the things she did when she first exited – what she wore, what she tried to get away with doing – but she was also the most emotional about the consequences of the lifestyle – her low self-worth, the impact on her family. Clara is now married. She no longer self-discloses.

Elizabeth

Elizabeth grew up with a mother who was a drug addict. She had an unstable childhood, living with different family members or being homeless. Elizabeth exited through Organization 1. After exiting, Elizabeth had to learn many life skills for the first time – how to drive, how to manage a checkbook. Elizabeth learned a great deal through coaching at work and through social interaction at church. Elizabeth is now married and has an infant. She works and is also completing a graduate degree.

Elle

Elle was in the sex trade the longest of all the participants. She was well embedded in what she called "the game." Elle exited through Organization 1, but was asked to leave the organization. Elle married soon after exiting. Her husband did everything for her. When he went back to prison Elle had to learn how to do everything on her own. Elle works hard now to not self-sabotage. She recognizes her tendency to hide "like a turtle" and not leave her home out of fear and a lack of trust. She said starting to be more trustworthy herself has helped her trust others more.

Eva

Eva quit using drugs before she quit the lifestyle. She found letting go of the income more difficult than the drug addiction. She is now married and tells her husband she needs to know her bank account is adequately full or she is afraid she will go back to the lifestyle. Eva exited through Organization 1. She is currently working as a survivor leader. Eva has excelled in applying the skills she learned in the sex trade to her current work. She gained great self-worth through earning "honest dollars" and through knowing her value from God, which she learned through the encouragement of the organization.

Gloria

Gloria has set strict boundaries around herself, based on how she expects to be treated, especially by men. She is a proud feminist and will not let anyone get away with oppressing her again. She will not do speaking engagements without pay. A man, who was trying to hire her for a speaking engagement, commented on her good looks and she turned down the engagement right there along with giving him some feedback about his comment. She now has a contract, which must be signed by anyone wanting her to speak, because she learned from others canceling in the past. Gloria is a fierce advocate for survivors with sophisticated language about the sex trade, a term she recommended I adopt.

Gloria owns her own business. She is a survivor leader and consults for other survivor leaders and organizations. Gloria has an undergraduate degree in public policy, which she was inspired to pursue after reading TVPA 2000. Gloria wanted to work for

the federal government, but was unable to do so because of her criminal record. Gloria continues to consult for the government at a federal level, as well as for local law enforcement. Gloria exited through a court-ordered drug rehabilitation program. When the sexual exploitation she experienced was identified she was referred to an organization helping survivors. There she connected with a well-known advocate and survivor leader, who acted as Gloria's mentor.

Helena

Helena is a business owner. She has a big personality, which she has learned to embrace through the years and it now serves her well. She considers herself a pillar of society, which was evident by being in public with her. Everyone in town knew and loved Helena. Helena currently employs other women who have struggled with addiction in her business. Soon she hopes to be able to invest in their business, as a form of lending to help them establish themselves in the ways she has done so. Helena has to work hard to not overcommit herself, which she feels could lead to a relapse. She has many interests and many talents she wants to pursue. Helena has always been able to use her personality to get jobs after exiting and other material things she needs. Her biggest struggle was always to rebuild relationships, because she would regain trust and then relapse again. Helena is married to a very supportive husband, but she recognized the challenge for him of being married to someone who was in the lifestyle. For example, during fights he may bring up her past, but most days their relationship is extremely positive. Helena exited through Organization 1 and has a relationship with Organization 2.

Jillian

Jillian works in an office job. She is extremely proud of how far she has come in three years since exiting. Jillian grew up in a middle-class home, but had a volatile relationship with her parents. She described herself as "intellectually smart, emotionally stupid." Jillian was drawn into the sex trade by a man who became her husband and then forced her into the lifestyle.

Josie

Josie is a proud mother. She wants to teach her children to be strong and not to rely on anyone else. Josie is in what she described as an emotionally abusive relationship. Josie works in food services and is proud of being able to provide for her family now. She was in the sex trade in the same area where she exited. When she was in the sex trade, she remembers going home when the school busses were passing by and trying to hide. Now she proudly puts her children on those same busses. Josie was the quietest participant who seemed the least comfortable sharing her story.

The next section includes an overview of the findings, followed by the findings organized by research question.

Overview of the Findings

The findings are divided into three sections associated with each research questions addressing challenges, supports, and types of learning, as demonstrated in Table 2. Each section includes themes related to the associated research question and where necessary subthemes providing additional details.

Table 2

Research Questions and Associated Themes

Research Question	Theme
Challenges	Related to employment
	Managing mental health and emotions
	Navigating basic life skills
	Building, rebuilding, and managing relationships
Supports	Finding support
	Importance of needs assessments
	Supportive relationships
	The need for holistic support
	Missing support
Types and Contexts of Learning	Experiential learning
	Social learning
	Survivor leaders – power and policy
	Survivor as expert and teacher

Related to Research Question 1, I organized the challenges women faced while transitioning out in the following themes: (a) related to employment, (b) managing mental health and emotions, (c) navigating basic life skills, and (d) building, rebuilding, and managing relationships. Research question 2 garnered the following themes: (a) how women found support, (b) the importance of support providers conducting a needs assessment with women, (c) the role of positive relationships, (d) the necessity of holistic support, and (e) the support women felt was missing while they transitioned. Finally, the themes related to third research question and types of learning include (a) experiential learning, (b) social learning, (c) the role of survivor leaders in power and policy, and (d) the need to treat survivors as experts and teachers.

Table 2 provides an overview of the research questions and associated themes. I will explore these themes in more detail throughout the remainder of this chapter, highlighting participants' responses related to each theme. The findings below are presented in the participants' voice and represent the themes they deemed most salient.

Challenges

Research Question 1: What challenges do women face while transitioning out of the sex trade?

In the following sections, I will outline several themes related to challenges the women faced after exiting. These themes include challenges related to: (a) employment, including barriers to employment, (b) managing mental health and emotions, (c) navigating basic life skills, and (d) building, rebuilding, and managing relationships. I will discuss each theme in the respective sections to follow.

Challenges Related to Employment

All 10 participants discussed employment related challenges. Nine of the participants personally experienced challenges, which made finding or maintaining employment difficult. Only one participant did not have any trouble finding work, despite having gaps in her work history and misdemeanors on her record. The remainder of the women, to varying degrees struggled to find suitable jobs, especially immediately after exiting. Some common employment related challenges included: (a) having a criminal history, (b) lacking employment experience, which left gaps in employment history and deficiencies in job skills, (c) demonstrating inappropriate work behavior, and (d) accepting inappropriate employer behavior.

Criminal history. All 10 women referenced criminal history as an employment challenge for women exiting. A criminal history had not created difficulties for two women personally: Jillian did not have a criminal record, and Helena had never been asked about her criminal history. For the eight other participants, a criminal history had at some point prevented them from pursuing their desired work, as a result of them being turned down for jobs they wanted (actual barrier) or by preventing women from applying for a job, because they were afraid the felonies were going to prevent them from being hired (perceived barrier). Actual and perceived barriers both created challenges for women, because they interfered in their ability to secure employment. In the first section below, I will discuss actual barriers along with two related challenges: the expense and difficulty of getting a criminal history cleared.

Actual barrier. Six of the 10 participants—Josie, Gloria, Amelia, Eva, Elle, and Elizabeth—had been turned down for a job they wanted due to their criminal history. This represented an actual rather than perceived barrier to employment. A commonality across Gloria, Eva, Amelia, and Elizabeth's stories is they all completed some education in the field they planned to pursue. No one counseled them about what jobs might not be available to them due to their criminal records. Eva and Gloria specifically referenced the devastation they felt after finding out their criminal records would prevent them from pursuing the careers they wanted most. Eva was hurt when she was turned down for a job as an activity director at an assisted living facility where she had worked prior to her last relapse. Representative of others' views, Eva said:

All of a sudden, 'No, we can't hire you.' And the job was open, 'No, we cannot

hire you, because of your background.' Well shit, it's already 12 years

old…They says, 'Yeah, but we can't have nobody like that.' And I was like,

'Wow.' So, that just crushed my spirits, so I just gave up. I wasn't going to try it

again. Cause I can't. I don't think I could take no for an answer again…Now

it's been 16 years old…You know, I always wonder. Maybe that's old enough. I

figured, I know these people. They know I'm a good worker. But you know

what. They also know I slipped and fell. So maybe that's why they said no. But

I took it bad, I said, but they know me. So I never did go looking anywhere [sic]

else. SO maybe I could go back. But it just, I hurt, it hurt me.

Similarly, Gloria reported being turned down for a federal job:

What I learned quickly is that my criminal record was going to hold me back. I

was not going to be able to get security clearance to work at the federal level,

even though, I had already been to the White House. I had been to all that stuff.

I completed my probation, my records expunged, it's not vacated… My dream

was shattered.

Elizabeth had a unique situation, because she was never convicted of a crime; she

only had an arrest record. Her arrest record was revealed in a fingerprint background

check, which is more detailed than the computer background check. Elizabeth's arrest

record prevented her from being a teacher, which she found out about halfway through

an education degree. Elizabeth is concerned the fingerprint background check may

create an additional challenge for her as she pursues her next career as a Licensed

Professional Counselor (LPC). Elizabeth said:

> I had heard that Medicaid was gonna start doing fingerprint background checks
>
> for whoever they reimburse for services and when I'm a counselor…if they
>
> decide then I can't see any Medicaid clients, but then if private insurance does it
>
> too then I can't see clients either. Now, I'm like, I'm working on this master's
>
> degree what am I going to do with it now? And I'm not a convicted felon. Like,
>
> I'm not. I mean, if I was a convicted felon, okay, I'm a felon. I've never been to
>
> prison. I never even did any jail time. I mean, I've been arrested and been in
>
> there a couple of days, but you know, if I knew I was a felon okay, I would know
>
> and I just approach things differently. But I'm like, 'Uh, I actually have a clear
>
> record here.' So, yeah. I mean, it's like that thing, I'm like, what if you're
>
> arrested, because they think you murdered somebody, but then you didn't and
>
> then you're just a murderer the rest of your life… But the school system sees a
>
> problem when they fingerprint me and they're like, 'Uh, no thanks.'…So yeah,
>
> absolutely, I have had an issue with that.

Elizabeth's job opportunities are limited because some employers are not willing to

accept her arrest record, despite a lack of convictions. Elizabeth and Gloria provided

additional insight into the complexities a criminal record creates for finding employment

and the cost prohibitive challenges faced in trying to clear their records.

Complexities of clearing a criminal history. Two complexities added to the

challenges participants faced due to their criminal history. First, it takes time and money

110

for women's records to be cleared, if that is even a possibility within the system. Elizabeth had been working with a lawyer for 3 years to try to clear her arrest record. She was frustrated by how long the process was taking and attributed the delay to either the lawyer being slow or flaws in the system. Elizabeth reported:

> He's like, 'It's taking so long, because you don't actually have a record.' So, everybody keeps asking me why I want to clear it. Like the DA [district attorney] is like, 'Why should I sign this, there's not a problem here.' I don't know. I'm about to hire a different lawyer.

Gloria also noted the time and money involved in clearing a record. She also pointed out a second complexity related to participant's challenges stemming from a criminal record. The participant's criminal charges were not dismissible under TVPA. Because of TVPA, when a survivor can prove force, fraud, or coercion, their prostitution related charges could be dropped. However, the felony charges of study participants did not relate to prostitution. Therefore, their charges would not be covered under TVPA, even if they were tangentially related to prostitution. If an employer is willing to hire someone with a history in the sex trade, they may not be prepared to accept the ancillary charges women have on their records, such as drug charges, theft, lewdness, loitering, and disorderly conduct. Gloria described this complication and the cost related to getting the remainder of her charges vacated:

> That's very expensive, because it's multistate. You have to prove force, fraud or coercion. And there are additional charges besides prostitution…felonies like drugs and alcohol, trafficking of drugs, which happened under a trafficking

111

situation. It didn't look like it, because the guy wasn't actually pimping me out.

But he was having me sell drugs, to feed my habit, which means I didn't have to

sleep with anybody. And believe you me, you are going to do whatever it takes

not to have to, to be blunt about it, to have any of your orifices entered or have

sex with someone. You are going to do whatever it takes not to. So, I started

doing that, got caught, went to treatment, and that was that. But the problem still

is, and I know lawyers all over the world, and I am working with a lawyer, is to

get that vacated.

Perceived barrier. A criminal record was also more of a perceived barrier for

three participants: Clara, Billie, and Josie. They women assumed their record would

prevent them from getting a job they wanted, which almost caused them to not apply. A

woman walked up to Billie at a career fair and asked if she had applied for the job in

sales they had open. About the encounter, Billie said, "I was like, 'Do y'all do

background checks, because you can just stop talking to us if you pull backgrounds.'

She was like 'Yeah we do, but go ahead and try.' And now she's my boss." Similarly,

Josie's friend recommended she apply for a job in food services. Josie said, "'Nah,

they're not going to hire me.' He said, 'Just fill out the application.' And I did, and they

called me a week later and I was hired." In addition to the challenges to finding

employment caused by a criminal record, the women faced an additional difficulty due

to a gap in their work history and job skills.

Lacking employment experience. Six of the 10 participants referenced

challenges due to a lack of legal employment experience. The participants referenced

112

these challenges in two different contexts. First, a gap in work history left a hole that could cause concern for potential employers. Second, a gap in work history meant that their traditionally employable skills were outdated or never learned. Amelia described the interplay between these two challenges when she said, "I hadn't worked in 20 years, so I had no job skills, no job history." Specifically related to a gap in work history, Eva was glad to have her current job, where she had been for a while, which improved her resume by showing a steadier work history. Representative of those for whom work history was a challenge, Eva said:

> Because I have a poor work history. I don't stay long. I run a lot. I have [a] real poor work history, but this will help build it. Because I've been here a year and a half and then I had moved to [a restaurant], but…I came back again, and I've been here since September, so it will be another year. So, that won't look bad.

Similarly, related to both gap in work history and a lack of job skills, Billie said, "I was scared I was going to go in there and they were going to be like, 'Well your past, you got these gaps in your job history.'" Billie said when she first started her current job in sales, she was unprepared for the skills required on the job. She said, "My boss had me scared shitless. I was afraid I was going to walk in there and get fired, like, on my first day." She felt she lacked skills her colleague had, such as typing, because she did not have typing skills and she does not own a computer. Billie also didn't have a college education or industry experience unlike many of her colleagues.

Josie, Eva, and Clara also specified similar challenges related to computer skills. Clara said:

I hadn't been on a computer. Okay, so when I started into the whole lifestyle

was like, 93/94…I hadn't been on a computer until 2011. Soooooooooo. Not

knowing how to type. Not knowing anything about computers. Trying to work

around them. Them wanting me to do Excel spreadsheets and I'm like

clueless… Everything's on the computer.

Another specific job skill many women recognized they lacked was an instinct for what

was appropriate in the workplace, which will be discussed in the following section.

Demonstrating inappropriate work behavior. In addition to the challenges of

finding and maintaining employment was participants' ability to act professionally in the

workplace when first exiting. When asked about an important thing she learned after

exiting, Jillian said, "Learning what is work appropriate. You don't know how to interact

with business people sometimes." The most common behavioral challenges to finding

and maintaining employment were: (a) talk, including use of street language, slang and

cussing; (b) appearance, including dress and tattoo; and (c) a lack of boundaries related

to self-disclosure.

Talk. Nine women referenced talk related to an employment challenge. The

women knew a different language on the streets and had to learn a language that was

more professional. For example, Amelia reported that customers made fun of her for her

manners and talk before she mastered the street language:

After being in that mess for 20 years, I didn't even know how to speak English

properly. It's just slang. Most people didn't even understand what I was saying…

And I'm so awful about it. I have a potty mouth. You hear me. I am working on

114

learning how to be a lady. I want to be that person. I'm not there yet obviously,

but it is what it is.

When Elizabeth first started working after exiting, she did not know what constituted

work appropriate talk. She said:

One time, I guess I was talking about some crazy things. I don't even remember,

but. [My boss] was like…'Do you really want everybody to hear all that?' And

like, you know, I just didn't realize. It's like, I just didn't know that people

shouldn't hear those kinds of things. Or you know, I'm sure I was talking about

sex or something and all the lobby could hear me.

About her speech, Eva said, it was "like it was a sore" and "ghetto" after she exited.

Self-disclosure. Initially after exiting, three women struggled with when self-

disclosure was appropriate. They too frequently self-disclosed, which created

difficulties with employers. Two others experienced extreme fear about their past being

found out by their employers, which initially created fear that interfered with their desire

to apply for jobs.

The following example provided by Clara provides some insight into the issue of

self-disclosure socially and more specifically at work. Representative of participants'

challenges with self-disclosure, Clara said:

I was really honest early on, TOO honest. And [women working at Organization

D] would be like, 'Watch what you're saying now, because one day you are

going to have a life and you're not going to want that everywhere around.' And

I'm like, 'Nah, I'm good girl, I'm good'…And I get that today. I'm like, 'Yeah,

I don't want everyone to know that.' But I didn't get that then… My other

boss…I self-disclosed to her for 3 hours…She hired me…but then later on, it

also kind of went against me sometimes, because she knew too much…I don't

self-disclose like that…like nobody at my gym, nobody at my work. They don't

know anything. They just know me as, she's getting her master's degree, she's

married, basic stuff. And I have just had to learn when was it appropriate, not

appropriate.

In contrast, two women were so fearful about their past being discovered that

they did not ever self-disclose. Their fear made them uncomfortable when applying for

jobs. Jillian said, "A lot of time I struggled with what if people find out. What am I

going to do? ...So I lived with that for a while. 'Oh my gosh, I will be so embarrassed if

somebody finds out.'"

Appearance. In addition to issues with verbal control, many women did not have

appear appropriate for traditional workplaces, which created challenges fitting into the

workplace. Specifically, five women referenced not knowing how to dress

appropriately. Clara's experience, specific to appropriate dress in a professional context,

was representative of others' experiences adjusting to dressing differently. Clara said:

I thought, 'Oh, God. This outfit is disgusting. I hate it.' And I got there and I

was dressed like everyone else. My shoes looked like 4 others. This is what

people wear? Okay…I was like, 'These shoes are disgusting.' But I got there

and everyone had them and I was like, 'Hmmm, okay.' I fit in, right? …That

was February of last year. So I've still grown. Like I've gotten even better.

116

In contrast, before learning what Clara called "appropriateness," she used to wear a G-string or "whale tail" showing on her lower back, six-inch stilettos, and a push-up bra. She thought when people first met her, after initially exiting, they thought of her as a "street walker."

A lack of resources may have interfered with women's ability to exhibit professionalism, and traditionally appropriate work appearance, creating additionally challenges related to employment. When asked what resources she lacked when exiting to succeed in a job, Amelia said:

> Clothing, shoes. I didn't have none of that shit. The only person that really brought me anything was my grandmother and who wants to dress like their grandmother, because she brings grandma clothes. I remember I was so embarrassed at the treatment center, my first shirt was a navy-blue shirt with a Pomeranian dog on the front. I was like, 'Oh, Jesus.' But those type of things, especially for a job clothing… For a job, it was definitely clothing, shoes, all that stuff. Because you couldn't just go in there looking any old kind of way.

Also related to appearance, Amelia experienced difficulty finding employment as a result of her tattoos. Many of the women had tattoos, but Amelia's were more visible and she was the only one who discussed her tattoos creating challenges in finding work. Amelia said:

> Some were like, 'I can't hire you with the felonies.' But really it was the tattoos, trust me. My hands, you can't cover that stuff up with makeup. So, I was like

geez this sucks. So, I was turned down by everyone. And I think there were a few

that I could have gotten a job even with eight felonies, but not looking like it.

Amelia is currently going through tattoo removal for her most visible tattoos. In addition

to the employment challenges resulting from their own lack of professionalism,

participants also faced workplace challenges resulting from a lack of instinct about what

constituted appropriate behavior from a boss.

Accepting inappropriate employer behavior. Three women experienced

employers' inappropriate workplace practices, which they were initially or still unable to

recognize as inappropriate. Their lack of knowledge about appropriate behavior to

expect from an employer and ability to negotiate boundaries is an employment

challenge, because inappropriate behavior by an employer led to two women quitting

their jobs and one being uncomfortable in hers.

For example, Gloria experienced sexual harassment at work soon after exiting.

Her statements about the sexual harassment she experienced not only provides insight

into her experiences with sexual harassment, but also why she—like Jillian and

Amelia—might not have been able to recognize inappropriate workplace behavior when

first exiting. Gloria said:

 And the guy, the owner, started acting weird and he had asked me to go on a trip

 or do something and I went back to group and I ended up telling [my

 counselor]…and she was like that's sexual harassment. My comment was, 'How

 is that any different from the rest of my life?' I could not even recognize sexual

 harassment…Sometimes in the early stages of exiting, we don't recognize

workplace abuses and things that are illegal, because it's so similar to things we've always been dealing with.

Amelia and Jillian were both yelled at and "cussed out" by their bosses, which they still thought was normal workplace behavior. Jillian specifically said being yelled at was nothing compared to what she had experienced in the lifestyle. Amelia did leave a job because of what she called emotional abuse by a boss and him taking advantage of her strong work ethic by using her labor for free.

Jillian was not yet so empowered to confront such inappropriate work behavior, though she was starting to be able to recognize it. Her inability to confront such behavior left her uncomfortable in the workplace. Jillian described a fairly common interaction with men at her work, in an industry that is male dominated:

And they will be like, 'We went to a strip club.' I am like, 'You really shouldn't talk about that.' All the women I work with they don't take offense to it in any way shape or form and I'm like you don't understand. What if they don't want to give you a lap dance? People who don't know about these things happening don't understand. It's hard. I don't get triggered by it, because I wasn't a stripper. But at the same time, I'm feeling really disgusted by the person who's telling me things and I'm feeling really bad for the person who they did it to. I'm like, 'You make your life choices and you will answer for them one day. Just know that you did not make the right choice, sir. That was very wrong.'

Though Jillian presented the experience as a conversation, I did not get the impression that she told the men their behavior was inappropriate. When she was talking, she

119

presented her statements as thoughts and not words said out loud. About other sex jokes said in the office, which made her uncomfortable, she said, "And I'm like oh my God, you really said that. I'm not sure how hard I should laugh."

The previous section specifically outlined challenges for women when seeking satisfactory, legal employment. In the following section, I will evaluate the challenges that the women faced related to managing their emotions and mental health after exiting.

Challenges Managing Mental Health and Emotions

The line between managing emotions and managing mental health is unclear given the connection between post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and challenges related to managing emotions such as anger, and even shame (Farley et al., 1998). It is therefore difficult to draw a clear connection between mental health (PTSD, anxiety, and depression) and emotions (self-worth, shame, and anger).

PTSD and related symptoms. This study is not about mental health. It is also not about women's time in "the life." Therefore, I did not specifically ask women about their mental health challenges or if they were struggling with PTSD. However, throughout the interviews, without being prompted, they all shared symptoms consistent with PTSD. In the following discussion, I will use the women's own words to point out some symptoms of complex PTSD they demonstrated. However, it is important to note not all women identified as having PTSD. The purpose of pointing out where their statements aligned with the symptoms of complex PTSD is to show the women struggled to manage the emotions arising from experiencing trauma.

Three women specifically identified themselves as having PTSD. Amelia and Gloria's PTSD has been clinically diagnosed. Elizabeth said she feels like she has PTSD. Some of the PTSD symptoms Elizabeth and Amelia talked about experiencing were fear and anxiety. Representative of the symptoms these participants experienced, Elizabeth said:

I have a tendency to stress and like think everything's a catastrophe, which my husband still tells me to this day. He's like, 'Is the world falling apart? You just couldn't get the jug open.' I'm like, 'Everything is wrong.' He's like, 'Uuuuhhhh, okay'…You know, I mean, on the outside, things are great, and on the inside they are great too, but like I said, I still struggle with this catastrophe thinking. I feel like I have like some PTSD, because I have like nightmares. You know, certain things trigger me, not trigger me, but like just remind me of things…I mean, you know, livin' on the streets and selling your body and the doing drugs. You know, I mean, I still to this day have like PTSD from that.

Amelia related:

I have, it's not nearly as bad now, but I have really bad PTSD. And it doesn't just stem from [the lifestyle], it's from childhood abuse as well. So that is probably the hardest part for me - the fear. Someone is coming to get me. Someone is following me. He is outside my door. And all of those things over and over again…I had never been alone, away from that, for a very long time and so that was terrifying for me. Going into the grocery store and seeing someone who sort of kind of looked like him. And I didn't have a car first so sitting at the

121

bus stop, it was awful. For me, I had stuffed so much shit inside from childhood

abuse and the abuse that I put on myself. Not just the abuse of my pimp, but

customers. All kinds of shit goes on out there – getting kidnapped, shot, all kinds

of stuff. I stuffed all that stuff.

Amelia also talked about how that fear even impacted her at work. She talked about

how at work it scared her not to be able to hear someone coming up behind her when she

said, "I love the summertime, because people wear sandals and flip-flops and I can hear

you coming. It was like I would shit on myself every time somebody would walk back

there."

Other women shared similar feelings of extreme fear, though they did not

voluntarily disclose having PTSD. For example, Jillian said, "You're not even sure if

you were conscious; if it actually happened, if it didn't happen, because you have

nightmares about it."

Other women identified more with anger, a common PTSD symptom. Amelia

cussed out customers at work. Billie and Gloria referred to themselves as fighters, and

angry after exiting, which translated into their drug treatment. Billie said:

I bucked the system the whole entire time. What I'm doing is working for me,

but fuck you, I don't want to fix it… You know I bucked the system. I talked in

every group and then when they took me to a counselor to get something else I

stopped speaking on it. Then it was refusal of treatment.

Billie's "refusal of treatment" could be another symptom of complex PTSD, an inability

to talk about traumatic experiences. Amelia described her in ability to speak in therapy,

saying, "When I got to therapy. I went to therapy at 10 and I couldn't talk, the same

thing this time. I had nothing to say. It was so much that I couldn't even put words

around it."

Another issue disclosed by six participants, and a symptom of PTSD, was a lack

of trust. For example, when talking about how her trust issues affected her, Elle said:

I still have major, major, major trust issues. Um, and it's kind of always in the

back of my mind, like, you know, when I meet people, like if they're real, you

know, nice, or they're this or they're that. I'm like okay, what do they want?

You know what I mean, but at the same time, those are things that I learned that

could very well, you know, save my life today. Because I'm so skeptical of

people and I don't know. I just. I go to work and I come home. I go to work

and I come home. I really don't. I don't go out too much…Another thing that

[an organization leader] once told me is that I was like a turtle, in that I put my

head out only so far and then I go back in.

Helena added to this perspective when she said:

I think it's hard for women who are coming out of the industry, because they're

not real sure who's taking advantage of them and who's not. So, we need strong

women in the community who can help other women transition out of the sex

industry. And then eventually learn how to discern whether men are hitting on

them or helping them. Cause even 3 years out, there's still men who just creep

me the fuck out. I get all creeped by them and I'm like ewwwww.

123

Depression. Three women specifically referenced struggling with depression. Elizabeth said:

> Depression and anxiety do come with those things [the lifestyle]. And just my upbringing and even probably family history, you know, my mom was a drug addict, she probably should have been on depression medicine.

Helena also said:

> I give myself like periods of time where I'm allowed to be depressed, because I think that comes along with recovery. You're going to be depressed. But I give myself like, this is how many days I'm going to allow myself to lay on the couch and then I'm going to get active and attempt to come out of my funk.

Lack of self-worth and shame. The most pervasive emotional challenge women had to manage was feeling a lack of self-worth. All the women mentioned feeling like they lacked self-worth, to varying degrees, after exiting. Some referred to the feeling as brokenness or deprivation. Amelia said the hardest part of exiting was "the emotional, spiritual, and physical deprivation." Amelia's feelings were shared by many participants when she said:

> I was just broken. Even though I was out of it, I was an empty shell and so that was probably the hardest part. I still didn't believe I was worthy of change… and even still, still I struggle with self-esteem. I'm trying to unpack my brain and take control. But when you're powerless or feel powerless for so long, it's hard to empower yourself. I still question that and I'm out 5 years.

During the interview, Amelia showed me a piece of art she drew. The sketch was of a woman whose mouth had been stitched shut. She said, "That's like how I felt. Like I had no voice."

Many participants experienced trauma while in the lifestyle and/or during childhood causing them feel they lacked self-worth. Gloria experienced years of trauma as a "prostituted woman." She said, "That had been clear for the last 20 years of my life. I was a piece of shit. I was worth nothing." Jillian described herself as "intellectually smart, emotionally stupid," which has allowed people to play off of her emotions and insecurities. She described the emotional trauma she experienced as follows:

> I was emotionally abused so severely. That crippled me more than anything.
> Bruises heal, broken bones heal. If you scar somebody's psyche and how they
> feel about themselves.

At the end of that statement, Jillian made a facial expression that indicated that emotional abuse had affected her greatly. Jillian went on to say:

> I didn't know what I was good *at* anymore. I didn't know what I was good *for*
> anymore…Because you get a lot of that taken from you, beaten out of you, when
> you're in the life. I don't know, I don't know how to dream. I don't know how,
> because I didn't think I would make it this far. I stopped dreaming. I stopped
> having goals, because you don't set your goals. Somebody sets them for you.
> You achieve somebody else's bar, you don't set your own bar, you don't achieve
> your own bar.

Elizabeth also experienced trauma as a child, which took away her self-worth. She said:

I think my self-worth was really in what I could get out of people or how sexy I

could be, or how many men I could manipulate and that's pretty much the extent

of my self-worth. I didn't really have any. And I felt like that was the only way I

was valued as a person and that's what I saw myself as, um, you know. When I

was [a child], I was molested…I think that, that set a precedent for my life that,

that's what I thought my value was to people. And I thought that was all that I

had to offer.

Like Elizabeth, four women felt their self-worth was tied to their beauty and their

ability to use their beauty to generate income. Billie called this "a false sense of

accomplishment." Clara said:

It was also a way I felt validated that I was pretty. Like I always felt attractive

when they chose me or something like that. It was really sick… my self-esteem,

my self-worth were really wrapped around men finding me attractive in a certain

way… Standing on the street corner out there and when the guys drove by and

picked you, I was like, 'I'm pretty. Gotta go.' And no. I mean, I got into so

many situations that were horrific thinking they picked me, oh they picked me.

And it validated that I was somehow okay or good enough.

Related to lacking self-worth, shame was another emotional challenge all the

women experienced after exiting. For example, shame made it challenging for Amelia

to go to church initially, and interact with people from church who wanted to help her.

For Amelia, the shame also led to anger, a link between shame and PTSD. Amelia said:

126

When you don't have any self-worth and it's just like the shame, when they come

in and they try to love on you. The only way you can handle that is to be

aggressive and hateful toward them.

Helena also described the shame she felt:

There are still a lot of like residual, um, like moments where I'll think about

encounters with men that I'm like God that was humiliating, or that was. I can't

believe I did that. Or um, just a lot of shame that comes along with what you've

done

Other women described shame related to more general feeling a lack of self-worth or an

inability to hold their heads high. Another key challenge women faced was relapse back

into the sex trade and back into drug addiction. In the following section, I will discuss

women's experiences with relapse and the factors that drew them back into the sex trade.

Relapse. Relapse refers to both relapsing back into the sex trade and drug

addiction. This section more specifically relates to relapsing into the sex trade, although

relapse into the sex trade is linked to relapsing into drug use. For the nine women who

struggled with drug addiction, relapsing back into the sex trade and relapsing into their

drug addiction were often connected. Billie described the interplay of addition and the

lifestyle many of the women experienced. She said, "I was addicted to crack cocaine

and I had a severe addiction. I fed my addiction through hustling and prostitution."

Helena also said, "I've never been off of drugs and prostituted. I've never been sober

and prostituted."

Eight of the 10 women specifically disclosed they attempted to leave the lifestyle at least once before exiting this last time, and some relapsed multiple times. Elizabeth did not specifically disclose whether or not she had relapsed in the past. Jillian, who was the only participant who is not an addict, only made one attempt to leave the lifestyle. However, even Jillian experienced the draw of the lifestyle, especially when first exiting. There are three sub-themes under relapse, which represent the most powerful pull back into the lifestyle identified by the participants, including (a) the money, (b) the undesirable jobs after exiting, and (c) the lifestyle mindset, which includes an attraction to the excitement of the lifestyle.

The money. Nine women referenced money as a pull back into prostitution. Amelia, provided a powerful statement summarizing the influence of money on relapsing experienced by the nine women. She said the money "was far more of a relapse for me than the dope ever could be." Gloria also represented the draw women felt knowing they had a backup plan, and the challenging transition to making less money:

> I still live with I could go to the corner and make $1,000 and everything is going to be fine…How do you think it felt for me going from making $1,000 a day down to $8 an hour? $8 an hour? I was like, 'My fucking check for the whole week was what I made in an hour.'

Gloria had been out of the sex trade the longest and was the most vocal about the inequities of the sex trade, including pay. She associated the incomparability of pay she could receive in the sex trade versus in legal work with gender inequality.

Eva described the pull the income had on her as well and the anxiety she still feels about money. Eva had given up some aspects associated with the lifestyle for her, like drugs. But she had not given up exchanging sex for money. She reported that the money kept her in it for so long. She said:

> I gave up other things, but there was that one thing. I don't know why. I mean, I guess because it was my security blanket. Cause, if I want money and I don't have it, I know how to get it. It's just a walk away. I just need to take a little walk and I'll come back with it… I told my husband too…'I have to have money. You don't understand. I have to have money. So when my dollars start to go down. You need to be man enough to say, Honey, do you need anything? And throw me dollars, because my mind will go left.' Shoot, my husband don't want to share his money? I'm gonna get my money somewhere else…I'm afraid of what I. I don't want to cheat on him and I don't think I ever would. I don't think I would. I'm afraid that I would be in that situation. What if I don't have no money? Would I be tempted to look to the left or to the right? That's a scary thought, because I don't want to cheat on that man…I just don't want to look like I'm broke, cause that kind of feeling makes me itchy. It's crazy, I don't understand it.

Four women disclosed continued engagement with johns, while living in a housing program helping them transition out. Clara said she continued in the lifestyle when she was living in a housing program, because like many other participants, she was so used to relying on the sex trade as a source of income. She said, "But I'm going to be

honest, even living [in housing] the first few months I still found ways and means to do that, because that was the only way I knew how to get money." Clara stopped after a humiliating experience where she expected a man to give her money, but she wasn't willing to give him sex.

Similarly, Helena, after a previous relapse, was living in a treatment facility and also continued to accept money from a john. Helena said:

And so I didn't have a lot of discernment in the beginning and in the beginning, I didn't want a lot of discernment. I wanted people to give me whatever I wanted, because that is what I was used to doing. Oh well, you wanted to hang out with a pretty girl, that's okay, because I want you to give me your money. Or, I was in a treatment facility one time and this guy that I had been hanging out with and sleeping with kept coming to visit me at the treatment facility. And he would give me $20 every time that he came. Well, we could get like snacks and stuff like that, so I'd take his $20. And about 3 weeks in, my AA [Alcoholics Anonymous] sponsor said, 'What the fuck are you doing? Why are you taking money from this guy? He's a john. That is a john and you cannot have contact with him anymore. And you owe him $60 now.' I was like, 'What the fuck, NO.'

Undesirable jobs after exiting. Additionally, four participants particularly hated the jobs they secured after exiting, not only for the low pay, but the undesirability of the work. They all referenced the undesirability of the job being a draw back into the lifestyle in addition to the income. For example, Clara said:

130

And when I first came home, I got a job as a fry cook. Oh, my gosh, I hated it. I

worked there for 3 weeks and I thought, 'why me? This is a nightmare. This is

my paycheck, this is what I'm getting? This is not worth it. I don't want to do

this.' … The hours were terrible and I was greasy and my face was breaking out.

The grease and cleaning and scrubbing, I was like I hate it, I hate it…So, I am

thinking there's got to be an easier way to get money, right.

Similarly, Amelia was dissatisfied with her first job after exiting. In addition to

the low pay, the undesirability of the work was problematic. Amelia said,

My first job was just awful. Rolling tamales, like two or three hundred a night.

And then I was busting my ass all night for 50 bucks and then you take taxes out.

Oh, it was awful. And it was quite an adjustment. You know I could make it that

in five minutes and I have numbers memorized. So that was a huge, huge, huge

transition for me.

In addition to the money and dissatisfaction over the jobs they obtained after exiting,

participants struggled to adjust their mindset after exiting. As I will discuss in the

following section, they needed time to move past the mindset they adopted in the

lifestyle.

The lifestyle mindset. All the women talked about some aspect that could be

attributed to what Amelia called the "mindset of the lifestyle." The lifestyle mindset

impacted women in a myriad of ways, including how they communicated to how they

processed the trauma they experienced in the lifestyle. Even women's self-worth was

impacted by the lifestyle mindset, which made them believe they were less than. Just the

word lifestyle describes the pervasiveness of the sex trade into all aspects of the women's lives while they are in the sex trade. Jillian provided a summary of the pervasiveness of the lifestyle mindset felt by the participants, which made it hard for them to adopt new habits, routines, and interests after exiting. Jillian said:

> When you wake up in the safe house you don't have to perform like a circus animal, because that's basically what I had been doing for the last 3 years. So you wake up and think people expect things from you or expect you to do things and you find out those aren't necessarily normal quote, end quote. You begin to analyze the things that you used to do, that you thought were legitimate and a perfectly sane thing that you used to do. You used to go do XYZ, with this number of people every day and you don't have to do that anymore…You go from basically having…sex 8 days out of 7, you do the math. So going 3 months cold turkey. You're on edge when you get out.

For some time, Jillian had to work to remind herself she was no longer a circus animal, which required an adjustment when she got to the safe house. She said:

> And you don't want to do things that you used to do. Because you don't have to. Your brain is trying to connect that with the rest of your body. You don't have to do this anymore. You have a safe place to go sleep. Things are going to be okay tomorrow. It takes a while for that to connect with you. And you're just like, 'Oh yeah, I don't have to do this.'

Three participants specifically talked about the rush sometimes involved in being in the lifestyle mindset. The rush made them miss the lifestyle, even though they

recognized the lifestyle could be falsely romanticized after exiting. Billie talked about

how prostitution was an addition like drug addiction. "It's an addiction. Tricking is an

addition, just like dancing is an addiction." In addition to the addiction to the income,

Billie also referenced the "excitement, the criminal, the addictive excitement behind it.

It almost became a rush, what I could do, what I could get away with."

Gloria called this excitement the "bling-bling" of the sex trade. She said, "You

have to teach people to reprocess the fight or flight. And redo the aspect of thrill

seeking. It's not really thrill seeking—the bling-bling I call it." As Gloria describes it,

the bling-bling is something more than just the attraction to the money. Gloria described

the bling-bling and pointed out the stark contrast between the sex trade and treatment.

Gloria said the rush of the sex trade can come from negative things as well, like "being

caught by the police or getting beat up by a sex buyer, whatever it is." Gloria said,

"When you are out in sex trade, there's constantly bright lights, whoop, whoop, danger,

scare, fight, flight. You got all of these things going on and I remember getting into

recovery and thinking well fuck, this is boring."

A specific example of the lifestyle mindset for three women was having pimps

and their money going to the pimp. About the man who Amelia now identifies as her

pimp, she said:

> I didn't identify him as my pimp. He was my husband. He loved me. I really
>
> believe that to the depths of my soul. I really believed that. If you would call him
>
> my pimp I probably would've bitch slapped you. Like what are you talking

about? It's a partnership. I didn't have a dime in my pocket, but that's the

unfortunate part.

When in the lifestyle mindset, the three women identified their pimps as romantic

partners. Now that they have exited, they cannot imagine having that mindset.

One participant had a unique experience with the lifestyle mindset, and her

perspective on her ability to have children. Through tears, she said:

Early on, I got pelvic inflammatory disease and that was my very first year in the

lifestyle…And I remember thinking this is so cool. Now I can never have kids,

because they told me, 'You're infertile.' And I was like, 'Good. I can be out

here and do this with every guy I want. I can do whatever I want and I'll never

have kids.' And now, that I'm married and I want a family it's been a really big

heartache for me, because I just remember being like, 'Cha-ching. This is

awesome.' And today thinking, 'Yeah, it's not so awesome girl.'

She called her way of thinking in the lifestyle, related to having a pimp and related to her

infertility, as "just a sickness of that whole lifestyle. It's really crazy and it gets you

sucked up into it." In addition to the struggles with self-worth and relapse, I will discuss

the challenges of navigating basic life skills in the following section.

Challenges of Navigating Basic Life Skills

The basic life skills discussed in this section include budgeting, household

management, adjusting to structure and new routines, and making decisions. All the

women, except Helena, initially struggled with budgeting. Besides budgeting, there was

less consensus around which life skills created challenges for the participants. However, all 10 participants referenced at least one basic life skill they found challenging.

For nine of the 10 participants, budgeting was a struggle initially after exiting; for some, it is still a challenge, despite living frugally. Gloria also said she had to learn "how do you manage a household, how do you manage a budget. Budgeting and money is still an issue for me. Even though I've had training on it, don't get me wrong." Elle connected her budgeting challenges with the difference in the source of income now she is working in a legal job with a paycheck, rather than making money in the sex trade. Elle said:

> But yeah, it's a challenge to learn how to budget, um with, with a paycheck, you
>
> know.   It's not about, well, if I spend all of my money today I can go get some
>
> more tomorrow. It's not about that anymore.

Elle had never lived on her own or paid her own bills. Even for a while after she left the game, her husband did everything for her. In addition to budgeting, Elle had to learn other basic life skills, like grocery shopping and planning means, which she did not have to do in the game or after exiting while living with her husband.

Elizabeth provided another example of learning basic life skills. Elizabeth's mother was a drug addict and was not a positive example. Elizabeth said,
Elizabeth said, "I didn't know how to be a wife. My mom had like four or five husbands and seven kids and she didn't take care of any of 'em." About her preparedness to address basic life skills when she arrived in the housing program, Elizabeth said:

I would say, that they taught me how to be, you know, they taught me how to live. My mom was a drug addict and like when I got there, I didn't even have a driver's license. I didn't know how to drive. I didn't know how to have a checkbook. I didn't know how…like that's just was not…I wasn't taught any kind of skills.

Jillian was very restricted when in the lifestyle, by her traffickers. Many aspects of household management, such as cleaning, cooking, and laundry were done for her by someone else. When exiting, Jillian had to relearn these skills. She had lived on her own previously, but it still took a while to get back into the habit of using those skills again. Jillian said:

But when you're in the lifestyle you don't do a lot of that. People baby you in such a way so you don't have to think. You don't have to do. You just have to perform…Sometimes you don't even know if the clothes that you're wearing are clean because I don't do my own laundry so I don't know if it's clean. Smells fine to me. I don't know. Even the basics, because you also depend on somebody else to shop for you. The person who is kind of controlling the money is person that controls what you get to eat, where you go. That dictates your shower.

Not having to do things like cleaning up messes has created challenges for Jillian, as she now manages her own household.

In addition to basic skills like cleaning and cooking, others found adjusting to a schedule and structure challenging. Gloria and Amelia both had to learn how to get on a

136

schedule specifically, and most of the women referenced adjusting to having structure after exiting. Gloria said:

> I had to learn how to go to back to sleep on time. I had to learn how to get up, and clean up stuff, which I was pretty good at that part already, because I don't like messes still to this day.

Related to structure, which was a challenge as well as a great source of comfort for the women, Clara said:

> I remember somebody asking me like the unmanageability of my life. And I was like, 'My life's not unmanageable.' She said, 'You are 34 years old. Do you have a bank account?' 'No.' 'Do you have a car?' 'No.' 'Do you have a place to live?' 'Yeah, that house.' 'That's a homeless shelter...So your life's unmanageable.' I'm like 'Nah, I don't see that.' I felt like I was managing my life, and so really getting to look at how unmanageable my life was and then them teaching me the tools, like today, I have a savings account and I know how to save money. Today, I know how to not overdraft on a bank account and I know how to pay my bills properly…I know my parents taught me that, but I just lost it. After 20 years, you don't do that. You're like, see you later.

In contrast, Clara said she had to learn to be accountable and had to learn to adapt to structure. Clara said, "I think structure and getting back into that, where I'm not just running the streets doing what I want, how I want, where I want. Learning to be accountable and structure."

For Jillian, the freedom she experienced when leaving resulted in her having to learn how to make her own decisions. Jillian reported that her time in the lifestyle impacted her ability to make decisions:

> You don't really make your own choices. I was a terrible decision maker. If somebody asked me if I wanted to go out to eat or even coworkers I had when I worked at the grocery store if they were like hey, do you want to go get lunch, I'm like, 'I don't know.' It's one of those things. You don't question if you're hungry. You don't question if you're tired, because you learn to stop questioning those basic instincts. I wouldn't even question when's the last time I took a shower? I didn't think about it, because you kind of set yourself on autopilot. Today is going to go exactly the same as yesterday, which is the same as the day before.

Jillian reported that she still experiences great anxiety around making basic decisions. In the previous sections, I have detailed the challenges the women faced as individuals. In the following section, I will describe the challenges the women faced in relationships with others.

The Challenge of Building, Rebuilding, and Managing Relationships

All of the participants discussed the complexity of building and managing relationships since exiting, including challenges and successes. The participants most often attributed their general challenges with relationships to their addiction and lack of reliability when in the lifestyle. For example, due to her relapse, Helena temporarily lost custody of her child, she almost lost her marriage, and she lost credibility with peers.

Helena's comment represents the general challenge participants experienced with relationships when she said:

> That's a difficulty, just repairing relationships. That's the hardest thing, repairing relationships. I've never, ever, ever had a hard time getting things back…I've had a hard time repairing relationships, because people trust and believe me when I am in recovery and then I go off the deep end and they don't hear from me or their lives are scrambled because I…They don't know where I am, or whatever.

Several participants talked about how self-centered they were in their addiction, which Amelia described by saying, "I didn't give a shit about myself or anyone else. I was just out to get high and get money and that was it. Nothing else. I didn't give a shit about nothing else."

Most of the participants talked about the importance of giving up all aspects of the lifestyle to move forward, including relationships. Billie called it "changing people, place, and things." Jillian, though not an addict, struggled to build new relationships and to let go of old relationships with people in the lifestyle. Jillian said:

> Relationships. Building new relationships with people…You have to give up everything—any cars you have, any places you live, friends you may have that are associated with, anybody who is trying to keep you in the life. You basically fall off the face of the earth for a *while*… That's what's been harder. Knowing you have to start over…That's a really easy thing to say and believe. It's a really hard thing to do. You get out. You basically don't have any friends, because any

friends you had were part of the lifestyle. Anybody you really knew was part of the lifestyle. It's not like you can call up your old friend you used to do whatever with. You avoid making relationships with normal people [when in the lifestyle], because you don't want people to judge you for the life you lead. Even if you considered it to be completely normal or you are not ashamed you don't make normal friends with like Susie high school. That just doesn't happen. So when you leave, you leave everything. It's a difficult pill to swallow that you have to completely cut off people in your life. Because not everybody who's associated with the life is a terrible person. You may be in it with other people who are also part of the lifestyle who don't want to be there either, but you can't afford to be friends with them afterwards, because you're like we have this history. I did this with you or we did this together. I can't risk a relapse. It's like you aren't going to go hang out with a drug dealer if you used to do drugs, because you're probably going to do drugs again.

Specific relationships most identified as challenging included those with children, birth family members, and partners, which I will discuss in the following sections. In a later section, I will detail the positive relationships that helped the women exit.

Relationships with children. Relationships, or lack of relationships, with children were complicated for the eight women who have had children. Half of the women who had children disclosed no longer having custody. Eva described the complication she faced with her children:

Because I hadn't been with my kids when they were little. I missed all of that. And I was just a few blocks away and still I couldn't come home. I was over here chasing these rabbits when I had my kids at home, but. My kids were really upset, but so when I cleaned up, I would spend time with the kids. That was my thing.

At the end of each interview, I asked the participants what else I should have asked. Two women, Billie and Clara, said I should have asked about children. Clara said, the following about children when she was in the lifestyle:

I know a lot of other women that had a ton of kids and they lost them or CPS or other situations. Like I remember seeing people pregnant all the time, but I never saw the kids. You know. Like they'd go and CPS would take them or they'd have them in prison. I never saw kids, like it was weird…I have so many friends that they don't know their kids.

Relationships with birth families. Birth family relationships were complex for several participants. I did not explicitly ask about birth families, since the study only relates to life after exiting, but some shared the complexities of their relationships with their birth families. For example, Billie no longer had contact with her birth family, but she had support from a network she considers to be her adopted family. When asked about what support women might be lacking, Billie said:

Family members that are just tired of them doing the same old thing. Like, 'Yeah, you can quit if you wanted to quit.' Family members need to be educated, because it's an addiction.

Josie, Elle, and Clara lived the family relationship Billie discussed. Josie said, "I'd say like, I had the support of my mom, but very critical and judgmental." Elle described family members who expected her to fail, because she had disappointed them in the past. Her family members were particularly skeptical when she experienced the death of several family members, something that might trigger an addict to relapse. Elle said:

> Even some of my family members they kind of, I hate to say expected me to go back to using and stuff, but that's all I had shown them before…A lot of people they…were standing there, with their, holding their breath, when all of these things kept happening. To see, 'Oh my God, what is [she] going to do? What is she going to do?'

Elle also experienced a challenging relationship with her mother, like other participants. Elle's mother set some firm lines earlier in Elle's time in the game, which created a separation between Elle and her mother. Elle said that she better understood the cause of the separation over time:

> You know and my mom used to tell me, you know [name] she said, we love you, but we're not going to live like you live. And until you get ready to live like we live, you know, we'll have to holler at you. Um, for 11 years, my mom and I didn't even speak to one another. And I felt like my mom had turned her back on me, but it wasn't even about that. My mom had to do what was best for her and for my younger sister. You know what I mean?

142

In addition to children and parents, women navigated relationships with partners, which were sometimes challenging.

      Relationships with partners. All 10 women discussed challenges related to starting or reconciling a relationship after their experiences in the sex trade. Jillian described a general challenge with trying to start intimate relationships after exiting. She said:

> Dating, dating is really hard. I've tried and it just does not work. I'm at that point in my life where if I'm single forever I'm not going to be mad about it. Because when you've slept with a different person every day for 3 years, you don't want to sleep with anybody else…But to get into new relationships with guys is so hard, because I still feel like guys view me as that person, like you are going to want me to be that person. Eventually, I am going to have to tell you, if we are going to progress into a relationship I am going to have to tell you. From the minute I tell you I expect you are going to treat me one of two ways. Either you are going to be so disgusted you don't want to be with me or you are going to be way too interested and you are going to expect me to be that person. I've yet to find the third option, which is someone who accepts it the way that I've accepted it. Realizes that I'm not that person; that I've moved on. And that I am healing and I've healed a lot.

For Jillian, specifically, an STD created an additional challenge for engaging in an intimate relationship, as the form of HPV she had could be dangerous for her if she had

intercourse with someone else with the STD, and certainly could be passed from her to her partner.

Four of the 10 women discussed being engaged in negatively impactful relationships either at the time of the interview or initially upon exiting. Amelia said marrying "the worst man possible" was her biggest mistake after exiting. Amelia described the situation as follows:

> When I first got out and I married the worst man possible that I could, not because he's a bad person, but that was just where I was at… He didn't beat me, he never called me out on my name, but I had always based my self-worth on bring it dude up financially. So I picked the brokest, lowest, and he's still there and he is still in that, you know. And I tell the girls in the facility…one of my lessons I do is on still. Being still, learning how to be still, but the other one is on staying away from still people—still broke, still borrowing, still getting high. Whatever it is, stay away from those people.

Josie and Billie said they were in emotionally abusive relationships at the time of the interviews. About her current boyfriend, who she considered to be one of her biggest challenges, Josie said:

> He's gotten back to his asshole self again. So, he's just kind of bringing me down. Not far enough down to where I was…I'm working on it…but I think it's part of my lifestyle from back in the days, because I used to be in an abusive relationship too, so it was just something that I know. But I see it now. I'm like,

'This is domestic abuse.' And it's not physical. It's mental and I see it now and I say, 'This is domestic abuse, man.'

Josie did not feel prepared to deal with an emotionally abusive partner; however, she was now able to recognize her relationship as abusive, which is something she may not have been able to do before leaving the lifestyle.

One of the specific ways women was whether or not their partner brought up their past. Two women had partners who frequently brought up their past. Josie said:

He always seems to always bring up, like, 'Well you were this.' And I am like, 'Oh well.' At first I would get like, 'Ahhhh.' Now I am like, 'Oh well, oh well. You just feel so crappy about yourself you just got to put me down to make yourself feel better.' I'm like, 'Oh well, God bless you.'

Helena's partner also brought up her past at times. Helena's experiences were slightly unique, because Helena and her husband were married before she relapsed. Therefore, her relationship with her husband required reconciliation, which she said was her biggest challenge after exiting. Her husband also occasionally brings up her past. Helena said:

Nobody wants to be married to a prostitute. There's not a man on the face of this earth that will say, I wanna be married to a prostitute, unless he is an offender or somebody that is trying to take advantage of—like a pimp or something. So there was a lot of hard reconciliation that had to happen…And my husband has a lot of anxiety based around it [her past]…He would rather not talk about it, but things come up periodically where it is kind of thrown in our face that that is what happened when I relapsed. And that's what was going on. So, he, there's

some anger from him sometimes. It's rare, but when it happens. It just, I feel, I

like revert into this like, what can I do to make him happy and I'm walking

around like I'm on egg shells and I'm sorry about everything. I made too much

noise, I'm sorry. But I don't feel that way normally in our relationship. We have

a really healthy relationship and it's very 50/50 in our giving and loving.

As detailed in this section, the women encountered many challenges after exiting.

However, they also received much support to overcome these challenges. The following

section addresses the second research question related to the support women received.

Supports

Research Question 2: What supports help women transitioning out of the sex

trade?

Important factors in understanding the type of supports women utilized in their

transition include (a) how women found support, (b) assessing the right support for an

individual, (c) what type of supports women found most helpful, and (d) what support

might have been missing for women. Those factors will be evaluated in the following

sections.

Support: Finding Support

Three women identified themselves as victims of sexual exploitation while they

were in treatment for drug addiction, which was mandated because of arrests. Two

women had a longstanding relationship with the organization helping them exit because

of the organization's community outreach. One woman connected with the organization

helping her exit through a bunkmate in prison. One participant's family member asked

146

an organization to help the participant after learning she was a sex trafficking victim. Another participant was connected to help through another organization where she volunteered before relapsing. Two women did not discuss how they connected to the organization providing them with assistance.

The key to recovery for two of the ten women was being identified as a victim of sexual exploitation in addition to being an addict. The women were not able to initially identify themselves as victims. While in court-mandated drug treatment, a counselor identified Amelia Amelia as a victim of domestic violence. Through domestic violence counseling, Amelia discovered the partner assaulting her was really her pimp, but she was not able to reach this conclusion alone. Amelia said:

> So it was with a special therapist that I was able to connect with, because I didn't really want to do that work. So I was able to identify myself as victim of human trafficking. He was not my boyfriend. He was my pimp and all those things there...She didn't even know he was my pimp.

Similarly, Gloria said:

> And I only got it, because my sexual exploitations was addressed through another agency and that connection through that substance abuse program to another agency. If my sexual exploitation had not been addressed, if my trauma had not been addressed, I guarantee you I would not be sitting here alive at 51 years old. I would either still be an addict or I'd be dead.

The women described here were being treated for drug addiction, but when the full picture of their past was understood, they were connected with support that addressed

147

their sexual exploitation and trauma in addition to drug addiction. Therefore, a critical

part of finding the right support is completing a proper needs assessment, which I will

address in the next section.

Support: Importance of Needs Assessments

All 10 women discussed the importance of understanding an individual's specific

needs to get connect each individual with the support appropriate for them specifically.

Some women discussed needs assessments in the context of readiness to exit, and others

described it in the context of providing individualized treatment by meeting participants

where they were when they first entered the organization.

Readiness to leave. All the participants talked about the need for an individual

to be ready to leave to exit successfully. About finally being ready to leave, after

multiple relapses, Eva represented many participants' experiences when she said, "Well,

I was so sick. I was so sick and tired…I was like, 'Uh, I got to go walk the streets

again?' You know, you just get so tired." Elle, who had relapsed at least once before

exiting this last time, said:

> You know, but I'm happy to say, that never, not one time, have I been tempted to
>
> use. Never have I thought about going back to prostitution. For one thing, I'm
>
> too old now. They would be like, 'Are you for real? Get outta here.' …But,
>
> again, I have to be aware of my tendency to self-sabotage things.

Jillian let the lifestyle after an organization approached her based on a tip from a

family member. Jillian talked about the needs assessment the organization did with her.

They made it clear to Jillian what it took to get out, to ensure she was really ready herself. Jillian said:

They have to do things on the side, which I understand now, because the people that are in the life that are trying to control you and keep you there generally are very violent people and criminal minded people. So they have to kind of be like, 'Do you want out? And if you do want out, this is what it takes to really get out.'

Individualized treatment. Additionally, all participants emphasized the importance of allowing everyone to recover in a way specific to them individually. Related to an individual's personal journey, Amelia had told the survivors she mentors to never say, "You can't ever recover like that? Don't say that to anyone. Each journey is personal and organic. You do what works for you." All the women emphasized that they had to be ready to fix themselves, and that no one else could want it for them in order for it to be successful.

Helena criticized traditional rehabs, which are not like the organization she ultimately used to exit, and said, "It's a cookie cutter program and everybody gets the same treatment plan and they have to go to the same classes and learn the same things and it's not helpful. It's not helpful." Helena also emphasized the importance of feeling validated as a unique individual. To be successful in her recovery, she needed to hear that she could be herself while sober and out of the sex trade. She said:

Every time I'd come into recovery I was trying to become a different person. I was trying to be meek, and I was trying to be quiet and subservient. And none of those things work well for me. I am not meek, or quiet, or subservient. And God

made me that way. He didn't make me by mistake a loud, hardheaded, pushy,

bossy woman. He did that with a purpose in mind and this is it and I want to be

able to tell other people. Other women who think they need to change their

entire lives. That's a big thing with women. They think I've got to get sober and

quit being who I am…I just don't drink. That's it. That's it. Everything else

about me has come along on the flip side. You know so, and I don't have sex

with men for money anymore, that thing.

Gloria emphasized the need for individual treatment of participants to continue after

intake. She said:

But when you are creating goals and plans with a client, those should not be

rigid. They should be flexible. So if the client came back one day…this is what

happens. First, "I want to go into cosmetology." "Okay, great. Let's get you

moving toward that direction." And then they are going to come back and say,

"No, I decided I want to be an EMT or firefighter now." Okay, you meet them

where they are, you change the plan. The plans not rigid and you move on.

Gloria had a unique perspective related to meeting participants where they are, as

she was concerned about organizations pushing religion on women when they were not

ready. Gloria believed this approach was not a client-centered approach. For example,

Gloria thought that by not allowing women to cuss, organizations put pressure on

participants to be someone they were not when first exiting, Gloria said, "You're having

people that are newly exited, right, and expecting them to make unrealistic changes.

That's not meeting them where they are. That's not client-centered care." Gloria's

counselor met her where she was by accepting her atheism, which later evolved into spirituality that was key for Gloria. This was important to Gloria, because at first she was not ready to approach spirituality; she needed to address the trauma first. Gloria recommended:

> Letting people be who they need to be in that moment, without ramming religion down their throat and truly embracing in a nonjudgmental, compassionate, client-centered way. Otherwise, I wouldn't be talking to you right now.

A critical part of a needs assessment is understanding the experiences women bring with them. Prior to finding support, women had been utilizing their natural attributes and developing skills through their experiences in the sex trade. In the following section, I will detail the most common skills and attributes that the women used after exiting the sex trade.

Identifying women's attributes and skills. All 10 women benefited from the skills they gained and the personal attributes they utilized while in the sex trade. Eight of the 10 women utilized those skills and attributes in their jobs after exiting. The skills and attributes most frequently referenced as beneficial were their resourcefulness and resilience, ability to hustle, and empathy. They were also able to utilize skills valuable in business such as client management, contract negotiations, and motivating others. However, the women needed support to gain the confidence to transfer these skills and attributes to their jobs after exiting.

Resourcefulness and resilience. All 10 women referenced their resilience and resourcefulness as benefitting them in their current job. Helena provided a specific

151

example of transferring the resilience she gained from her experiences in and exiting the lifestyle to her work. Helena received advice from a business owner in her network of supporters, which gave her confidence that she would be a good entrepreneur as a result of her previous experiences. Helena said:

> He said, 'Do you know what makes a successful business?' And of course, I had some really good answers for him. I was like, 'Well, keeping up with your books, and being innovative, and sticking with the times, and hiring good people.' He said, 'Ah, those things make a good business. But do you know what makes a successful business?' And I said, 'No.' He goes, 'Falling flat on your face and still getting up the next day and going again.' And I was like, 'I am so good at that. I am so good at that. That's my forte. I am goooooood at doing that.' And he was like, 'Well you are going to be a successful business owner then.' I didn't know, but that was. He was right…We lost all our product one Friday night…I got to the [location] on Saturday morning and all of our [product was ruined]…And it was devastating to my business at the time, because I hadn't gotten a loan at that point. I hadn't gotten investment at that point. At that point, I was taking profit from the…the week before, and putting it towards making [the product]. So, on Saturday mornings we were at zero every Saturday morning. Then on Saturday night we were back up. And then I bought and we, you know. So, it was like that at the time. It was devastating and it could have been a show stopper…We threw all the [product] away and I asked my husband. I just said, can you buy the [raw materials] for next week? I need

your help with this. I need you to buy the [raw materials] and I will give you the

money back as soon as we are done [with sales for the week] and he said okay.

And I just had to be humble enough to go ask, because it was still at a point when

he was like not exactly feelin' it...He wasn't real sure if I was going to do the

right thing. And it was a risk for me to ask him to take it. And I did and I gave

him the money back. I mean as soon as the [sales event] was over I handed him

his money back and then took the profits and put it toward next week. And I just

kept getting back up, as we have fallen, as we have made major mistakes.

Like other participants, Billie also referenced her "street-smarts, street-wise,

chameleon like abilities," which through resourcefulness she has utilized in her current

job. She said:

You know how I talk. This is not how I talk at work. I sound rough when I talk.

Okay, humble me if you want to. That is my whole attitude in life. I am my own

worst enemy. I don't need you to be mine. At work I talk like this, 'Hi, how are

you,' because I answer phones. Some people are like, 'That's fake.' No, that's

professionalism.

Hustle (sales). All 10 women also referenced their ability to "hustle" or sell as

benefiting them after exiting, including in their current jobs. For example, Billie, who is

in sales, said:

When you're in prostitution or even dancing you're a salesman [sic]. You're

selling them what they want to get what you need. And I apply that concept in

153

selling [in my current job]…I'll give you this if you do this. I'll do this for you,

if you'll do this.

Empathy. Because of the empathy women gained through their experiences in

the sex trade, they all wanted to work in jobs helping others. Seven women specifically

wanted to use their experiences in the sex trade, or with related addiction and trauma, to

help other people as counselors, business owners, public speakers, authors, and/or law

enforcement trainers. Elle provided some insight into what that might be:

> I think it's because, for myself I can say. Um, I felt trapped for so long, and
>
> again, I never thought I would get out of it. I never did. And so, I think, that it's
>
> just vitally important to me, for other people to know, they can be free of that.
>
> Now, whether they take that chance or that opportunity or not, I mean, that's up
>
> to them then. You know, it's imperative to me that they know.

Specifically, six women developed empathy through their experiences in the

lifestyle, which they use to help others in their current jobs or volunteer work. Clara,

who is studying to be a counselor, said:

> I have empathy today, because I've been through a lot of situations. I don't even
>
> have to self-disclose it. Just, I've been there...I had a crisis and counseling class
>
> this summer and one of them was like what was a traumatic crisis or trauma
>
> you've been through. I didn't have to go through anything, except that I was
>
> brutally raped. BRUTALLY raped, by gun point and knife, by two men, for
>
> hours, and I escaped with my life….But the fact is that like, if anyone's ever
>
> been through that. I will have that. You know. Or if somebody's homeless, like

I know what it feels like to be homeless. You know broke, brokenness in a lot of

areas. And I don't have a relationship with my mom…So, if somebody's having

a family issue and doesn't have, like I have that.

Elizabeth works with a marginalized population and can relate to and empathize with

their experiences, which helps her better connect with them. Elizabeth said:

I definitely know what it is to struggle to reach a goal…I understand all these

obstacles that they have, you know. There was a time where they, this

[participant] was like, 'I'm sorry I missed [a session] Miss, I got locked up.' I'm

like, 'Man, I hate when that happens.' And he goes, 'Miss you've never been

locked up.' I'm like, 'Yeah I have.' He's like, 'No, no way.' I'm like, 'Uh huh,

more times than I can count.' He's like, 'That's crazy.' They just, I just think

they just relate. And I just talk to them like normal.

Amelia also wanted to use her experiences to help others. Amelia was

influenced by her experiences being re-victimized by law enforcement who arrested her

and never her pimp. Amelia described re-victimization by law enforcement as then

threatening to arrest her, but not her pimp, even though they knew her pimp's identity.

She described the way law enforcement talked to her and treated her with disrespect as a

form or re-victimization. She also described being re-victimized by healthcare

professionals, when they treated her without identification, with her pimp present, and

with visible signs of assault. For these reasons, Amelia wanted to provide trauma-

informed training to those agencies to avoid re-victimization when interacting with

survivors. Amelia has financial concerns about how to fund such a project initially and

155

ensuring there is a sustainable market for the product, but she is passionate about using her experiences to help others.

Similarly, Gloria owns her own business consulting for the government, law enforcement, organizations assisting survivors, and survivors working to help others. Despite struggles to make a substantial income, Gloria believes in the value of the work she is doing, because of her past experiences. Eva's job also involves supporting other survivors in their transition process. For the business she owns, Helena hires survivors of the sex trade and recovering addicts. She enforces the policies she learned when exiting, balancing care and compassion based on the empathy she has for others in recovery.

Support needed to transfer skills and attributes. Most of the women needed additional support or encouragement from the organization helping them to exit to see how they could use the skills they gained in the lifestyle for good once they exited. The six women who exited from the same organization received such support for a variety of skills, including how to keep the books, manage clients, and motivate others.

Eva described the organization leader encouraging her to use her hustle to sell, and her experience with client management to keep and organize the books. Eva said:

> She always tells us…you used to hustle for money, back in them days for bad. Now you need to learn how to hustle for good. You used to make sure you had your contacts in place and you knew who was giving money from what time to what. You need to know what you need to take care of over here. There's

certain areas that have to be a certain way. She's right. And I know how to do

that. I just have to move it…for good. So, that's cool.

Helena also needed extra encouragement to realize she could still be herself and

translate her strengths from the sex trade for positive use in her business, such as being

able to motivate people. About the organization leader's encouragement, Helena said:

[She] said, 'You weren't given a set of skills to be a crackhead prostitute. You

can take those same attributes.' She called them attributes. I had never called

them that. I had always said, I'm super manipulative. I get what I want. I'm

pushy and bossy. And she said, 'All of those things translate well into business

and here's what they look like.' And I needed somebody to tell me that… I've

always been able to manipulate people. I use it in a good way now. It's

motivation now as opposed to manipulation, is what it was in the past.

The organization leader's encouragement allowed her to reject the dramatized idea of

someone who engages in prostitution, runs away, and eventually dies of an overdose.

Helena now considers herself a pillar of her community.

Participants needed additional support in order to be able to transfer useful skills

and attributes to their experiences after exiting. In the following sections, I will evaluate

the other supports that the women needed to be successful through their transition

experience, starting with supportive relationships.

Support: Positive Relationships

There was some overlap between the positive relationships which supported the

women in their transition out, and in the relationships women found challenging to build

and maintain presented in the previous section. For example, family and partner relationships were both a challenge of exiting and an area of support in overcoming the challenges of exiting for others.

    Birth families. Three of the 10 women found significant support from their birth families. An additional two women found assistance from families who were not their birth families. Billie described her "adopted family," which became like family to her as an adult. Elizabeth relied on her in-laws in the absence of a positive relationship with her own birth family.

    The three women who relied on their birth families experienced a reconciliation with their families after exiting and getting sober, which required working through some of the challenges with birth family relationships presented in the previous section. Elle's story provides an example of reconciliation and subsequent comfort received from family. Elle reconciled with her mother who had created some separation between Elle and their family because of the lifestyle Elle was living. Elle was happy to have been there when her mother passed away. Elle currently relies on her sister, since they have reconciled. Elle has received some financial assistance from her sister, but more so when Elle has not known how to handle something she is facing in life her sister has given her advice and emotional support. Elle was most proud that the two of them can provide each other with mutual emotional reassurance. Elle said:

    Um, but she actually put, you know, a sizeable amount of money into that for me.

    Which before, when I was using and stuff, my sister wouldn't give me $5.

    Because she's like a zero tolerance with drugs and stuff. But, you know, I've

kind of proved myself to her now. And I mean, she's, and it's not just a financial

support that she gives me…It's cool too, because sometimes you know, she has

problems and she doesn't know what to do. She feels alone, because her and my

mom were like best friends and now my mom is gone. And so, you know, I'm

able to be there for her as well. And that, really, really make me feel good.

Clara and Amelia also had similar stories and reconciliation and support from most in

their family.

Partner. Five women of the seven women currently in relationships described

having positive relationships, which helped support them during their transition

experience. Three women specifically found their partner's acceptance of their past, and

their ability to not bring it up, to be very important. Clara said:

He knew that I had a past, but he never, ever, ever brought it up. Like in any

fight or anything, he never brought it up. He's always just loved me for me.

He's always treated me like a lady, so I think that really helped transitioned into

me believing that I was. And also realizing that somebody could love me

through my brokenness and help me put the pieces together and be willing to go

to therapy and being willing to do the things…to work through it, because I had a

lot of issues.

As previously described, Helena had a different experience. Unlike the other

women who met their husbands after exiting, Helena was married before she relapsed.

Much like the birth family relationships described, her relationship with her husband

required reconciliation before the relationship was again supportive. Despite the

challenges in their relationship, previous presented, Helena found the renewal of her

relationship with her husband to normally be an incredibly special and positive aspect of

her transition out. She said:

> Me and my husband have a better relationship today, even though there's those
>
> patchy times. Our relationship today is so much richer than it was before. And I
>
> think it's kind of like that thing where when you're on a sinking ship with
>
> somebody and y'all get rescued off a sinking ship, where you were counting on
>
> being dead. You were counting on this thing dying. We were counting on our
>
> marriage falling apart and going through divorce. My husband had already
>
> written up divorce papers, so when you're rescued from that then it's even, you
>
> know, you're stronger.

The participants described these relationships as both challenging and supportive.

There are two more categories, which the women identified as almost exclusively

positive: their connection to God or people in the church, and to the individuals working

in the organizations assisting them in exiting. I will describe these relationships in the

two sections to follow.

Relationships with God and church family. Nine of the 10 participants credited

God, or lessons learned at church or in Bible studies with playing a critical role in their

recovery. For example, Helena said:

> I say this to people all the time. I have a lot of friends that are atheist or agnostic
>
> or whatever or you know Buddhist or whatever and I tell them all the time, it is
>
> nearly impossible to know me and know the fullness of my story and not believe

in God. It's nearly impossible. And even if you believe that God just worked in

my life, you still can't deny it. There's no denying it. God worked in my life, in

a really big way.

About staying in the lifestyle, Eva said:

No wonder it was starting to feel difficult, because God was reminding me.

Don't feel shame, but know who you are. I know who I am in Christ. I know

I'm a child of God. I know I don't have to do these things. So, her reiterating it

and me doing that for so long, for so long, for so long. That I just like, 'You

know what? You sure right. I don't need to do this.' And I didn't.

Eva later said, "God made a way. God made a way; showed me my value."

Other women credited God with more tangible areas of their transition

experience, like their ability to get a job despite having a criminal record. For example,

about her criminal record being clear despite having multiple felonies, Elle said, "Um,

again, it just has to be a God thing." Billie also attributed her obtaining a job to the

power of prayer.

For Elizabeth, church provided her with the most important support she has

received since exiting. Church was where she received counseling and support for her

recovery. She said, "If it wasn't for the church that I went to, I don't think I would have

been as successful, but I did a lot of counseling at my church."

The tenth participant, Gloria, was an atheist upon exiting. Since exiting,

spirituality, but not religion has been critically important to her recovery and restoration.

Gloria's counselor helped Gloria work through the trauma she experienced first and then

they addressed her spirituality when Gloria was ready. About the experience, Gloria said:

> It took me about 5 years and she guided me to find a spiritual path that's not religious, but that met me where I was at the time. She told me, you're atheist, that's okay. You believe in nothing, that's okay. Let's work with the trauma.

The women's relationships with the organizations helping them exit was the other consistently positive relationship in the women's lives. In the following section, I will discuss the nature of the relationship and the benefit women derived from their connection to the organization from a relational perspective.

Relationships with organizations. All 10 women described their relationships with the organizations with the most impact on their exit as positive. As documented in Chapter III, the participants exited through a variety of organizations and some had multiple sources of support, such as through an organization providing housing, but also through an AA sponsor. The many different ways women were supported in exiting will be covered in more detail in the section related to the teaching, support, and recover methods women perceived to be most helpful. However, regardless of what methods women found helpful in throughout their recovery, what they cited most often as helping them was the relationships they had with the organization leaders and the care and compassion they received from individuals in the organizations. In the following sections, I will specifically outline ways the organizations built positive relationships with the women and broke down barriers between participants and the organizations assisting in their exit.

Love of a family within an organization. The organizations provided the women with a feeling of being loved, like the love from a family. The women found that this love and support often filled a void left by some of their families. Jillian said:

> So [the organization]'s always been there. I don't depend on them so much for any sort of financial support, but because I have such a big gap between me and my family I need the emotional support.

Josie also represented women's beliefs about the void the love from the organization filled, and the unconditional nature of the love, like the love from a family. Josie also provided a specific example of when an organization leader treated her like family:

> I think they kind of filled that void of what a family is supposed to do, because I don't know. I don't know. It was that love, that no matter what I love you…When I had my child, [the organization leader] was there, held my baby…We may not talk all the time, but that's a love there. It's like an aunt or something.

> Additionally, all of the women continued to connect with organizations for

support, even years after exiting, to varying degrees. Not all of the women connected with the first organization assisting them in exiting, but with an organization(s) as support. For example, about still using the organization for support, Clara said:

> Support of family and friends is super important, but the women at [the organization] have been a huge support and they continue to be. Like I will go over there…I'll call [the leader of the organization] and be like, 'I need to meet in the office. I'm not okay today or something's going on.' And they're there.

Clara went on to say, the women at the organization "loved me, when I could not love myself. If that makes sense? They loved on me."

For the women, who were all struggling to love themselves, being loved by someone else, with "that no matter what I love you" love was critical. As previously stated, the women had low self-esteems when they first exited. Many had been judged for being in the sex trade and for being addicts. They all experienced some degree of shame, as documented previously in the section on emotions and mental health management. Managing their shame and not feeling embarrassed or judged by the organizations was critical for the women in exiting.

A nonjudgmental, open door. All of the women discussed the importance of compassion given by the organizations assisting them, which they also described as nonjudgmental treatment from the organizations. Amelia described what she found helpful from individuals who served as her AA/NA sponsors while she was transitioning out:

> For me it was more so compassion. You know a lot of sponsors that I had, they
>
> were hard asses. I just wasn't going to hear it. I would just completely shut you
>
> down. I don't know what else. I'm huge on compassion.

Specific to a nonjudgmental treatment of participants, the participants also talked about the criticality of women knowing the organization was there for them when they were ready to get better, even if they had relapsed. Gloria introduced the term "open door policy," which she described when she said:

An open door policy, like okay, you relapsed, you went and turned a few dates.

Dates, I put that in quotes by the way. Okay, fine, we love you and we want you

here. We're going to teach you to love yourself until you can love yourself.

We're going to role model loving yourself and getting self-worth.

Other women stressed the importance of feeling welcome, even if they were not quite

ready to get better, or even if they relapsed. Josie said:

They have been, for me, for years, because I wasn't ready. I'd go and then I'd

leave. And they'd be okay. But then finally. I had kids too. Times got hard and

we went back. And they just instilled it in me. I was finally ready to listen, to

listen.

Eva described the importance of knowing someone was out there and willing to help her

when she was in the lifestyle. She needed to know they would not judge her, but would

be there for her when she was ready. Eva also understood the importance of such an

attitude toward people who were still out there on the streets. She said:

Well, what's important is, like I have, I want to say friends, girlfriends, sisters.

We call each other sisters. That are still out there. They're still out there and you

want them to come out and they have, and they've even tried to come out and

then they go back. And the only thing, the only thing I found helpful was not to

be mad, not to close that door, because these girls. I always feel like they always

need to know there's an open door when you're ready come on, when you're

ready. I know you're not ready right now. That's okay. I just hope it's not too

late before you die, but should that be it, I'll come to your funeral. But the truth

165

is. You don't ever want to say, 'I'm so mad at you. You will never get it. I'm done with you.' Don't ever say those words. Don't ever say, 'I'm done with you.' Don't ever say, 'Oh, you're such a loser.' Don't say those things. Just say, 'We'll be here when you are ready to go back.' Those are the kinds of things that keeps the person out there hopeful. Because they're going to be in that hopeless state and they're going to say, 'Oh my God, I'm down here by myself, nobody loves me, nobody wants me.' But they're going to remember that so and so said, 'I will be here when you're ready' and they might make that phone call. And that was the lifeline, that one statement, when you told them, 'I'll be here when you're ready, I'll be here.'

Elle expressed some confusion about the open door policy when she was living in the housing program at one organization. Elle said:

That was something that was hard for me to see at first…This girl had came in. She, you know, all these crazy things happened, but she was doing well and then she left. And it just devastated me. I mean, I was just devastated, for her. And I remember [the leader of the organization] came in that Monday morning and [the house mom] was like, 'Well, so and so left…' And [the organization leader] was like, 'Okay.' I was like, 'Okay? What the hell? I mean, you're good with this, really?' And you know, but I get it. I get it now that, you know, all people can do is plant seeds and whatever you do with that is entirely up to you. But to me, at the time, it felt like she didn't care, and if you know [the organization leader], you know that nothing could be farther from the truth.

Helena, a business owner, adopted a similar open door policy in her business, when employing addicts and women transitioning out. Helena said:

I have…that same policy, I picked up that policy at [the organization] and carried it into my business. If you relapse, if you come to me and you are in recovery and you relapse I'm going to give you 3 days. At the end of that 3 days, you need to come back to work or you need to find a new job…I don't give you some excuse to go keep on doing what you're doing. That's bull shit. Nobody needs that. Nobody needs someone that goes, hmmm, well, take a break. Since you've already started smoking crack again take a break. Nobody needs that. They need to be held accountable and say, no, you need to be back at work on Monday and sober.

Helena's policy addressed a critical balance between care and challenge. The women recognized how important it was to provide support and care, but not to enable either. In the following section, I discuss the balance between care and challenge to prevent moving from support to enabling.

Balancing care and challenge. All 10 women recognized the importance of organizations not crossing the line between supporting and enabling. Like the love of a family, the love from the organization was sometimes tough love, which the women understood. All six participants who exited through the same organization referenced how important it was that with the organization's leader, as Helena said, "There's no bull shit with her at all." The leader was incredibly beloved by all six women, but she was not considered soft or easy. The leader did not tolerate women not being truthful to

167

themselves or the organization employees. Helena said that she needed someone to "call me on my shit" and the woman at the organization did just that. All of the women who exited through this organization had a similar experience with being called on their BS. Clara described her experience when the organization leader called her out as "a turning point in my life. It was a huge turning point." Clara had broken a rule and was trying to talk her way out of out of it. Helena had a similar experience. Helena describes herself as a "habitual relapser," but recognized the organization assisting her the last time as the "last house on the block" for a lot of women. For Helena, someone seeing through her believable personality was critical to her recovery. Helena said:

> I had written out a treatment plan…And it was elaborate and it was detailed and
>
> it extended for like a year and I really. When [the organization leader] got
>
> home…it was like sitting on her desk, ready for her to review and I just was sure
>
> it was going to get a stamp of approval and she was gonna go, 'You're so easy.
>
> This is so easy to deal with you.' And you know like, I was expecting a pat on
>
> my back, because that is what happened to me all my life. People have gone,
>
> 'Oh, you're intelligent. You'll be easy to recover.'…So I expected these
>
> accolades from her whenever she got back and she called me into her office and
>
> she sat me down and she said, 'So, I see that you have made a plan for your stay
>
> here.' And I said, 'I have.' And she goes, 'You're educated aren't you?'…So I
>
> knew this was coming. I was like, 'Well yeah,' like I knew she was ready to tell
>
> me how great I was. And she goes, 'So you're smart…and it seems like you've
>
> got your shit together, right?' And I was like, 'I do, thank you.' And she goes,

168

'That's BULL SHIT. This is bull.' She like rips up my plan, throws it in the air, like it's confetti. She goes, 'That's not how we operate around here. You're going to do things the way we say you're going to do things or you can pack all your stuff and leave.' I was like, 'Fine, I'll pack all my stuff then.' We got in this argument. And I went upstairs and I packed all my shit, which by the way was, a bunch of dresses, like evening gowns. And no two pair of shoes that matched. I did not have a pair of shoes…I spent my first 2 weeks…in evening gowns and flip flops that someone had given me. That's how out of my mind I was when I came. So I pack all my stuff up and I am ready to go and that's the day my will broke. Her assistant came upstairs and just said, 'You know you don't have to leave right.' And it was like, to me, in my mind, it was audible. I could hear my will breaking, like a bone, like craaaack. And I just lost it and you know, cried. I ended up staying for 4 months. It was 2 weeks in. I ended up staying for 4 months. And in that moment I just made a commitment to myself and to God that I was going to do whatever they told me to do.

Helena called a friend who had helped her find the organization that assisted her in leaving and told her she was going to leave. Helena said to the friend:

'I'm getting out of here. This is bull shit. They don't care about who I am as a human. She's not treating me like a human being. She's treating me like a dog.' Really, she just wasn't doing what I wanted her to do. And [the friend] said, 'Well, I need you to know that if you leave there we cannot help you anymore. We are not gonna come get you if you go back…we're not going to come get

you this time. We're not going to take you back to [the organization]. You are

probably not going to have a bed if you leave. So, if you go now, this is kind of

your last chance with us, too.' So, I was like, 'Whatever, I don't need these

people.' And then the whole encounter with my will breaking happened; ended

up staying. So, that was pivotal, that was a big one.

Elle was actually asked by the leader of the same organization assisting her in

exiting to leave the organization the last time she transitioned out. Elle described the

circumstances that led to Elle being asked to leave the organization:

When I left, it was not really of my own accord. Um, I went out on a pass and

um, [the organization leader] called me and told me to come back from the pass

and I was like, 'No. I made this pass and blah, blah, blah.' It was about me, me,

me, me, me. I'm doing what I want to do. And she said to me, 'Well, perhaps

while you're out today, you need to find somewhere else to live' and that's how

it ended. So, I left with a real bad taste in my mouth.

Despite the organization leader's tough love, Elle said, "She and I are still very, very

close, um, and she's been like kinda like a mom/friend/employer. The whole thing,

she's the whole package."

All of the women struggled with the structure they found in the organizations

providing assistance when they first exited. The women didn't always initially

appreciate the structure, accountability, and rules enforced by the organizations, but the

love they felt from the organization encouraged them to push through. Amelia now

mentors survivors who have recently exited. When the survivors are feeling frustrated

by the rules and structure enforced by the organization, Amelia reminds them of the love they get from the organization. Amelia said:

> I tell them all the time. I know it sucks, but guess what they probably have more respect for you and love you more than any of those people out there that you know. Those drug dealers don't give a shit about you. Your boyfriend, or whatever you call him, they don't give a fuck about you. These ladies actually care.

Compassion, meaning nonjudgmental care, was an important support mechanism for helping women through the transition process. In the following section, I will discuss a more internalized tool that the women utilized as support during the transition process. The women gained transferable skills while in the sex trade, which they used as support during the transition process. In addition to providing women through love and compassion, organizations met some of the women's other basic needs and mental health needs when first exiting.

Support: The Need for Holistic Support

All participants identified the need for holistic support. Helena's statement represents many participants' emphasis placed on the importance of a holistic approach to supporting women after exiting. Helena said:

> I really, really, really hate it when people treat addicts or alcoholics or sex survivors, sex trade survivors, as like one piece of the puzzle. They don't treat them holistically they just say well, we'll get you off drugs and you'll be fine. Well, that's physical now I need some mental stuff, I need some social stuff, and

I need some spiritual stuff to go along with that or else you are going to fall flat

on your face.

Participants considered holistic support to include housing and the stability provided

through a housing program, drug treatment, and therapy or counseling, which

contributed to their success in exiting.

Housing and associated stability. All 10 women discussed the stability

organizations brought by meeting their basic need of housing. The following statement

by Clara represents the importance of providing housing for women when they exit.

When asked what helped her the most, Clara said, "Stability, stability. Being stable,

having clean sheets, clean place to stay."

Several participants referenced the reprieve living in a safe house, or a housing

program of some kind, provided them, and especially related to earning an income. Not

only did organizations provide them with tools for learning how to budget, but living in

a housing program allowed them time to save money before they went out on their own.

Billie, who lived in a halfway house through a drug treatment program after exiting,

said:

> You need a momentary pause where you can't say I need to fall back on this trick
>
> to do it. We got 3 months to stack paper at $7.25 an hour, I'm just going to
>
> round it up to $200 a week, that's $800 a month for 3 months…That's $2,400 to
>
> step out on.

In addition to housing and financial stability, the organization offered stability to

women through rules, which taught them accountability. Elizabeth said, "They taught

172

me responsibility with my time, uhm, like we had to be accountable to where we were

gonna be at. You know, they taught me to be honest about what I was doing."

At least two participants did not always love the accountability and house rules

that came with the stability gained. As Clara said:

At first I thought I hated it at [the organization], but I hadn't had that kind of

stability. Because I was in and out of motels, in and out of cars. I mean my life

was crazy, so to be able to have the same bed and the same clean sheets and the

same thing every night, that stability gave me something. Today I still love the

fact that I have stability. That was something that I didn't have for so long.

Drug treatment. Additionally, all nine recovering addicts treated their addiction

as part of their transition out. Three went through formal drug treatment programs and

aftercare during their last exit. Women who did not exit through an organization with a

formal drug rehabilitation program relied on AA and/or Narcotics Anonymous (NA).

Regardless of the approach, addressing their addiction was a critical part of their

transition out.

Therapy or counseling. Finally, in addition to drug treatment, the participants

pursued therapy and counseling to work through the trauma they experienced. All the

women received some therapy or counseling, even if exclusively drug related, when

exiting. Not all participants continued counseling since exiting, only three women

referenced continuing counseling. As the next section will demonstrate, receiving

counseling did not guarantee participants specifically addressed the trauma often

associated with being in the sex trade with a counselor. However, therapy and

counseling were critical for those who sought treatment after exiting, and especially for those who have continued treatment.

The counseling methods used varied. In addition to more traditional therapy, Amelia found art therapy to be beneficial. Elizabeth referenced a form of counseling she experienced at church:

> I would go to my pastor's wife when I was really struggling with stuff and you know, she would just kinda say, you know, this isn't right. They also did like, you know, a lot of churches don't do this type of thing or believe this type of way, but they did something called Deliverance. And it is like where you write down aaaaallll your stuff. You know like, you write down all of your sexual partners, you write down like, you know, I even like wrote down my tattoos, not that tattoos are a problem, but like, you know, you just write down all your junk. And then they like go through it and pray over it and like ask for forgiveness and it's like you leave there you know, and it's just like, it's done, you know, it's over with, like you know? And I think that was extremely beneficial.

Gloria found Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy to be beneficial in helping her overcome trauma. EMDR is a tool used to treat patients with PTSD, using eye movement to desensitize patients to the recall of traumatic experiences (Shapiro, 1995).

Clara specifically referenced the role counseling played in helping her recognize her own abilities and to mitigate her self-doubt. About her counselor, she said:

174

And he always tells me stuff like that's a feeling and not a fact. And he says, but

you have an associate's degree and a bachelor's degree and you're working on a

master's and you have made straight A's. So you're not inadequate. So you're

smart. So the facts are that you have a bachelor's degree. And I'm like okay. So,

I am not inadequate. So I'm okay and he helps me with that and I want to do that

for other people.

As stated, learning their own self-worth and adequacy was a critical part of the

participants' recovery and learning.

All six women exiting through the same organization experienced a 2-week

internal restoration period before pursuing work. The 2-week period did not involve

formal counseling, but women participated in Bible study, interacted with other

survivors, went to AA or NA, and spent time reflecting and recovering. Most of the

women felt all their needs were met through the support they received from

organizations. However, some women offered additional support they would have liked

to receive, which I will evaluate in the following section.

Support: Missing Support

Two women who exited through the same organization identified more

counseling as something they would have liked to have received. Elizabeth received

most of her counseling through church, but pointed out that not all women exiting attend

her church and could need more counseling through the organization assisting women

transitioning out. Helena also said she would have like to have received more

counseling. She said:

There's no prostitution counselors. There's not people that do this. You know what I mean…And I think some of that's tricky with me, because I, because I am so quick to recover. Things come back to my life very easily. I'm cognitive enough to make good decisions. And to rebuild relationships on my own. I think people kind of go, well she doesn't need therapy…I don't think anybody just really ever considered it. They just thought, 'Oh, you get her off the drugs and alcohol and she's a perfectly fine human being.' Which to an extent is the truth, but there was a lot of trauma that happened.

Elizabeth also identified several advanced life skills she would have liked to learn, including how to prepare taxes, how to buy a house, and more about retirement savings. The organization covered many basic life skills training, but did not provide services, for women who had been out for a while, in more advanced life skills.

Finally, some women did not receive support needed to connect with satisfactory employment opportunities while in a recovery program. Though one organization required women to start working within 2 weeks of exiting, some organizations did not let women work outside of the safe house until they left the safe house.

Jillian exited through an organization where women did not work outside of the safe house. The organization had a program where women made a product, much like organizations that teach women to make bags or jewelry. Jillian was fearful about finding work when she left, because she knew making the product inside the safe house was not going to be a sufficient source of income after she left the organization.

Helena exited through the organization requiring and supporting women in finding work within 2 weeks after exiting. In response to organizations not allowing women to work outside of a safe house, Helena said:

Do you want to know what that does for your morale? Nothing. That does nothing for your morale. It makes you feel like, I have to be protected and I can't go into society. That is one of the. I'm going to get back on my, I'm steppin' back up on my rehab soapbox…that is the biggest mistake that rehabs make is they completely take you out of society. They take you away from your family. You're not allowed to make phone calls. Your mail is limited. Who you can see on visitations is limited. And so, and then after 30 days they go [whips her hands clean] see ya. And they throw you right back out in the environment that you came from.

Though not experienced by many participants, an organization's lack of support related to work is critical, because of the learning women experience in the workplace after exiting. In the following section, I will evaluate the types of learning women experienced. As will be demonstrated, much of the learning occurred through work experiences, in addition to learning acquired in a social setting.

Types and Contexts of Learning

Research Question 3: In what types of learning do women engage and in what context(s) do women learn while transitioning out the sex trade?

Learning Contexts

Learning occurred in a variety of contexts. The two contexts in which learning occurred were most salient for participants – at work and in social settings. The social interaction included interaction with organization leaders, and most importantly with survivor leaders. Work experiences as well as experiences in other contexts will primarily be discussed in the experiential learning section. Learning from organization leaders and survivor leaders will be outlined in the social learning section. Additional findings related to the challenges of balancing organization leaders and survivor involvement in social learning will also be presented. The following paragraph describes other, less salient, contexts for learning.

Formal, nonformal, and informal education all provided contexts where women learned throughout the transition process. As presented in the participant description section, most of the women have pursued some form of formal education since exiting. The formal education has helped some pursue their dreams and has increased some of their self-esteem through the accomplishment of completing an education. However, most of the learning women experienced occurred through nonformal and informal learning environments. Nonformal education is organized education not resulting in a degree, with or without a set curriculum, and a leader with experience or a credentialed teacher, such as a continuing education computer course. Informal education occurs without credits or curriculum, such as through a conversation with a peer (Merriam et al., 2007).

Experiential learning and social learning were the most common learning styles adopted by women during their transition out. Findings related to experiential learning and social learning will be presented in the following sections, after a brief explanation of what constitutes both types of learning. References to the contexts most salient for each type of learning will also be made.

Experiential Learning

Before presenting the findings related to experiential learning, a brief explanation of experiential learning is necessary. Experiential learning theory posits that new experiences require new learning (Merriam et al., 2007). According to Jarvis (1987), a potential learning experience can inspire active experimentation (practice) and reflection. When evaluation of the active experimentation and reflection occurs and learning is internalized, the learning results in a more experienced person. Through experiential learning, the women primarily developed methods to address the challenges faced with basic life skills, and to adopt the skills and behaviors necessary for work, needed as a result of gaps in their jobs skills.

Cognitive apprenticeships and problem-based learning (PBL) are specific methods for employing experiential learning to help a learner grow and develop. Specifically, they stem from the situated cognition perspective, placing learners in authentic situations by teaching in the context of real-world problems (Merriam et al., 2007). Through a cognitive apprenticeship, an educator provides support to a learner as the learner navigates a specific experience. The learner and teacher may solve a problem together, so the learner can see how an expert models problem solving in a certain

179

context. Cognitive apprenticeships rely on "continuing authentic activity" where the

expert can coach the apprentice through real-world experiences with a focus on ways of

thinking rather than specific skills (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989). For example,

through a cognitive apprenticeship, an individual may work with a mentor, with more

experience, at a new job to learn how to use a computer program. The learner might

watch the expert work on the computer program, then the expert could provide support

as the learner tries the computer program. Gradually, the learner becomes more

independent only receiving help when requested and eventually not needing help. The

gradual removal of support is an example of scaffolding (Merriam et al., 2007).

Through scaffolding, an educator gradually removes support as learners become more

prepared to tackle a challenge (Ambrose et al., 2010). The ultimate goal is for the

learner to be able to transfer their knowledge to other situations (Fenwick, 2001).

PBL allows learners to work through problems consistent with those they will

face after their education experience. PBL often allows learners to address problems of

interest to them, making PBL student-centered. Problems are typically addressed in

groups. Like in cognitive apprenticeship, the PBL expert or educator models their

thinking around the problem and solutions, acting as a coach (Koschmann, Glenn, &

Conlee, 2000). For example, a group of women in a community may be coached

through solving a problem, such as how to help women find satisfying, well-paying jobs.

PBL and cognitive apprenticeships can be used by leaders, who in this case are

organization leaders, to provide support for learning through real life or simulated

experiences. With both PBL and cognitive apprenticeships, scaffolding allows for

support to gradually be removed, resulting a more self-directed learner (Merriam et al., 2007). Participants in this study experienced PBL and cognitive apprenticeships supported by survivors and non-survivors in educational coaching roles with the organizations supporting them and at work.

Learning basic life skills. As previously stated, 9 of 10 women struggled with budgeting. Most women referenced the impact gaining experience with budgeting, especially in the safe environment of an organization, had on their ability to develop budgeting skills. Helena provided a good description of the program one organization had in place to help women learn to budget. All six women exiting through that organization referenced the positive impact of the program on their budgeting skills. In describing the program, like the other five participants, Helena said:

> I don't have to make a certain amount. They take a percent of my check. They also take a percent of my check and give it to the church. 100% of your check is used, but like they take 50% of your check at first and then they put 20% of your check in savings, and then they take 10% and they write a check for whatever church you want to give it to. And then you get that 20% to get shampoo and hair stuff. And it is real hard to have a habit, a drug habit or a drinking habit, with 20% of a check, of an income of nothing.

The program provided scaffolding for the women to learn how to budget. Specifically, in this case, participants were required to budget, but only certain percentages. The women learned to budget in a safe environment, where they had support if they made mistakes. The women also opened a savings account, which was

181

the first time five of the six had a savings account. As the women earned more, the amount (not percentages) they contributed increased along with the amounts they were able to spend. Once they left the organization the scaffolding was removed completely and they were then prepared to budget as a result of the practice they received in the organization, in a self-directed manner. Cognitive apprentices receive support, or scaffolding as they are coached. The participants receive such support from organizations leaders as they were coached on budgeting, while they were living in the house.

As did Elle, after exiting, the women's learning related to budgeting remained experiential, "basically through trial and error."

Beyond budgeting, Elizabeth stated that the organization helping her exit taught her how to get a driver's license, learn to drive, and manage a check book. They provided her experiences to practice such skills in a low stakes environment. Elizabeth is now a homeowner and is still learning additional life skills, through experience, like how to prepare her taxes and buy a house. Elizabeth's aunt now admires what Elizabeth has learned through experience. Elizabeth said:

> Like, you know, my aunt even says, my aunt got married when she, right out of high school and she was married the whole time. And she's never lived on her own, and she said, now she's divorced, and she's like asking me questions, like, 'How do you…?' And she was like, 'It's so great that you know how to do everything, like you can do anything you need to do.'

Josie learned critical parenting skills while she was living in the housing program with her children. She learned these skills through the experience of parenting, while receiving coaching from organization leaders. The experience she gained getting her children on a schedule allowed her to maintain the practice after leaving the program. Josie said:

> Well, like, as far as the kids go. Putting them to sleep early, giving them a pattern. Like the dinner pattern. I had seen like right after I got out, I had fell off on that, and I'd seen the big difference. And now, I am trying to doin' it back again. And they're asleep by 8:00.

In addition to learning important life skills, the women learned additional skills and behaviors through their experiences that are valuable in a work context.

Learning job skills through work. All participants referenced learning through their work experiences. Participants learned other concrete job skills, such as computer skills, typing, organizing files, and supervising others on the job. One of the most important job skills women learned through experience was work appropriate behavior.

Elizabeth provided an example of how she learned work appropriate behavior through experiential learning. The situation she described encompasses all components of Jarvis's (1987) model. The model starts with an individual's biographical history creating context for a potential learning experience. The individual becomes a more experienced person, if they engage in active experimentation with and reflection on what is learned. The person then moves through evaluation of the experience and internalization of the learning. Elizabeth's learning is further evaluated in the context of

183

experiential learning in Chapter V, where Jarvis's (1987) model is illustrated and discussed.

Elizabeth had a potential learning experience when she was talking about inappropriate things at work. Her boss played a role in the experience as a mentor by asking Elizabeth to reflect on what she was saying at work. By reflecting on the experience (reflection-on-action; Merriam et al., 2007), Elizabeth realized what she was saying was not appropriate at work and a "light bulb would click on." The light bulb moment and the subsequent changes in behavior Elizabeth experienced showed she moved through the experiential learning model to internalization, resulting in a more experienced person. The learning allowed her to become more adept in work appropriate behavior. Like other participants who had similar experiences, Elizabeth said:

> You know, this one time, I guess I was talking about some crazy things…She was like, 'Do you really want everybody to hear all that? And like, you know, I just didn't realize. It's like, I just didn't know that people shouldn't hear those kinds of things. Or you know, I'm sure I was talking about sex or something and all the lobby could hear me. She's like, you know, just real gently and very, you know, I never felt embarrassed or and then. It would just cause me to think, like, oh, yeah. I guess I don't want everybody to hear this stuff, you know. Duh, it's just like a little light bulb would click on.

Additionally, the example provided by Elizabeth demonstrates the role of coaching in experiential learning. Like educators, Elizabeth's boss served as a mentor

184

by helping her through a scenario at work, much like problem-based learning or role-play in a classroom (Merriam et al., 2007).

Amelia also expressed the critical role that reflection-on-action (Merriam et al., 2007), active experimentation (Jarvis, 1987), and mentorship (Ensher, Thomas, & Murphy, 2001) played in her learning work appropriate behavior. Amelia engaged in active experimentation with potential learning experiences because of consequences given to her by her boss. Being late or exhibiting anger with customers provided potential learning experiences followed by active experimentation with consequences, leading to reflection-on-action and resulting in changed her behavior. Amelia said:

But he taught me all of those things. He would pull me to the back, 'You cannot talk to people like that. You can't answer the phone like that.' I didn't realize how crazy I was on the phone. I didn't know. They can't see my face, but they can hear your intentions over the phone. I didn't know that stuff…He would have to really school me on all of that stuff. I did not know. If I was late, 'Guess what you don't work today.' After a couple times, I need that money. I'll be here on time next time. You know he never fired me but when I cussed him out. He didn't fire me, 'But one, are you taking your meds, but two you can't work for a week. Do not come back to work until next week and you need to think about what happened.' I was like a little kid.

The modeling Amelia's employer provided could be considered experiential learning. The experience of not acting appropriately at work provided an opportunity for Amelia to learn from her employer, acting in the role of coach.

Additionally, through several work and counseling experiences, Gloria learned appropriate behavior to expect from an employer. Gloria had an experience with sexual harassment at her first job after exiting. She learned to recognize and handle sexual harassment through reflection guided by her counselor. Gloria said:

> I learned by experience when I was first out and someone helped me recognize sexual harassment. And then I became the one that advocated against workplace violence and violence/abuse…And then I became a trainer on different things within that organization and also on sexual harassment. So, I became an HR person and I worked alongside a pro bono attorney and that's how I began to learn.

Gloria now sets clear boundaries and does not tolerate harassment. She reported that she has turned down work because potential clients made comments about her body.

In addition to learning job skills, like work appropriate behavior, the participants learned about their own self-worth and gained confidence and pride because of their work experiences. The impact of experiential learning at work on women's self-worth will be discussed in the next section.

Learning self-worth through work. All 10 women emphasized the role work played in helping them learn their own self-worth. Three work-related experiences were instrumental in the women learning their own self-worth. The women learned they had self-worth when they experienced: (a) earning an income and providing for their families, (b) being a productive member of society through their work, and (c) having to "figure it out" things they did not know how to do at work. In addition to resulting from

experiential learning, self-worth was a product of incidental learning (Jarvis, 2012). The women did not consciously set out to learn their own self-worth by working, they were working to fulfill a basic need, but learned so much more through the experience, such as self-worth. The three incidental sources of experiential learning will be outlined in the respective sections to follow.

Income and self-worth. All 10 women referenced the impact the experience of working to earn an income and provide for themselves and, in some cases, their families had on them learning they had self-worth. For example, when I asked Eva to talk about the most important thing she learned, she cited her own self-worth. When I asked her what helped her the most in learning her own self-worth she said, "That I can make honest dollars. I can make honest dollars. I've got like, on my own, not from other people holding my money. But on my own." Similarly, Josie said the most important thing she learned about herself was, "that I didn't need to rely on that to get money. I could get a job." When I asked Josie why a job was important for women, she said:

> Because, for women, like for me it was always making money out there. And it makes you feel like shit afterward. And you know, with a job, it boosts you up. It's like wow. I go cash my check and it's like wow. I did it without having to do this or that or call him. It makes a person feel good and strong.

Generating income also allowed women to provide for themselves and/or their families, which was a great source of self-worth and pride. The women referenced tangible representations of how far they had come since exiting, from being able to buy a TV of their own to having dental insurance. Learning they could have a steady, reliable

187

income, and learning they could do it on their own, built their self-worth. For example, Elizabeth said:

> You know, so I never would have imagined I had all of my own stuff and my own house, and doing it all on my own…I feel like I could do anything…You know, my life is just so much different. It's just great. I mean, I own a home…I know material things don't matter, but in a sense to me, having a house, and a working vehicle and food in the pantry and my bills paid, like that is a big defining factor of my life, you know. That does show my value. I mean, we love our home, we respect it and we take care of it.

Similarly, Elle said, "Little by little, as I learned how to, again, get an apartment, and pay my bills, and things like that, I developed confidence in myself." Additionally, Josie said:

> I got out, got my own place. It made me feel good. I got my own TV, I did it by myself…I mean I have my own spot, you know, pay my bills, my kids have cable. I mean we don't live in the best house, but it's mine. It's ours.

Jillian elaborating, saying:

> I did things I didn't think I was capable of. I bought a new car on my own…I financed a new car on my own in 3 years. I have a checking account, with money in it. I have credit cards. These are things that you don't legitimately think you are going to have when you're in a lifestyle like that… Now I have this beautiful story to tell people. I've gotten this far. These things happen to me and this is where I've gotten. I'm only going to go further.

Beyond just income, working taught the women that they could be productive members of society, which also helped them recognize their own self-worth.

Productivity, accomplishments, and self-worth. All 10 women talked about how proud they were to work. Their experiences at work, through incidental and experiential learning, taught them they could be a "productive member of society." For example, Clara represented many participants experiences when she stated the impact being productive had on her self-worth and self-esteem:

> You start to build self-worth and self-esteem, because you have a job and you're
> doing something…Having a purpose, feeling needed, feeling like I was doing
> something productive, like I was a productive member of society…and not
> feeling like I was on the opposite side. Starting to feel like I was on the right
> side, I think really helped…integrate me into society.

All of the women found great pride in what they had accomplished at work and through work, even beyond income. As Billie said:

> I enjoy going to work now. Even though it's mundane, it's 5 days a week, you
> know, but it's stable and it's a good job. It gives me something to be proud of,
> because…I know where I've been, and where I came from, and where I am now.

In addition to the role income played in helping women learn their self-worth, the experience of self-directed learning at work changed women's beliefs about their own self-worth.

"Figure it out" and self-worth. Five of the six women who exited through the same organization specifically referenced the expectation from the organization leader

189

for them to "figure it out" in their jobs with the organization. Helena, the sixth participant, valued learning through experience and figuring it out in her own business. They all valued having to figure it out, even when they had no formal prior skills or knowledge in the area where they were working. Being able to learn new things and figure out new job skills helped the women develop self-worth and confidence.

Eva described one of the organization's core values, "experiential discovery learning," which to her demonstrated the deliberate emphasis the organization placed on experiential learning. Eva described experiential discovery learning as "going in there and figuring it out, figuring it out." The organization's experiential discovery learning allows women to specifically engage in problem-based learning (PBL) and move closer self-directed learning (SDL). Employing SDL to solve problems on their own, or figure it out, gave women more confidence in themselves and helped them to see their own self-worth.

For example, one day, Eva and her team had to create a flyer. When she told the organization leader she was stuck and didn't understand how to complete the flyer, the organization leader said, "Well, you got all day to figure it out." Clara had a similar experience with the same organization leader. When the organization leader put Clara in to a different department, Clara said:

> I didn't know anything about it. I said, well, 'I don't know that.' She goes, 'Read books, Google it, look it up. Learn. Figure it out.' I was like, 'Hold on, what?' And she wouldn't tell me anything. I had to do all this research.

Figuring it out was tough for Clara at first, but proved to be an extremely valuable

learning tool, which helped her gain self-confidence in the right areas. Clara said:

> Not giving me the answer, but making me start to look and dig and realize I was
>
> capable of so much more. Not needing to be validated, like, 'Oh you're pretty,'
>
> but 'Oh you're intellectual, oh, you can think.' You know what I mean, and
>
> those things were really important for me.

The value of figuring it out translated into women being more confident about

their skills and value after leaving the organizations. Learning to figure it out at work

and in their everyday lives gave them confidence they could handle anything. Eva found

confidence to pursue a new job through the skills she gained in her figuring it out at the

organization. Eva said:

> Now that I know I can lead and motivate and coordinate and do these things,
>
> organize and handle paperwork, because that was my fear was handling
>
> paperwork. I think I can handle it. There are so many facets to being [in this
>
> job]. You have to take care of this and that and that and that…And to handle the
>
> emails. I think I can do it.

Josie's confidence translated into her everyday life as well. Josie said, "I'm wiser, I'm

smarter, I'm stronger. I'm a survivor. I can survive when times get tough. I can survive

when the average person would probably freak out. I know how to make a way."

The women felt empowered through the learning they acquired from their own

experiences. They also learned by observing and interacting with other people—both

non-survivors and survivors. In the next section, I will present the women's experiences with social learning.

Social Learning

Bandura (1986) highlighted the important role of social observation in learning. Schunk (1996) summarized social cognitive learning theory as:

> …the idea that much human learning occurs in a social environment. By observing others, people acquire knowledge, rules, skills, strategies, beliefs, and attitudes. Individuals also learn about the usefulness and appropriateness of behavior by observing models and consequences of modeled behaviors, and they act in accordance with their beliefs concerning the expected outcomes of actions. (p. 102)

In this section, I will demonstrate how women utilized social learning to acquire socially appropriate behavior.

All of the women referenced learning "normal" or appropriate behavior by observing others. For example, Elizabeth learned basic social skills from watching other women at church. Many participants learned in similar ways, in other social settings, represented when Elizabeth said:

> I learned a lot from the people at church as well. Like, I would kind of observe people and how they interacted, because I wasn't taught how to interact in public. …And so I'd really just kind of observe, you know, what normal was. And be like, 'Oh, that's how you act normal.'

The women also specifically learned how to dress by watching and interacting with other women. Clara provided an excellent example of how she learned to dress through social learning. Clara said:

Well, watching women like [the women working at the organization] and the way they dress and understanding that they were not showing their boobs to everyone and they did not have a whale tail [G-string] up the back. And I was like, 'Hold on. Hmmm. Classy, not classy; classy, not classy.' Starting to look at what was appropriate. So, I think it was just by really being observant as to the women I wanted to more mirror.

Clara contrasted the way "classy" women dressed with the way she observed some of her peers dressing, which she started to view as inappropriate. Clara continued:

Also, when we were teaching that computer class, I got to see. One of the girls showed up with a john one day and she was trying to pull her clothes on as she was coming into the computer class. And I was like, 'Hmmm. Do I want to be that girl or do I want to look like [women working at the organization].' …She was late coming to computer class. When I opened the door, she was out there with a john in the truck and I was like, 'Don't miss that. Don't miss that at all. I don't miss that.'

Like Clara, Elizabeth was influenced by other women in the house, but for Elizabeth, the other women provided a positive example. About a specific incident related to the way Elizabeth was dressed, she said:

Even the other women in the house would really influence each other, because I

remember...I just dressed like a hoochy everywhere I went. And I remember

walking out, which is so far removed from me today, I can't even believe it. I

remember walking out of the house and this girl was like, 'You're going to wear

that to church?' And I was like, 'Yeah.' And she was like 'Really? You're

boobs are hanging out. You really think everybody needs to see that?' ….It's

like I didn't even know. Like I didn't. And I was like, 'Wow, my boobs

shouldn't be hanging out?' I didn't even know. Just completely unaware. Oh, I

need to cover them. I need to cover my boobs in public. Wow, what a concept.

Elizabeth also found watching other women outside of the house extremely

helpful. The behaviors role modeled by from other women also helped Elizabeth

navigate some of the challenges presented in the findings related to the first research

question. Though social observations, Elizabeth identified what she wanted in a future

marriage and how a healthy relationship was modeled. Elizabeth said:

I also observed people that were husband and wife and saw their relationship and

saw how loving they were towards each other. And I wanted that…And at the

church, I didn't see husbands and wives talk to each other inappropriately in

public and like that's something I carry over to my marriage. Like, even if my

husband and I are arguing, it's like, I don't talk down to him in public or like

just, you know?

Elizabeth also observed women at church in order to develop parenting skills. She said:

Or you know, I would watch the women, how they would talk to their children.

And they'd get real quiet and make them look, look in their eyes and they'd say,

'No ma'am, you can't.' You know like, things I would watch, like 'Wow, that's

how you talk to a kid.'

Consistent with social learning the women not only learned skills and social

norms by observing others, but observation also aided in the acquisition of new beliefs

and attitudes. Observing others gave women hope. The source of their hope was in part

by observing people who had never experienced what they had. Helena said:

I have to have people in my life that have never used drugs, that have never

resorted to prostitution, that have had cookie cutter looking lives and have had

everything handed…I need people like that in my life, so I know that's a reality.

So that I know what I'm doing is not the norm.

Billie also said, the organizations helping women exit were "here to show us there is a

better way." However, for most participants, the context for the most impactful social

learning they experienced was other survivors, which will be discussed in the following

section.

"Survivor leaders" and mentors. Other survivors, who were further along in

exiting, served a critical role in the participants' social learning experiences. The

mentorship women received from other survivors led to more meaningful social learning

experiences.

Gloria shared the term "survivor leader" to describe this role. Based on Gloria's

description, a survivor leader is a survivor of the sex trade, who now serves in peer

leadership role at "all levels of management, development, and service provision" within

an organization helping women exit (Hotaling, Burris, Johnson, Bird, & Melbye, 2003,

p. 256). Similar peer programs have been adopted with other marginalized populations –

drug addicts, individuals with HIV, and homeless (Hotaling et al., 2003). Three

participants in this study were survivor leaders. One identified herself as a survivor

leaders and shared the term with me. I used the term to describe the experiences two

other women shared. Two survivor leaders worked in administrative roles in addition to

mentorship, and one worked in a solely mentorship capacity.

Survivors served in formal and informal mentorship roles, in women's social

learning, as peer, step-ahead, and traditional mentors (Ensher et al., 2001). The

distinction between the different forms of mentorship is based on the relationship

between the survivor and the mentor. Two women who exited around the same time

could be in a peer mentorship relationship, because they have the same amount of

experience with the transition process. A step-ahead mentor is someone who has been

out slightly longer and with more experience in the transition process. Someone who

had been out a considerable amount of time would serve a more traditional mentorship

role.

All 10 women emphasized the importance of receiving mentorship from

survivors and the importance of them sharing advice with other women first exiting.

Specifically, women learned through social interaction with other survivors. In a

mentorship capacity, the participants stated that survivor leaders served as a source of

hope to show them recovery was possible and as an example to model, and as someone who really understood their experiences.

Gloria, who is now a survivor leader, emphasized the importance of having a counselor who was a survivor leader when she first exited. Gloria said:

Having someone like [my counselor] who set across the table from me and I had tattered jeans and a way too short shirt and was still acting a fool 5 months out, even though I wasn't using drugs, I was still acting out. Have her sit across from me and say, 'You know 15 years ago,' and she was in a business suit and I was in my tattered clothes, saying to me, 'You can be where I am. You don't have to ever do this again, and I was where you were 15 years ago and I had no hope.' So it was the peer education or peer service delivery model. Otherwise, I don't think that I would be here.

Gloria later said seeing her counselor, who had succeeded, gave Gloria hope she could do the same. The social interaction with Gloria's mentor helped her learn to hope for more and provided Gloria with a model to emulat.

Similarly, Helena described a life changing moment when a survivor, who had lived at the same organization, came back to donate some clothes a couple of years after moving out. The interaction gave Helena hope she too could exit successfully. Helena said:

This was a life-changing moment…So, I had that day that my will broke…And I did not, I do not want to come out of my room for like 3 days. And so, I am in my bedroom and I am crying. This girl had been to prison, since she had turned

18, she had been to prison the majority of her life…She showed up to drop some

clothes off...And she came upstairs and she said, you can do this…It is hard, but

it is worth it. And I needed to hear from her. Because she had had a harder time

at it than I had. She'd been to prison for God's sake. Things were rough for her.

So, I needed to hear that from her and then I needed the people around me that

could tell me how to do it.

The social interaction with someone who shared a similar experience helped Helena

learn that she too could make it through the transition.

Elizabeth emphasized the importance of receiving support from people who

could related to your struggles, in the context of exiting the sex trade, and in other areas

where survivor support is used. Elizabeth said:

It's kind of like, if you're in the military and you have PTSD. You want to talk

to somebody that gets it. You know, you want to talk to a counselor or

somebody that has a lot of training in that area, or like has been in the military,

you know, and overcome it…Even like drug addicts, like I know somebody that

went to rehab and she said her counselor…'What was your drug of choice?' And

the counselor was like, 'I've never done any drugs.' She was like, 'Well, what

do you have to offer me. Do you know what it's like?' You know. And so I

think it just, those type of populations, who have done those types of

things…there's just something in having somebody that's done that and has

overcome it.

Eva, who is a survivor leader, found relating to the women she mentors extremely important. Eva said:

> I can relate. Her experiences don't freak me out…. No, I can understand. I've been there. I've done that. That's nothing…So I can break that uniqueness, so that way she can see not our differences, but to see our similarities and that's a good bridge to build.

The interaction with someone who could relate eliminated potential barriers to learning, such as a lack of belief about their ability to grow and develop. In the following section, I will outline some specific benefits and challenges of survivor involvement in organizations, which created the environment or context for some of the most critical learning women experienced.

Survivor Leaders: Policy and Power

Policy and power played a role in shaping the context in which women learned throughout the transition process. Eight participants made statements related to the importance of survivor leader involvement to reduce issue of power. An imbalance in power can negatively impact learning, by reinforcing status quo and existing social structures, which leave some learners marginalized or further marginalized (Merriam et al., 2007). Marginalization may specifically impact experiential learning, because due to marginalization, everyone may not have the same ability or opportunity for reflection implied by experiential learning models (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). The risk of further marginalization is magnified if educators play too active a role in managing learners'

199

experiences and reflection, or in determining what constitutes an experience (Fenwick, 2001).

Specific to this study, the participants felt that power imbalances between survivors and non-survivor educators created issues with further marginalization and feelings of inferiority. Additionally, the power imbalance created incentives for the learners to not be authentic about their development and their challenges. The participants felt power issues could be mitigated in two ways: (a) a more likely balance of power between two survivors, and (b) survivor leaders could influence policy and practice within the organization to reduce the risk of marginalization.

Related to the balance in power, Eva said the survivor is going to feel low and at the same time is going to "feel like this lady [non-survivor] is all powerful, all knowing." Amelia, another survivor leader said, "I think that's crucial, especially ones coming right out, because it's us against them when you're first coming out."

Gloria provided a specific way she influenced an organization as a survivor leader, in a consulting capacity. She felt the lack of survivor leadership within the organization caused them to unintentionally mimic women's traffickers with their policy and practice. She said:

Now that we've got these, what I call do-gooders on board, those do-gooders need to hire survivors to consult all the way from policy to how they treat the clients, etc., etc. Because you can very quickly and easily send down a message of power and control that mimics the trafficker and nothing irritates me more…One faith-based organization, that I was consulting with to do case

management, was monitoring how many pieces of toilet paper it took, because the girls were using too much toilet paper. And I heard it from two different clients. I went to the staff and I said, 'I've got to tell you something. You can't do that. Can I tell you why? Cause it mimics the trafficker. What you are telling that woman is she's too stupid to figure out how many pieces of toilet paper to use. That reinforces what the trafficker probably told her all along, she's too stupid, she'll never make it, etc., etc.'

Survivors versus "church ladies." Gloria's previous statement points out a specific issue experienced by the participants, in the context of power of organization leaders and authenticity of those exiting. The women that Gloria called "do-gooders," Amelia called "church ladies." As stated in Chapter III, with the exception of drug treatment facilities, the organizations helping women exit were religious. For most women, the individuals with authority, who imposed rules and supported women in their learning journey through the transition process, were not survivors. Some of the participants felt the religious, non-survivor leaders in the organizations interfered with women's ability to learn and grow in a way that was authentic and met them where they were based on what was realistic for them, especially early in their transition journey.

The participants said survivors need to feel they can be authentic, so real progress can be made in their recovery. Amelia said that if not, women will appear to be successfully recovering to organization leaders, when they are really about to leave the organization supporting them. Amelia said, "That's not authentic. They are running game. They're good; they're good; they're smart." Amelia highlighted a conversation

she had with an organization leader. Amelia felt she was better equipped than the

organization leader who had never been in the lifestyle to identify when survivors were

being inauthentic or putting on a show for organization leaders. In Amelia's experience,

the leader said, "Oh, isn't so and so, isn't she great?" Amelia said, "She's gonna run."

After going back and forth, Amelia said, "Sure enough. It was a mask. Stop it. They

[non-survivor leaders] have no idea."

As a survivor leader, Amelia heard the complaints women exiting have about the

"church ladies" supporting them in their recovery. Amelia said that the survivors she

has worked with have hated their interactions with the volunteers in the organization

who have specifically asked the women exiting not to cuss. The rule felt oppressive and

unrealistic given the language they used so frequently in the lifestyle. Amelia said the

following about how the survivors she serve view the "church ladies:"

> They complain so much about these church women that come in and visit them.
>
> 'Oh God, here comes the church ladies again.' I mean they hate it, they
>
> absolutely hate it. And I felt the same way. I felt the same way, because I can't
>
> relate to them. What do they know about me, but also I felt dirty… These women
>
> [survivors] when they are in those positions with these people [church ladies]
>
> they don't have any opportunity to be free, to be themselves, so they're still
>
> putting on that mask to deal with these people that are helping them, but they are
>
> not being authentic. They have a mask on. Anytime I say this [cuss] she says,
>
> 'No ma'am don't talk like that,' and they call them out on it…They need a
>
> chance to be themselves, because they don't get that. They're there all day – case

managers, Christian ladies. They [survivors] don't have any opportunity to really

let loose and vent. Let it out and be real.

Amelia provided a specific example of when she was made to feel like she could not be

herself as a survivor leader supporting the women exiting in their learning and growth.

Amelia said:

> The first time I went and did a group, I do my groups outside, but they had the
>
> door cracked. [The organization] is Christian and I'm flying the F word. I got
>
> pulled aside. 'We heard the F bomb flying out there, from you too.' And I said,
>
> 'I know, and I told you if you want me to do this, I'm going to keep it real and
>
> that's who I am.' They [the survivors] need an opportunity to get all that trash
>
> off their chest.

Amelia could relate to the sentiments of the women earlier in their exit process. Amelia

said the shame she felt about her past when she first exited made it hard for her to

interact with church ladies. It took her a long time to feel comfortable going to church

and interacting with people who were religious.

Helena provided additional perspective about the challenges of religious

organizations supporting women in their transition experiences. Based on volunteering

with an organization for women in a particular aspect of the sex industry, she also

discussed the challenge with relatability facing religious organizations. Helena

emphasized the need for survivor leadership to address this issue when she said:

> I think is the biggest struggle with [the organization]…[The leader] knows this
>
> and she has asked me for feedback, 'What could we do better as an

organization?' 'Well, you could have more girls that used to be [in the industry].

Because right now, it's a bunch of [university] girls and soccer moms who have a

heart for [women in the industry].' Fuck that shit. I don't care how much you

have a heart for me, if you haven't been through it, I probably don't care as much

about your input as I would if somebody came to me.

Helena also said:

Cuss at them or with them or talk to them about their baby daddy. You've got to

learn some lingo. You can't go in there like, 'Praise the Lord. Hallelujah,'

because they are going to roll their eyes and walk away.

Helena provided an example about how a woman reacted to someone saying Jesus while

the organization was attempting to minister to women in the industry:

She turned around and she said, 'Jesus can suck my dick.' And [the organization

leader] goes, 'You have one, no way. What do the guys think?' And the

[woman] was like, 'Uh?' And I too was like, 'Whaaat did you just say?' It was

the perfect response.

Relatability and not mimicking the trafficker are challenges organizations have

faced, which the women felt could be mitigated through survivor involvement, and

particularly survivor leadership. On the other hand, when survivors are involved, they

face the challenge of being viewed as survivors rather than experts, which will be

discussed in the following section.

204

Survivors as Experts and Teachers

Eight participants who have worked with the movement, as volunteers or as leaders, discussed the desire to be viewed as experts. They also identified themselves as teachers, which enhanced their own learning and aided in others learning. In addition to teaching others survivors in non-formal settings, four survivors taught law enforcement, healthcare professionals, churches, and the public. Some women conducted trainings for these groups about dealing with survivors of sexual exploitation and drug addictions. Some engaged in public speaking at fundraising events to raise awareness about women's experiences in the lifestyle. Two participants have served as experts on nonprofit boards and all of the others volunteer with or consult for organizations in less formal capacities and view themselves as experts with insight to offer the organizations. However, some of them felt like they were treated as survivors and not as the experts they felt they deserved to be considered.

Gloria, in her role as a policy consultant and consultant to survivor leaders and organization, has struggled with not being treated as an expert. After being asked by her boss to read TVPA, Gloria decided to go back to school to pursue a degree in public policy and human rights. Therefore, Gloria is an expert not only based on her experiences, but her education. Gloria said:

> I mean, I applied to [a government agency] as an expert and then they were like,
> 'We're going to run your criminal background.' I said, 'Oh, whoa, wait a
> minute. I forgot to mention, I'm a survivor too.' But I wanted to be deemed as
> an expert consultant, not a survivor. Because that's what I am.

Gloria's statement demonstrates how she views herself as an expert and as a teacher, using her experiences to teach others.

In talking about the importance of survivor involvement in helping women exit, Elizabeth referred to being a survivor as a "credential."   She said:

> Somebody that has been there done that. You know, because when you're living, when you've lived that kind of lifestyle. You're really, it means a lot to have that, *credential* [emphasis added], or really understand, you know.

Helena received help from a survivor who had started a business, when Helena was writing her own business plan. She has planned to help another survivor write her business plan soon. Helena felt that a survivor is uniquely positioned to help another survivor start a business, because she said, "You know they used to have this lifestyle and so you'll know the hiccups that they go through, the self-doubts mainly in our own head."

Unpaid experts and teachers. Participants expressed a tangible, marginalizing impact of viewing them as survivors instead of experts. Despite the expertise participants provided organizations, the women were not often paid for their time. Talking about the issue with pay, Helena said, "What they'll find is the executive director's making a good paycheck, and the business director is making good paycheck, and the accountant is making good paycheck, but you want us to volunteer." Gloria provided the most insight about survivor pay. She consults with survivor leaders and encourages them to ensure they are paid a living wage. Gloria said:

Pay survivors a living wage. My whole thing with the survivor leaders is they are like, 'Well, the church asked me to do a speaking engagement.' 'That's really great. How much are you getting paid? Do you have a contract with them? What happens if there is a cancelation?'

Summary

I began this chapter with a summarized description of the participants included in this study. I then outlined four themes related to women's experiences exiting the sex trade – employment challenges and successes, other challenges of exiting, relationships, and learning and teaching. Through these themes, I detailed the aspects women found to be most challenging in their exit, and then the support women received to overcome these challenges as they learned through their transition experience exiting the sex trade. I will discuss the findings in the context of existing literature in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, AND

IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter, I provide a brief summary of the study, a discussion of the conclusions made from the findings in the context of existing literature, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of women transitioning out of the sex trade, especially related to finding legal employment. In conducting this study, I sought to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What challenges do women face while transitioning out of the sex trade?

RQ2: What supports help women transitioning out of the sex trade?

RQ3: In what types of learning do women engage and in what context(s) do women learn while transitioning out the sex trade?

I used a general qualitative methodology to gain insight into women's experiences transitioning out of the sex trade. Consistent with an interpretivist epistemological framework, and achieved through a qualitative approach, I was "interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 6). Additionally, an interpretivist epistemological framework allows for

208

consideration of multiple socially constructed realities, which positions women exiting the sex trade as experts in their own lives.

Ten survivors of the sex trade, who exited between 3 and 20 years ago, participated in in-depth, semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions. Each participant had the opportunity to participate in two interviews. Participants' first interviews lasted between 45 minutes and about 2 hours. I conducted a much shorter second interview, approximately 5-15 minutes, after transcripts were returned and reviewed by the participants. I performed simultaneous data analysis and collection using the constant comparison approach. I initially analyzed data through open coding and then grouped into common themes or categories through the axial coding processes. I constantly tested the categories identified against new data collected.

The analysis revealed findings divided into three sections associated with each research questions addressing challenges, supports, and types and contexts of learning. Each section includes themes related to the associated research question and where necessary subthemes providing additional details. The themes associated with challenges included employment challenges, managing mental health and emotions, navigating basic life skills, and building, rebuilding, and managing relationships. The findings related to supports included how women found support, the importance of needs assessments, supportive relationships, the need for holistic support, and any support women identified as missing. The themes related to types of learning included experiential learning, social learning, and the impact of survivor leader presence in

power and policy related to learning, and treating survivors as experts and teachers. In

the following sections, I will discuss the findings in the context of existing literature.

Conclusions and Discussion of Findings

The discussion of the findings will be organized around the three research

questions posed in this study. I will present five conclusions in the context of the three

research questions to address women's experiences transitioning out of the sex trade.

The five conclusions include: (a) women experience a similar transition process after

exiting; (b) workplace development opportunities are critical for income and self-worth;

(c) support from organizations is critical, but complicated by power dynamics (d) the

nature of learning is experiential and social and takes place in the context of

transitioning; and (e) transitional learning theory provides insights into women's

learning related to transitioning into legal work. Within each conclusion, I will integrate

existing literature with a discussion of the findings discovered in this study.

Conclusion One: Women Experience a Similar Transition Process after Exiting

The findings revealed a consistent transition process experienced by the

participants, which is captured in the model in Figure 3. The model addresses the

overall purpose of this study, which was to investigate the experiences of women

transitioning out of the sex trade, and captures findings related to all three research

questions - women's challenges, supports, types and contexts of learning. I developed

the model using findings from the study and incorporated findings from exiting models

specific to exiting the sex trade. The following discussion will include a summary of

existing models influencing the creation of this model, an overview of this model

including overarching concepts such as sociocultural influences, and then a section to

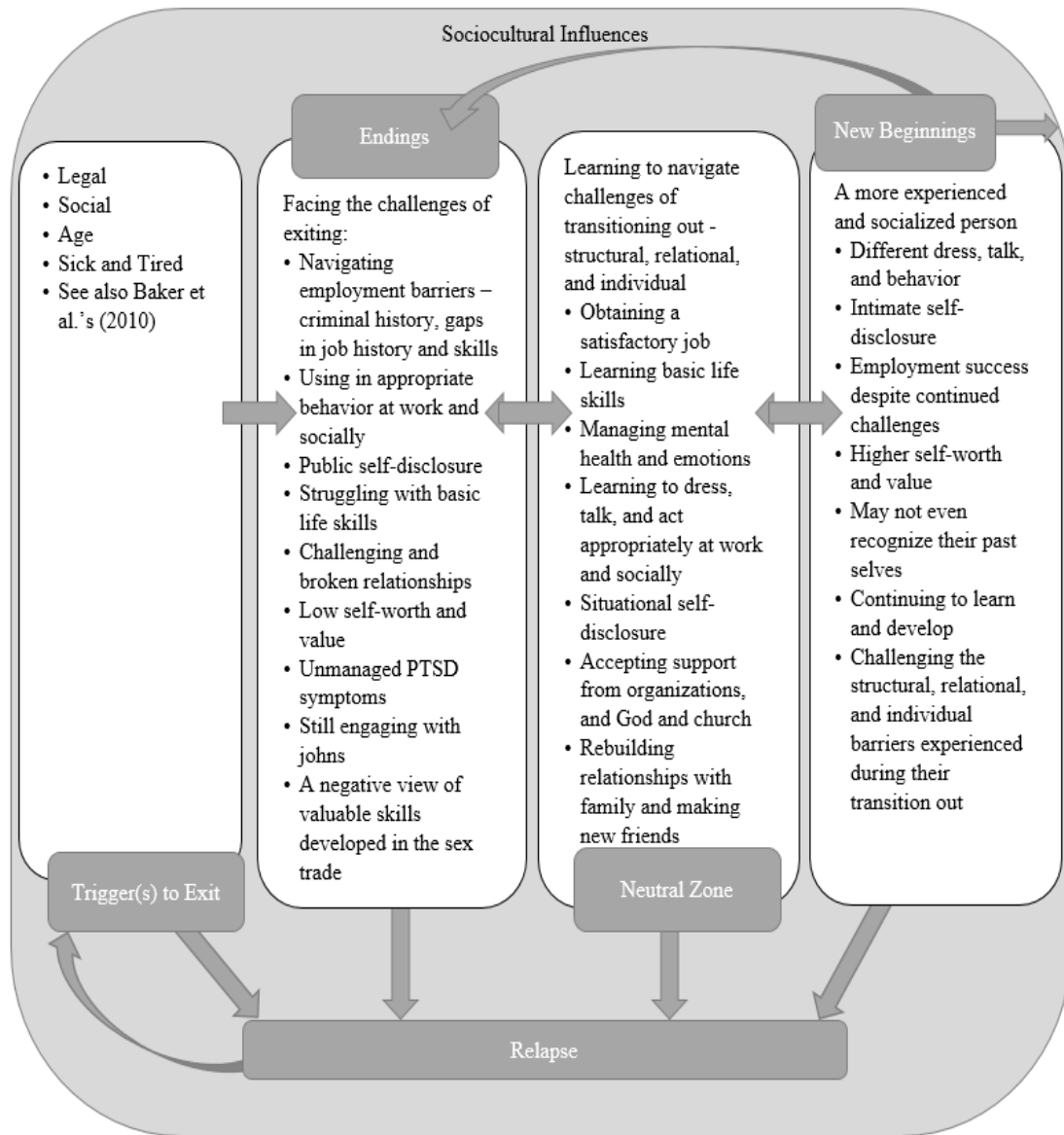detail each component of this model.

Figure 3. Women's transition process out of the sex trade.

Existing models summary. Existing models specific to the sex trade focused on barriers and inspirations for initially exiting (Baker et al., 2010; Mansson & Hedin, 1999; Sanders, 2007), rather than the longer-term transition process. Only one scholar, Oselin (2009), presented three stages of exiting prostitution—rookie, in-between, and expert—which were fairly consistent with the transition stages presented in Bridges's (1991) and Schlossberg's (Anderson et al., 2012) general transition models.

The previously existing exit models and the transition typologies do not provide a model for the transition experience after exiting. With the transition model supported by this study, I move beyond the initial exit and cause exiting to provide longer term insight into the transition process and into what a longer exit, whether or not it is final, might involve.

Oselin (2009) provided the only model related to the transition experience after exiting. Oselin used three categories to describe women's transition process: rookie, in-between, and expert. The categories were specific to women exiting through a PRP, and did not include insight into the women's experiences outside the PRP, such as at work or in outside social or familial interactions. The model developed with the findings from this study provides additional insight into Oselin's rookie and in-between phases. I also do not use Oselin's term expert, because the findings in this study show learning through the transition process is continuous, even for someone who has been out 20 years. The term expert may have been appropriate within the context of the PRP, but not in the context of broader society for the women exiting, at least not in the 2-year time period indicated in Oselin's study.

Additional details regarding previously existing models can be found in the transition theory section of the integrative literature review in Chapter II. In this study, I supported, expanded upon, and refined components of the existing transition models specific to exiting the sex trade. The following provides an overview of this model and then a discussion of each component.

Model overview. The participants' transition process started with *trigger(s) to exit*, which includes what caused women to exit, a precursor to the transition process. The transition process then continued with a phase similar to Bridges's (1991) *endings* or Oselin's (2009) rookie phase, moving through to the *neutral zone* (Bridges, 1991) or in-between phase (Oselin, 2009), and concluding with the *new beginnings* (Bridges, 1991) phase, which is a continuous and lifelong phase. The model is not entirely linear, as shown with the arrows in the model. Progress typically involves moving through each phase, but individuals may readdress previous phases when they experience setbacks or challenges. At any point in the model, an individual could relapse moving them out of the transition process and back into the sex trade. Experiencing additional triggers to exit could move an individual back through the transition process. The model is primarily psychological, which is consistent with Bridges's (1991) model, but the model is situated within the influence of sociocultural factors influencing participants' transition experience.

Sociocultural influences. The sociocultural influences are represented by the grey circle encapsulating the model. Examples of the sociocultural factors influencing women exiting the sex trade include cultural norms around work appropriateness,

societal perceptions of women in work and social roles, values about sex, attitudes toward criminality and sobriety, and norms around traditional middle class behavior, including financial independence and responsibility. For example, related to work appropriateness, women like Clara solicited help from others who had not been in the sex trade when dressing for important professional experiences. Other women, like Elizabeth questioned the appropriateness of what they discussed at work based on feedback they received from their bosses.

Women experienced interference with their transition experience and learning, which helps them move through the transition phases, from sociocultural influences in the context of managing their mental health and emotions. Similar to Illeris' (2004) model, in the current model I recognized the impact the interplay of emotions and society can have on positively contributing to, distorting, or interfering with learning. In the beginning, emotions may primarily interfere with learning. For example, the women talked about shame interfering with their desire to interact socially. Amelia specifically mentioned shame and anger preventing her from wanting to interact with religious people. Given the high percentage of religious organizations helping women exit, this could significantly interfere with women's ability and desire to learn. As women develop further in the transition process and move through the phases, they learn to manage the mental health and emotional challenges better in a way that allows them to fit within the sociocultural influences surrounding them and may contribute to more learning and growth. Learning to fit within the sociocultural influences surrounding women may reduce the likelihood of relapse as women move through the transition

214

process. A more detailed description of each phase in the context of existing literature related to exiting follows.

Trigger(s) to exit. The trigger(s) to exit evidenced in the findings of this study are similar to those documented by Sanders (2007), reinforced by Oselin (2009), and expanded upon by Baker et al. (2010). Sanders (2007) presented four transition typologies: reactionary, gradual planning, natural progression, and yo-yoing. In the current study, I did not add any new findings to the literature related to triggers to exiting, as exiting was not a focus in this study. Therefore, the model relies primarily on previously exiting studies for the trigger(s) to exiting and in particular points to the extremely comprehensive model of Baker et al. (2010) which built upon Sanders's (2007) typologies and structural, relational, and individual factors influencing women's exit identified by Mansson and Hedin (1999).

Though not a focus of this study, many participants did voluntarily share the events that triggered their exit, which supported the existing studies. Participants in this study experienced all four typologies presented by Sanders (2007). Specifically, some exits were reactionary, such as Josie who left because she was having a child. Other women, such as Amelia, Gloria, and Billie, initially exited through court-ordered mandates related to drug charges. Helena and Jillian exited due to the intervention of family and/or friends. Clara's exit was most consistent with gradual planning. She found out about the organization that assisted her in exiting from a bunkmate in prison and decided she wanted to go there after her release. Natural progression, as defined by Sanders (2007), was most consistent with the transition experience for women in this

study. Most participants exited because they were "sick and tired" of the lifestyle. They were ready to get sober and experience more stability. Consistent with natural progression, Elle also referenced her age a reason she could not go back into the game. After exiting, the participants moved through a transition model starting with endings, which will be discussed in the following section.

Endings phase. The participants in this study detailed the challenges experienced in the *endings* phase. Consistent with how Bridges (1991) defined endings as "letting something go" (1991, p. 5), including a routine, relationship, or components of one's identity, the participants left behind "people, places, and things." Their old behaviors, including talk and dress, and relationships created conflicts for them in this phase. For some, like Amelia, their inappropriate behavior at work resulted in losing their jobs. Other received reprimands or effective coaching by their bosses during this phase. They remembered wearing inappropriate clothes to work and church. They struggled with basic life skills, like cleaning up after themselves, and getting up at time when they used to go to bed. The women viewed the skills they gained in the lifestyle as negative and did not feel fully comfortable being themselves, but did not yet know how to act differently. Women lacked self-worth and struggled to manage emotions like shame and symptoms of PTSD like fear and anger.

A specific behavior indicative of the endings phase was continuing to engage with johns. The model of Baker et al. (2010) and the findings in this study provide more insight into why women may initially struggle to disengage from the lifestyle and, as participants in this study did, continue to engage with tricks after exiting. The first stage

216

in this model is immersion, when a woman is "immersed in prostitution and has no thoughts of leaving or any conscious awareness of the need to change" (Baker et al., 2010, p. 590). This study shows the more immersed a woman is in the lifestyle mindset the stronger the pull back to immersion may be. To move from endings/rookie to neutral zone/in-between and through to new beginnings may be harder based on how deeply the woman is immersed in the lifestyle mindset.

Additionally, in this phase, they self-disclosed too frequently. This finding is similar to the immersion phase in Baumgartner's (2007) identity model related to chronic illness, where people with HIV/AIDs begin to self-disclose. Additionally, in the immersion phase, individuals with HIV/AIDS surrounded themselves with other individuals who had the disease through support groups. Similarly, participants in this study were frequently around other people transitioning out, or moving through addiction recovery. As women exiting the sex trade began to learn to tackle the challenges facing them they move closer to the neutral zone, described in the following section.

Neutral zone phase. Learning was especially critical in the *neutral zone*. The neutral zone is a learning phase. The transition started to become more comfortable for women, but they were still learning and had not mastered the experience. Specifically, experiential and social learning, detailed in this study, was critical to helping women move through the neutral zone. As the conflict due to their behavior, experiences, and social interactions rose their behavior started to change moving them to the *neutral zone* phase. Their talk, dress, and behavior became more congruent with their social settings

and self-disclosure decreased to situational self-disclosure, like in Baumgartner's (2007) integration phase for chronic illness. In the integration phase of Baumgartner's model, individuals with HIV/AIDS moved from public disclosure to situational disclosure, as "the prominence of the HIV/AIDS identity receded" (p. 925). Similarly, when women transitioning out of the sex trade moved into the neutral zone they learned to not disclose to everyone. They learned through some of the consequences they experienced from self-disclosing too freely. Similar to Baumgartner's model, the participants learned they were more than their past. They could apply the skills they learned in the past and some of their natural attributes and strengths to earn "honest dollars" and be "on the right side" to "integrate…into society." As demonstrated related to the neutral zone, women's learning, practice, and reflection were critical to moving them through the neutral zone phase to the *new beginnings* phase, which will be discussed in the following section.

New beginnings phase. The new beginning phase according to Bridges involves a conscious choice to think and act differently. For the participants in this study, the choice was initially conscious and then became a natural part of who they are. Their new talk and behaviors are more natural, and they likely only self-disclose to significant others or very close family and friends.

Further, the term new beginnings in this model signifies the lifelong journey involved in transitioning out. Even years after exiting, the women continue to work to master what they consider "normal" behavior. Women who have been out longer are starting to challenge the structural oppression they experienced, such as Gloria, who is a consultant for government policy and survivor leaders and Amelia, who wants to train

law enforcement to avoid re-victimization. The arrows following the model allow for continued movement forward, for readdressing a phase, and for relapse, which might cause women to move through the model again.

The lifelong nature of this model, somewhat contrasts existing models, which have presented a final phase or stage. Baker et al. called this phase the *final exit*. Similarly, Mansson and Hedin (1999) named their last stage *after the breakaway*. Although, Baker et al. struggled to define a final exit and Mansson and Hedin did not attempt a definition. The model supported by this study does not attempt to represent a final stage or final exit. All of the women in this study seemed to be in a final exit stage. However, some of them had relapsed before after exits that also seemed final. Therefore, defining a final exit is difficult given the many temptations to relapse and the frequency of relapse. There is no amount of time or behavior that provides certainty someone will not relapse. Baker et al. (2010) came to a similar conclusion, but chose to represent a final exit in their model. The following section provides more details on relapse, which as the model demonstrates could be visited by women exiting the sex trade at any point in the model.

Relapse. This model accounts for individuals relapsing at any point. Nine of the 10 women relapsed back into the lifestyle, which is consistent with Sanders's typology yo-yoing. However, the term yo-yoing does not seem to appropriately capture women's experiences transitioning out. The draw or pull back into the lifestyle for the participants in this study more closely mirror addiction, drug addiction and an embeddedness in the lifestyle mindset.

Drug addicts are known to have a high relapse rate (Fiorentine, 1999), as do women exiting the sex trade (Baker et al., 2010; Sanders, 2007). Participants were often managing drug addiction on top of the pull to the lifestyle and trauma from sexual exploitation. Billie explicitly talked about being addicted to the lifestyle, Gloria talked about the draw to the "bling-bling." Eva was able to give up drugs before she could give up the income from the lifestyle; for Amelia, the addiction to the money being more powerful than her addiction to dope. The term yo-yoing seems to imply an amount of flakiness or dipping in and out of the lifestyle that does not seem to capture the experiences of the participants in this study. Baker et al. (2010) adopted the term reentry in the model the scholars presented. I use the term relapse in this model.

Like Sanders (2007), based on the findings in this study, I dispute Sharp and Hope's (2001) findings. Sharp and Hope claimed individuals engaged in one deviant behavior would replace that activity with a different deviant behavior, due to a general lack of self-control. Like Sanders (2007), I also challenge the correlation Love (2006) identified between illicit sexual behavior and low self-control. The women in this study did not lack self-control. They had a great deal of self-control once they were able to disengage from the lifestyle mindset, in which they were imbedded for a time after exiting. Likewise, the women did not replace one deviant behavior with another. The women integrated into society, supporting themselves with legal after exiting, even if it took them time to fully disengage from lifestyle in the endings phase. The pull back into the lifestyle seems more complicated than a general lack of self-control and more related

to the mindset that has been engrained in them through emotional abuse, physical abuse, and/or sexual exploitation.

Participants in this study were drawn to, and drawn back to, the lifestyle for a variety of reasons. For example, being selected by a john validated their beauty and made them feel desired by others. Some participates thought they loved their pimp and thought they were loved by their pimp, despite the pimp abusing them physically, exploiting them in the sex trade, and taking the money they earned. As previously stated, the participants found financial security in the money they earned in the sex trade and the money drew them back into the sex trade. Erikson (1980) quoted Freud and cited "'Lieben und arbeiten' ('to love and to work')" as central concerns in adulthood (p. 102). The participants in this study experienced the same primary concerns for love and work. When their needs were not met outside of the sex trade, women felt a pull back into the lifestyle.

Logically, a person would not relapse when the cost of relapsing is greater than the cost of remaining out, as Baker et al. implied at various stages in their exiting model. However, relapsing does not seem to be so calculated and logical; relapsing seems to be much more psychological and emotional. Helena provided a good example of relapse where the cost to relapse was greater than the cost of staying out, but her drug addiction drew her back into the lifestyle. During Helena's previous exit, she was running a program, was married, and had a child. She relapsed shortly after the program closed. She temporarily lost custody of her child, she almost lost her marriage, she lost credibility with peers, and she experienced shame because of her relapse. Helena now

221

owns a business and once again considers herself a pillar of society. She once again feels that the cost of relapsing is too great. The conclusion I made from Helena's experiences was the greater the barriers to relapsing, meaning the higher the cost of relapsing, the less likely someone is to relapse, but there is not a formula for what is most important to an individual who has exited and there likely is not a conscious, logical decision to relapse, making a final exit undefinable and more conceptual.

As Helena's story demonstrates, much of women's transition experience seems to be driven by emotions and psychological challenges, rather than simply logic. As captured in the findings, one of the biggest challenges women face are managing mental health and emotions. In Chapter IV, I referenced the blurred lines between mental health and emotions, given that PTSD symptoms may seem like emotional challenges when they are really an issue of mental health. Common symptoms of PTSD include anxiety, depression, fear, nightmares/flashbacks, anger, withdrawal, negative self-perception, and shame (Farley et al., 1998; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2016). Three women specifically identified themselves as having PTSD, but all the participants experienced more than one of the symptoms listed here, with the most common being negative self-perception, fear, and anger. The mental health and emotional challenges women face after exiting are pervasive across all phases in the model.

As previously stated, learning was critical to women moving through the transition model. In order to better understand women's learning experienced during transition, it is important to discuss the support and learning women experienced. In the

222

next conclusion, I discuss the support women received from earning an income to meet their basic needs and increase their self-worth.

Conclusion Two: Job Opportunities Are Critical for Income and Self-Worth

Conclusion two is supported by findings primarily related to the third research question, as the connection between income and self-worth was primarily learned through experiential learning in the context of work. However, this conclusion was supported by components of the other two research questions as well, including challenges women faced to manage their mental health and emotions – specifically self-worth and relapse. Finally, the conclusion is connected to the second research question, as the income and self-esteem gained through work proved to be a critical support during participants' transition experience.

In summary, income replacement was critical to women successfully transitioning out of the sex trade, but so was the restoration of self-worth that came from working an honest job and experiencing workplace development. The following section further supports exiting studies and presents a more complicated relationship between the sex trade and income than previously presented in research.

It is about the money…and so much more. This study supports Dalla's (2000, 2006) findings, where the scholar demonstrated the role income played in drawing women to the street. Dalla (2006) concluded, "the ability to legally earn a living wage was paramount to sustained withdrawal from the sex industry", even more so than support networks and other services (p. 282). A participant in Dalla's (2000) study said, "The money…is more addicting than anything else" (p. 349); this is similar to Amelia's

223

comment about the money being more addictive than the dope. Participants in Dalla's study also referenced the ease and magnitude of the money. One of Dalla's participants said, "It's [prostitution] quick and easy money, tax free, but it could cost you your life, and it does cost you your self-worth" (p. 349). Similarly, participants in this study felt the draw of being able to quickly "go to the corner and make $1,000 and everything is going to be fine." However, they also recognized the sacrifice of self-worth, safety, and sobriety for the money earned in the sex trade, which motivated them to continue working the minimum wage jobs they did not like after first exiting. The following sections will outline the increase in self-worth women experienced from working a legal job after exiting and the pull of the lifestyle beyond just income.

  Self-worth after exiting. Dalla (2006) provided the only existing evidence of the role work played in boosting women's self-confidence after exiting. Dalla (2006) concluded that women's "employment records were a source of pride" (p. 283). This study provided additional evidence to support Dalla's conclusion. For the participants in this study, work played an equally important role in meeting women's basic needs by providing income and meeting deeper emotional needs by increasing their self-worth.

  As previously referenced, Sanders (2007) disputed Sharp and Hope's (2001) and Love's (2006) findings explaining engagement in the sex trade with women's low self-control. Further, Sanders (2007) concluded, "Involvement in sex work as a means of earning money does not fit into the low self-control explanation, as for many respondents, their involvement in a deviant activity was framed as 'work' rather than gratification or gain" (p. 89). This study does not fully support the framing of a deviant

224

activity as "'work' rather than gratification or gain" (p. 89). Participants in this study did not view their engagement in the sex trade as work, but the sex trade was an important source of income for them. The source of income was not comparable to traditional income from work, in that participants often did not spend the income they earned in the sex trade responsibly.

For many participants in this study, the sex trade was not only a source of income, but also a source of validation. Therefore, the findings support the importance of income replacement, but also the replacement of self-worth or validation—the restoration work brings to a woman exiting the sex trade. Economically viable employment addressed both needs for women after exiting. Some aspect of women's involvement in the sex trade did relate to gratification or gain, but in a way they recognized as unhealthy over time after exiting. The women were attracted to the "bling-bling" of the lifestyle, as stated by Gloria. As previously presented, they did receive a false since of validation from engaging in the lifestyle. Billie called it "a false sense of accomplishment." Jillian talked about her emotional stupidity and need for constant validation making her susceptible to the lifestyle.

These findings contradict the economic choice presented by previous scholars who framed "sex work" as a choice when other employment is less economically appealing. These previous studies placed more emphasis on income alone than the findings in this study, which also recognize the power of self-worth. For example, Jeffrey and MacDonald (2006) described sex work as "a careful decision between the economic choices—including minimum-wage work or welfare" appealing for income

and flexibility (p. 313). Similarly, Rosen and Sudhir (2008) defined sex work as a "perversion of choice" (p. 417) created by a lack of viable economic choices. The findings from this study suggest a more complicated relationship between women in the sex trade and work than presented in previous works. Many participants in this study were capable of obtaining viable incomes prior to entrance into the sex trade and the start of drug use. Several had started school at 4-year colleges. Their draw to the sex trade was more, or at least equally, emotional and psychological than economic. Based on the findings in this study, framing women's reasoning for involvement in the sex trade as strictly economic is too simplistic.

The sex trade was not only a source of income for the participants in this study. For example, the findings showed women continued "turning tricks" on the side even when they have a source of replacement income. The participants used money they knew they could earn in the sex trade as a "safety blanket," which some utilized initially after exiting. Women also romanticized the lifestyle initially after exiting, which demonstrates a larger role the sex trade is playing for them than only an income source. The participants in this study painted a far more complex picture of the lifestyle. For one, they called it a lifestyle, not work. Lifestyle implies an all-encompassing way of living. The participants believed they were getting other things from the lifestyle. Despite the abuse participants experienced from their pimps/traffickers/johns, their embeddedness in the lifestyle mindset made them believe they were getting something else from the lifestyle: love, acceptance, and validation. In hindsight, the women could see that these things were not legitimate sources of validation. They could see

226

prostitution was not a worthwhile source of income, but not when they were immersed in the lifestyle. Finding legal, economically sustainable work was critical for women learning they had self-worth and could make a positive contribution in society.

In addition to the support women received related to income and work meeting their needs and increasing their self-worth, women received a great deal of support from the organizations helping them exit. Findings related to the support women received from organizations, and the associated complications with power, will be discussed in the following section.

Conclusion Three: Support from Organizations Is Critical and Enhanced by Survivor Leadership

Conclusion three is supported by findings related to the second research question, as organizations were a critical support for participants exiting. Additional findings involving survivor leaders, related to the third research questions, supported the conclusion as survivor leaders provided a context for social learning.

As presented in the findings, participants relied heavily on organizations and the leaders in the organization for tangible support (housing, counseling, and drug rehabilitation) and intangible support (love, care balanced by challenge, encouragement, and reiteration of participants' value). The following section outlines the most important support organizations provided women, first compassion and then the importance of involving survivor leaders in organizations helping women exit.

Compassion. Participants felt most importantly organizations provided them with nonjudgmental, compassionate care. Maya Angelou is often quoted as saying, "I've

227

learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel" (Lee & Deutsch, 2014). In line with this sentiment, the participants in the current study were far more concerned with how those supporting them made them feel that how they taught them. The participants would mention a specific support they received or a skill they were taught, but quickly redirect to tell a story about how the person facilitating the learning made them feel.

Organization leaders reminded women of their value with words and continued to reiterate women's value, even when they relapsed back into the lifestyle. Further, organizations effectively demonstrated nonjudgmental, compassionate support by implementing an open door policy. In organizations with open door policies, women were given second chances when they broke house rules, if they demonstrated a commitment to change. Women were also encouraged to come back to the program when they were ready to change, if they were asked to leave or chose to leave.

These findings support the practices of Standing Against Global Exploitation (the SAGE Project). SAGE was a non-profit organization addressing drug addiction, sexual exploitation, mental health, and trauma (Hotaling et al., 2003). Hotaling, the founder of SAGE, provided a scholarly article detailing SAGE's practices along with her colleagues. This study provides empirical support for SAGE's practices. Hotaling et al. described SAGE's open door policy as follows:

> Peer support counselors know firsthand the overwhelming obstacles. Many
>
> women return to the sex industry as a result of untreated trauma, financial need,
>
> substance abuse or other ongoing problems in their lives. Concurrently, if they

leave SAGE, they are always welcome to return without bias, and when they do,

their return is celebrated.

In addition to the open-door policy, the quote above demonstrates the importance of peer

leadership within organizations. The following section connects findings related to

survivor leadership and existing literature.

Survivor leaders: relatability. The SAGE Project was, most importantly, a

survivor run organization. This study also supports SAGE's use of peer leaders, called

survivor leaders by the participant Gloria, a term adopted for this study. This study

supports the benefits of survivor leadership in organizations as outlined by Hotaling et

al. (2003). Survivor leaders provide a level of relatability and sensitivity to survivor

experiences, which may not be achievable by non-survivors. Hotaling et al. (2003)

outlined the importance of relatability:

The experiences of staff allow them to relate sensitively and compassionately to

the client's experience of exchanging sex acts for as little as $5, the inability to

think of oneself as human but instead a collection of mechanical parts, the

compartmentalization of experiences and body parts and the complex dynamics

of the pimp/madam-prostitute relationship.

Hotaling et al. (2003) went on to discuss the disconnect created by non-survivor

counselors:

Because of the shame and social stigma associated with prostitution, survivors

and those involved feel a greater trust for those who have had similar

experiences. "You don't understand" disconnects survivor from the non-survivor

(or "straight") counselor. Staff who have lived through recruitment into

prostitution and later identified their recruiters/pimps as such will more quickly

recognize the same behavior patterns in a client.

The findings from this study support the claims of Hotaling et al. (2003). The

participants in this study desired interaction with other survivors, as has been found to be

true about survivors in other contexts. This study supports similar findings in studies in

other contexts as well, such as those related to chronic illness where survivors sharing a

common experience desired interaction with each other and found the reliability and

connection they found through other survivors critical. Additionally, survivors found

purpose in serving as peer counselors or group leaders. Examples of such studies related

to chronic illness include support groups for multiple sclerosis (Preissner, 2013) and

HIV/AIDS (Baumgartner, 2007; Baumgartner & David, 2009).

Not only was the relatability critical, but so was the elimination of power issues

between survivors and non-survivors. Additional discussion will be provided in the

fourth conclusion related to the impact of power on learning. The following section

relates to the impact of power on women's more general transition experience and

recovery, through organization policy and rules.

Survivor leaders: issues of power. Enforcement of oppressive rules through

punishment, such as eviction, can interfere with women's recovery by incentivizing

participants to lie to organizations leaders in order to avoid consequences or displeasing

organizations staff. Participants believed the inauthenticity could increase women's

likelihood to relapse or to never seek help when first exiting. For example, many

participants continued to turn tricks when they were in recovery, but hid this from organization leaders rather than seeking help and support. Similarly, other participants believed rules around cussing were unrealistic and incentivized inauthenticity in participants and prevented them from being themselves. Tisdell (2003) defined authenticity "having a sense that one is operating from a sense of self that is defined by oneself as opposed to being defined by other people's expectations" (p. 32). Adult education scholars have demonstrated a need for authenticity in effective learning and teaching (Kreber, Klampfleitner, McCune, Bayne, and Knottenbelt, 2016; Tisdell, 2003). The participants in this study supported the need for such authenticity in learners.

Further, the findings demonstrated policies could be oppressive, as a result of non-survivor involvement. Gloria shared an incident when an organization's rules were mimicking those of a trafficker. The non-survivor leaders of the organization were not aware the rules came across as oppressive. Gloria also felt requiring women to be religious to receive services was oppressive. This study demonstrates more survivor involvement could reduce the imbalance in power and prevent oppressive policy. These findings support the description of SAGE from Hotaling et al. (2003).

Additionally, the findings support O'Hagan's (2009) analysis of literature comparing conventional leadership with user/survivor leadership in mental health settings. O'Hagan offered an excellent comparison of the two organizational structures, with survivor leadership primarily being differentiated by its focus on equality and empowerment. Survivor leadership acknowledges issues of power and identifies the need for "'power with' leadership" (O'Hagan, 2009, p. 38). Additionally, survivor

leadership gives import to knowledge gained through experience and respects diversity in experiences. O'Hagan's description of survivor leadership is supported by this study.

Finally, the findings also demonstrated participants found organizations that used *volunteer* survivor leaders to be oppressive. Paying women a living wage to contribute to the organizations was deemed important in showing the women they, and their expertise, were worth something.

The field of adult education frequently advocates for individuals seeing themselves as experts in their own lives. For example, Attwood (2006) and Maruatona (2006) developed HIV and literacy education, respectively, in Africa based on the teaching of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, focused on empowering marginalized populations (Freire, 1970). These models have been used to engage marginalized populations in working together to solve problems in their community rather than having outsiders solve their problem (Attwood, 2006; Maruatona, 2006). This study supports the adult education literature based on survivors' desire to be considered experts based on their experiences.

Further, this study supports other methods for survivor-focused support. One such program is gender-responsive programming (GRP) used for incarcerated women (Covington & Bloom, 2006; Sandoval, Baumgartner, & Clark, 2016) and women recovering from drug addiction coupled with trauma-informed care (Covington, Burke, Keaton, & Norcott, 2008). GRP considers the differences between male and female, including relationships with family, and "a larger mosaic that includes a woman's individual background and the social, economic, political, and cultural forces that shape

the context of her life," which may impact her addiction and engagement in criminal behavior (Covington & Bloom, 2006). According to Sandoval et al. (2016), GRP for incarcerated women led to transformative learning experiences. The findings in this study support the possibility of GRP application in the context of women exiting the sex trade. GRP also acknowledges trauma women may have experienced contributing to their incarceration or addiction, through trauma-informed care. Trauma-informed care will be further discussed in the next section.

Trauma-informed care is common in treating women exiting the sex trade (Macy & Johns, 2011). Trauma-informed care involves adapting systems and approaches to accommodate the violent experiences of victims. Macy and Johns (2011) posited that organizations using the trauma-informed care framework would:

(a) Give priority to survivor's physical and emotional safety; (b) concurrently address co-occurring problems; (c) use an empowerment philosophy to guide service delivery; (d) maximize survivors' choice and control of services; (e) emphasize survivors' resilience; and (f) minimize the potential of the survivor experiencing additional trauma. (p. 92)

Though participants did not specifically reference experiencing trauma-informed care, as noted in the findings and in this conclusion, the participants did reference these characteristics of trauma-informed care as being critical to their transition experience.

The next conclusion evaluates the type of learning women experiences, which included experiential learning and social learning. More discussion about survivor leadership will take place related to social learning as well.

233

Conclusion Four: The Nature of Learning While Transitioning Is Experiential and

Social. Issues of Power Can Interfere with Such Learning.

The fourth conclusion is supported by the third research question. Learning was

critical to participants' transition experience. Experiential and social learning had the

greatest impact on women's learning experiences. Women learned to figure it out, and

gained work and basic life skills through experiences during their transition experience.

They also learned social norms and behaviors, including how to dress and talk, from

observation key to social learning. In the following sections, I will first evaluate

women's experiential learning and then social learning throughout their transition

process.

Experiential learning models. Experiential learning theory posits new

experiences require new learning (Merriam et al., 2007). Kolb's (1984) experiential

learning model starts with a concrete experience. The learner then observes and reflects

on the experiences, which are transformed into abstract concepts, which lead to new

actions tested by the learner (Kolb et al., 1999). Most learners choose one stage,

between the two opposing stages, situated on opposite sides of the cycle: concrete versus

abstract and reflection versus action.

Jarvis (1987) later revised Kolb's (1984) model by removing the dichotomization

of concrete from abstract and reflection from action. Jarvis's model demonstrates the

reinforcement and revision of action occurring through reflection. In Jarvis's model, an

individual's *biographical history* influences a *potential learning experience,* which

either results in a *previous experience confirmed* or in *a more experienced person*. The

234

path to becoming a more experienced person starts with an interplay between *active experimentation* and *reflection*, with movement through *evaluation* and *internalization* producing a more experienced person. This experiential learning journey evidenced in this study support's Jarvis's (1987) experiential learning model.

Elizabeth's experience with learning workplace appropriate behavior provides an example of how participants' learning experiences aligned with Jarvis's experiential learning model. Elizabeth said:

> You know, this one time, I guess I was talking about some crazy things…She was like…, 'Do you really want everybody to hear all that?' And like, you know, I just didn't realize. It's like, I just didn't know that people shouldn't hear those kinds of things…I'm sure I was talking about sex or something and all the lobby could hear me. She's like, you know, just real gently and very…It would just cause me to think, like, oh, yeah. I guess I don't want everybody to hear this stuff, you know. Duh, it's just like a little lightbulb would click on.

In this example, Elizabeth's *biographical history* left her without knowledge of appropriate workplace behavior, as was true for many of the participants. As presented in the findings, women's biographical history impacted everything from their ability to execute on basic life skills to their mindset, which was often embedded in the lifestyle. Because of their prior experiences women "street skills," skills they learned in the lifestyle, which they brought to their new experiences. Many also had trauma because of sexual exploitation and/or assault, which impacted their mental and emotional health. Their prior experiences, embedded in their biographical history impacted the way they

235

perceived and acted upon potential learning experiences, sometimes creating challenges for the participants.

After exiting, women encountered a multitude of new *potential learning experiences* (Jarvis, 1987). Professionally, they were working in legal employment, some for the first time. Like with Elizabeth, the participants engaged in learning experiences with their bosses, in the form of coaching and consequences. Socially, they were interacting with individuals who had not been in the lifestyle. They were also engaging with an organization, which was enforcing rules and accountability as well as structure and stability. These were new experiences for the women, even for those who had relapsed before the experiences were being had at a new time in their recovery.

The participants then engaged in a combination of *active experimentation* and *reflection* (Jarvis, 1987). Like Elizabeth, they thought about what a boss, organizations leader, family member, or friend said (reflection), and realized they wanted to try changing their own behavior (active experimentation). Others reflected on an encounter with another survivor who was dressed professionally, they reflected on a comment from a peer about their dress. They experimented with different ways of dressing, even when it did not feel entirely comfortable. They reflected on the way others were dressing and acting and actively experimented in engaging in similar behavior.

Upon active experimentation and reflection, women moved into *evaluation* (Jarvis, 1987), determining whether the new behaviors fit them, and then adopted the behavior as their own through *internalization* (Jarvis, 1987). Elizabeth perceived the progress from evaluation to international as swift, "like a light bulb would click on." For

others, the process required more coaching or more consequences before internalization resulted in a *more experienced person* (Jarvis, 1987).

One of the most critical impacts of being a more experienced person (Jarvis, 1987) was on women's perceptions of their own self-worth. As evidenced in the findings, work and life challenges allowed women to engage in the experiential learning opportunity referred to in the findings as "figure it out." When they could figure it out, at work or in their personal lives, women were proud of their accomplishments. Women's self-worth gained through employment and life experiences was important not only for them internally, but also in helping build their trust in others. As presented in the findings, Elle said the following about learning to live on her own after exiting:

> Well, a lot of it has to do with my own self-confidence…little by little, as I learned how to again, get an apartment, and pay my bills, and things like that, I developed confidence in myself. Which has kind of allowed me to see the better in other people as well.

Through the psychological and emotional journey of transitioning out, experiential learning played a clear role in building women's self-worth. Rebuilding self-worth was one of the most critical emotional factors women had to address in order to exit successfully. The following discussion will map Fenwick's (2003, as cited in Merriam et al., 2007) five experiential learning perspectives to the participants learning experiences.

Fenwick's five experiential learning perspectives. Merriam et al. (2007) summarized five experiential learning perspectives identified by Fenwick in 2003:

(a) Reflecting on concrete experience (constructivist theory of learning); (b)

participating in a community of practice (situative theory of learning); (c) getting

in touch with unconscious desires and fears (psychoanalytic theory of learning);

(d) resisting dominant social norms of experience (critical cultural theories); and

(e) exploring ecological relationships between cognition and environment

(complexity theories applied to learning). (p. 160)

Participants in this study experienced learning from most of these perspectives.

From Fenwick's (2001) constructivist perspective, women implemented

reflection-through-action by reflecting on and learning from past experiences in group

and individual counseling sessions. The participants discussed the importance of

individual and group counseling in helping them to process their past experiences and

learn from new experiences. For example, Gloria learned about sexual harassment in the

workplace. When she first exited, she did not see the experience with sexual harassment

at work as different from her previous biographical history. Reflection-through-action

that occurred in counseling helped Gloria redefine how she viewed herself and the way

she deserved to be treated in the workplace. Reflection also occurred in the more

informal conversations in the participants' shared housing. For example, Elizabeth

talked about leaving for church one day in an inappropriate outfit and how her peer's

comment made her rethink the way she dressed.

From a situative perspective, learning occurs in a community of practice.

Organizations helping women exit are a community of practice working together toward

a common goal: exiting the sex trade and/or drug rehabilitation. The community of

practice, which in this study's context are women participating in the transition program, "refines its practices, develops new ones, or discards and changes practices that are harmful or dysfunctional" (Fenwick, 2001 as cited by Merriam et al., 2007, p. 160). The participants in this study refined their behavior individually and as a group in the years since exiting. For example, Eva talked about how her manner of speaking was "like it was a sore," but now she doesn't talk "ghetto." Similarly, Amelia said she basically had to learn how to speak English again after exiting. When she first entered, johns made fun on Amelia for having so many manners, but when she exited, she had to relearn them all. Her community of practice was with others in drug rehabilitation and later at work and in a survivor organization where she volunteers.

In line with Fenwick's (2001) psychoanalytical perspective, much of the transition experience for participants was psychological and emotional. As stated under the first conclusion, as participants move through the transition phases they become better equipped to manage the emotional and psychological aspects of the transition, including managing the trauma they experienced prior to exiting. Some participants used counseling and rehabilitation services to work through their desires and fears. From the psychoanalytical perspective, it was critical for participants to learn through their experiences to navigate any psychological, including emotional, impediments to their learning and progress. Gloria stated that she used EMDR therapy in her recovery. Many women used counseling to process their new experiences. Clara talked about her counselor helping her rethink her beliefs about herself, which was critical in rebuilding

her self-worth. When she is feeling inadequate, he reminds her of her many

accomplishments, and the difference between feeling and fact. As Clara said:

> And he always tells me stuff like that's a feeling and not a fact. And he says, but
>
> you have an associate's degree and a bachelor's degree and you're working on a
>
> master's and you have made straight A's. So you're not inadequate. So you're
>
> smart. So the facts are that you have a bachelor's degree. And I'm like okay. So,
>
> I am not inadequate. So I'm okay and he helps me with that and I want to do that
>
> for other people.

As demonstrated in her statement, through evaluation and implementation (Jarvis, 1987),

Clara worked on adopting her counselor's words as her own beliefs. She let go of her

own insecurities in order to move forward in her learning and progress through

transition.

Fenwick's (2001) fourth perspective relates to critical cultural perspectives,

which challenges hegemony in experiences and existing social structures. Some of the

women could use experiential learning to question hegemonic experiences and social

structures. In addition to questioning the sexual harassment she experienced, Gloria

partially blamed gender inequality for the pay disparity in what she could make as a

prostitute to what she could make upon transiting out. Gloria, also pushed back on

organizations' resistance to pay survivors. Other participants, along with Gloria, also

believed survivors should be treated as experts and questioned being treated as survivors

only and not experts. Amelia, Clara, and Jillian now recognized the extreme oppression

they experienced by engaging in the sex trade under the control of a pimp or trafficker.

They question how they could have been so susceptible to someone else's control. Clara recognized the role women's need to be accepted for their appearance played into feeling validated when she was picked by a john. Many of the participants recognized the structural oppression they experienced because of their criminal records preventing them from being hired for a job they wanted. Elizabeth believed that her arrest record without convictions should not prevent her from being hired. Gloria described the system as unfair to her, because the conviction she had for a drug charge prevented her from being hired by the federal government. The charge was not a prostitution charge that might have been vacated, but the system did not recognize that she was trafficking drugs, because her pimp gave her a choice between trafficking drugs and trafficking herself and she choose the drugs. The system did not recognize the lack of agency she had related to her drug charge.

Finally, Fenwick's (2001) last perspective relates to enactivism and the structural relationships in complex systems. This perspective includes co-emergent cognition, meaning as individuals interact within their system there is a "commingling of consciousness" (Fenwick, 2001, p. 54). Circumstances within a community of practice enact certain conduct and behavior. According to Fenwick (2001), "Learning is thus cast as a continuous invention and exploration, produced through the relations among consciousness, identity, action and interaction, objects, and structural dynamics of complex systems" (p. 55). This perspective of experiential learning best fits women's experiences with learning appropriate behavior. Within the system of work, women identified the social norms at work through interactions with their supervisors and

through consequences imposed by their supervisors. The reflection occurring in experiential learning occurs in the context of the environment or system in which a person operates.

From an enactivist perspective, one would also claim participants' interaction with organizations and employers would also change the systems with which they interact. In this study, I only investigated how participants evolved because of their interactions with each other and systems outside of the organization. There may be additional insight gained from investigating how the participants impacted their environment as well.

Mis-educative experiences. This study also supports Dewey's (1938) concept of mis-educative experiences. The findings in Chapter IV provided evidence women's mis-education, especially findings related to the challenges women faced after exiting. Women's experiences, especially those prior to exiting, had "the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience" (Dewey, 1938, p. 13). As Knowles recognized, participants' biases, habits, and assumptions created by past experience created challenges upon exiting for the women, which needed to be unlearned for new learning to occur (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Miseducation through prior experiences occurred in the following areas for women.

First, some participants learned through previous experiences in the lifestyle and in previous recovery efforts that their attributes or the skills they gained in the sex trade were bad. As noted in the findings, through their experiences in the lifestyle, the participants knew how to "hustle," they were "chameleon"-like, and one participant even

242

described herself as "manipulative." In the lifestyle, women experienced trauma, stigmatization, and marginalization through pimps, law enforcement, society, their families, and drug treatment that lead them to believe their skills and attributes were bad. Organizations helped the participants to view themselves differently. The participants had to learn, or relearn, that they had value and that the skills they learned in the lifestyle could actually be used for good. Learning to use their skills and attributes for good gave the women great confidence in their ability to work and integrate into society. As Helena said, she turned manipulation into motivation. The other women used their hustle to sell legal products and services. They used their resilience to "figure it out." Through their experiences, they learned that their skills were positive and did not have to be negative.

The participants described themselves as loud and outgoing. They all had big, strong personalities. When organizations allowed participants to be themselves, rather than encouraging them to be someone else, the participants were more successful. As Helena said, she was successful when the organization allowed her to be herself, just a sober version of herself who did not sell sex. Through experiential learning, including experiences involving observation and social interactions, women learned to channel their personalities appropriately and to adapt their behavior to given situations, as they had to do as chameleons in the lifestyle.

 Second, based on past experiences, including experiences they observed others experience, the women believed their criminal records would prevent them from getting a job. Initially, the miseducation of several participants—Billie, Josie, Elle, and possibly

Eva—almost prevented them from getting the jobs they wanted, because they believed their record would prevent them from being hired. Women's current experiences getting a job corrected their miseducation. Elle even encouraged others not to believe their criminal record would prevent them from getting a job. She said it would only be a barrier for someone if they themselves believed it was a barrier. Not all of the women had their dream jobs, yet, but all of the women were working. Through experiences with job rejection and successes they learned ways to navigate the system to get a job that was at minimum satisfying to them.

Third, the women believed $1,000 made on the street was a lot of money and was an easy way to make money. Even when first exiting, the amount and perceived ease of making money created a draw back to the lifestyle for the women. However, as they learned how to budget, the realized what they could do with less. Through experiences, they also realized when they were in the lifestyle they did not spend that money responsibly, some had to give their money to a pimp, and so it did not go as far as the money they made from legal work. Additionally, women realized they did not want to earn money the way they had previously. Clara shared her experience trying to get money from a man after she left the lifestyle being humiliating. She had established new boundaries for herself and she was not longer to trade sex for money, so she had to learn a new way to make money relying on herself. Gloria talked about setting very clear boundaries for herself. She did not tolerate sexual harassment and comments about her body, even if she thought it would lead to good opportunities professionally.

Finally, through past experiences the women were miseducated about their self-worth. While in the lifestyle they were made to feel unworthy. For many, the only time they were told their value was when they engaged with organizations helping women exit, even before their last exit. The words the individuals at organizations told them about their self-worth stuck with them, even when they were in the lifestyle and feeling stripped of their self-worth. In the lifestyle, they were physically and sexually abused on top of the sexual exploitation many felt they experienced in the sex trade. Statements such as Jillian's, "I didn't know what I was good *at* anymore. I didn't know what I was good *for* anymore" or Amelia's, "I was just broken. Even though I was out of it, I was an empty shell and so that was probably the hardest part. I still didn't believe I was worthy of change" evidenced the impact of the miseducation they received about their self-worth while in the lifestyle. As Jillian said, she felt like a circus animal who was only good for performing all day. Jillian had to relearn her own worth and value, as did all of the other participants. Over time, through accomplishments, primarily at work and for some through formal education, the women relearned their own worth and value. The organizations also helped women to relearn their worth by reiterating it continually

In addition to learning from their experiences, women learned from their social interactions with other survivors and individuals who were never in the lifestyle. In the following section, I will provide additional discussion related to women's experiences with social learning.

Social learning. The findings in this study support social cognitive learning theory, also called social learning, as defined by Bandura (1986). In addition to learning

through experiences, a portion of the participants learning occurred in a social environment. Specifically, participants in this study learned social norms, such as how to dress, talk, and interact with others. As Schunk (1996) summarized in regards to social learning, the women learned the "usefulness and appropriateness of behaviors and the consequences of modeled behaviors, and they act in accordance with beliefs about their capabilities and the expected outcomes of their actions." (p. 118).

A significant source of this study's participants' social learning occurred through observation and interaction with organization leaders. This finding supports Oselin's (2009) finding related to the change in talk and behavior women experienced in a PRP. Though Oselin did not specifically reference social learning theory, Oselin's findings can be explained using social learning theory. Oselin identified an alignment between participants' talk, called role embracement, and behavior, called biographical re-construction.

This study also brings some questions to light related to Oselin's (2009) findings. As Amelia said in this study, survivors may be mimicking behaviors they see exhibited by organization leaders, to please others or receive services. The behavior they are demonstrating may not be indicative of lasting change, which may result in the survivor leaving the organization and relapsing. From a learning perspective, the learning may be more oriented to a behavioral perspective of social learning consistent with Rotter's (1954) theory. According to Rotter, social interactions with other people influence people's behavior, and further people's behavior is motivated by the expected outcome or effect of the behavior. Oselin's (2009) participants may have been more motivated by

the outcome they expected their behavior to have when they mirrored the organizations leaders, rather than true transformation of identity or personality.

Further, this study moves beyond Oselin's (2009) findings by also evaluating the role other survivors. This study especially provides insight in to the role of survivors who act as step-ahead or more traditional mentors (Ensher et al., 2001) to survivors who exited more recently. As stated, SAGE is an example of a peer lead organization. In addition to increasing relatability, as stated in the third conclusion, Hotaling et al. (2003) detailed survivors' impact as role models. Hotaling et al. (2003) said:

> SAGE counselors serve as role models for clients. Many women who come to SAGE have never made money other than through prostitution. When clients see that others just like themselves have achieved the goals of living independently and outside of the sex industry, they begin to believe they, too, can accomplish this. Clients see women who were once just like themselves now holding jobs, pursuing their education, having safe homes, owning cars, reuniting with children, establishing healthy relationships, having healthcare and health insurance, paying taxes, having fun, and otherwise enjoying the basics of life which most people consider "normal." (p. 260)

The findings in this study support this description of experiences at SAGE. The survivor leaders acted as role models, aiding in women's social learning, by giving the participants hope and by demonstrating behavior considered "normal."

In addition to relatability, hope, and role modeling, engaging survivor leaders can reduce issues of power that can impact women's learning experiences in the transition

247

process. Related to the power dynamics, Oselin (2009) recognized the significant influence organizations have over their participants. Oselin also expressed concerns about the influence the organizations had over women and directing them toward a specific way of living. Oselin (2009) said:

> Although it is not explicitly stated, it seems the roles encouraged by the PRP are characteristic of the ideal American middle-class lifestyles: holding a steady (legal) job, being financially responsible, maintaining sobriety, remaining out of prostitution and street life, cultivating non-abusive, supportive intimate relationships, acquiring a place to live, and so on. (p. 387)

This study supports Oselin's findings, as the organizations helping women exit were instrumental in their recovery and their influence over women can create a power imbalance.

The issues of power support adult education literature where issues of power in learning are prominent. Power can interfere with learning or shape learning, such as educators' power over managing learners' experiences and reflection on such experiences, or in determining what constitutes an experience (Fenwick, 2001). An educator or supporters power may lead to further marginalization as demonstrated in other similarly marginalized groups. As Breton (2000) found with immigrant refugees, "One of the most critical barriers for immigrant and refugee women is the use . . . of professional practice paradigms that fail to recognize . . . oppression when working with people of low status and low power" (p. 18). The participants in the current study support these findings as well. As Eva related, survivors can feel less than or not on the

same level as non-survivors. As Amelia said, "when you're powerless or feel powerless for so long, it's hard to empower yourself." Power can interfere with learning and leave survivors further marginalized.

In addition to playing a role in learning, power plays a role in women's work transitions as will be documented in the following conclusion, especially in the distinction and resistance strategies of transitional learning (Stroobants et al., 2010). The conclusion to follow will evaluate women's learning experiences particularly in the context of work transitions.

Conclusion Five: Transitional Learning Theory Provides Insights into Women's Learning Related to Transitioning into Legal Work

This final conclusion is supported by the findings related to Research Question 3, as it provides insides into a specific context for impacted women's learning experiences. This conclusion specifically addresses women's learning experiences in the context of finding work and transitioning to new work. Additionally, this conclusion addresses the barriers to employment women faced when finding work after transitioning out of the sex trade, a component of the first research question. Before outlining women's transition experience in the context of the transitional learning model, more discussion is needed about whether or not women's engagement in the sex trade is considered work.

Is sex work? None of the women viewed their time in the sex trade in the context of sex work, or even work. As Gloria said, "There is no such thing as sex work. It is not designed to be work. It's designed for an intimate experience between two people." Amelia even referred to her time in the sex trade as sex slavery; no one used

249

the term sex work at any point. Even the participant who called herself an escort when she was in the sex trade, in hindsight, did not view her time in the sex trade as work.

After receiving advice from a survivor consulting on the study, I quickly discontinued the use of the term "finding new work" to refer to the work women found after exiting. The term implied selling sex in the sex trade was work and they were finding a new job after exiting, which some found offensive.

In conclusion two, I expanded the view of the sex trade from a strictly an economic choice, in the presence of limited choices, as described by Jeffrey and MacDonald (2006) and Rosen and Sudhir (2008). However, the findings in this study do support viewing the sex trade as a source of income, an income participants were drawn to even after exiting. Therefore, when they left the sex trade, finding legal employment was important to their ability to remain out of the lifestyle.

Though one may not consider prostitution "work," this study showed the challenges and successes women experience as they transition from an illegal source of income to legal employment. Therefore, the transition experience is a nontraditional transition into work, which required a great deal of learning, even if not considered a transition from one form of work to another.

Transitional learning model. Participants' experiences finding work supported the transitional learning model developed by Stroobants et al. (2010), as illustrated in Figure 4.

Societal Demands ◄——————————————► Personal Demands	

	Resistance	**Distinction**
Changeable	Amelia, Gloria, and Helena employed the resistance strategy the most. Gloria especially was consulting the government to disrupt oppressive policy, organizations to disrupt practices that mimicked traffickers, and was consulting with survivor leaders to encourage them to demand payment for their expertise. Amelia wanted to develop training for law enforcement to prevent re-victimization of survivors. Helena employed other recovering addicts and sex trade survivors, to help them when other markets might not be open to them for employment.	All participants were engaging in the strategy of distinction in an effort to move away from societal demands, which they experienced as oppressive. For example, about her time in the lifestyle, Jillian said, "You achieve somebody else's bar. You don't set your own bar. You don't achieve your own bar." In later work transitions, moving between legal jobs, participants engaged in distinction again as they learned to better identify oppressive workplace behavior. For example, an experience with sexual harassment inspired Gloria to leave a job. Amelia quite working for an emotionally abusive boss who took advantage of her willingness to work for free.
	Adaptation	**Growth**
Unchangeable	For many participants, the initial jobs they obtained after exiting utilized adaptation. Women did not believe they could get more satisfying or better paying jobs (a societal demand, which was not aligned with their personal demands) due to their criminal records (belief the market was not changeable). Many participants, including Josie, Eva, Amelia, and Elizabeth, did experience adaptation again later in the transition experience, due to their criminal records. For example, Elizabeth, was studying to be an LPC, even though she still wanted to be a school teacher. Elizabeth said, "And now I'm on this whole different career path, just because I can't be hired by the school." For some, they were not able to initial obtain more satisfying jobs, because they did not have the necessary skills. They remedied this deficiency by utilizing the growth strategy.	Several women, including those referenced in adaptation, attempted to utilize growth as a means to cope with unchangeable structures within a particular field and within society. Some pursued degrees in higher education, Eva took job skills courses specific to the career she wanted to pursue. Unfortunately, some women's growth efforts were met with market resistance. After obtaining additional education several participants found out their criminal records prevented them from pursuing jobs in their educational disciplines. Many participants engaged in the growth strategy at work, where they gained on the job skills training and continuity in their work history. For example, at the time of the interview, Eva was working in a job as a survivor leader. Though the pay was not good, she was gaining skills and continuity to compensate for gaps in her work history and job skills. The job was temporary and she viewed it as a growth opportunity.

Figure 4. Transitional learning phases for participants after exiting the sex trade.

Along the horizontal axis, the scholars' model identified the tension between societal and personal demands. The scholars' vertical axis captured women's perceptions about adaptability of the work environment and their ability to "influence or change arrangements and structures" (p. 118). The two axis create four quadrants, which represent strategies for meaning making: *adaptation*, *growth*, *distinction*, and *resistance*. At the time of the interviews, at least one participant demonstrated each of the four strategies. Throughout their time since exiting each woman utilized multiple strategies. The following will describe how women utilized each of the four strategies after exiting, as described in Figure 4.

The participants in this study most frequently engaged the *adaptation* strategy when first exiting. While working in jobs such as a fry cook (Clara), or rolling tamales (Amelia), the participants hated their jobs, were dissatisfied with their pay, and felt a pull back into the lifestyle. As Gloria said, which was echoed by quite a few other participants, "I still live with I could go to the corner and make $1,000 and everything is going to be fine." The women thought they could not get other jobs, due to the barriers presented in the findings—criminal records, gaps in work history and job skills, and even a lack of self-worth and belief they enjoyed anything better.

To move out of their initial jobs upon exiting, the participants utilized the *growth* strategy. Through formal, informal, and nonformal education, women pursued growth to find jobs that were more satisfying to them. Seven participants pursued degrees of higher education, engaging in formal education. Eva completed courses related to working in assisted living, which was a form of non-formal education. Most of the

252

women's education experienced were informal. For example, Helena utilized a network of business owners to engage with the growth strategy in order to learn how to start her own business. Many of the other women's growth experiences occurred through workplace learning. As previously documented, their learning was primarily experiential and social and occurred in informal education settings. Informal education settings are where learning occurs without credit or curriculum, even through something as informal as a conversation (Merriam et al., 2007).

For the participants in this study, *distinction* could describe their initial entrance into the legal workforce. Even if one does not adopt a view of prostitution as work, distinction, as defined by Stroobants et al. (2010), encompasses avoiding oppressive societal demands in addition to labor related oppression. Stroobants et al. (2010) used the following as an example for distinction, "the demands of the labour market which are at odds with images of freedom, creativity and authenticity" (p. 118). The women certainly regarded the sex trade as at odds with their perceptions of freedom, as several referenced feeling free once they exited. Entering the legal workforce was a way to avoid the oppression they, at least in hindsight, identified in the sex trade.

Additionally, participants frequently revisited the distinction strategy as their understanding of oppressive working conditions developed. For example, Amelia utilized distinction in reaction to the sex trade, but also in reaction to the way an employer treated her after exiting. She classified his treatment as "emotional abuse." Her employer was explosive and took advantage of her work ethic by allowing her to work for free to meet deadlines. The distinction strategy motivated her to find work she

did not feel was oppressive. Similarly, Gloria exercised distinction when she left a job

shortly after exiting. She experienced sexual harassment at the workplace. She learned

to identify sexual harassment with the help of her counselor (growth), a survivor leader.

She acted on what she learned by leaving the job where she had been harassed to find

work in a less oppressive environment (distinction).

Finally, several women engaged in the *resistance* strategy. The resistance

strategy was only utilized by those who seemed to have a firmer grasp on oppression.

Amelia, Gloria, and Helena most explicitly engaged in resistance. As a business owner,

Helena utilizes resistance. Helena is using her business to change public perception of a

former "crackhead prostitute." She rejects the "Lifetime movie version" of someone

who engages in prostitution who runs away and eventually dies of an overdose. Helena

wants people to know she moved out of the lifestyle and is now a pillar of society. She

is working to disrupt stereotypes, shame, and marginalization attached to women

engaged in the lifestyle. Helena also hires recovering addicts, including those exiting the

sex trade, as a way to support them through their recovery. Through this practice in her

business, Helena resists the societal demands, which typically prevent recovering addicts

and those with a criminal record from finding satisfying employment.

Gloria also uses her business and expertise to disrupt oppressive policy by

consulting with the federal government, and practice by training law enforcement.

Additionally, unlike most survivors, Gloria refuses to accept speaking engagements

without payment. She feels survivors need to demand a living wage for their expertise

as survivor leaders, consultants, and speakers. As a consultant to other survivor leaders,

Gloria encourages them to also require payment for their services. Amelia aspires to start a training program for law enforcement to help them use trauma-informed practices when interacting with survivors.

Stroobants et al. (2010) warned that their strategies are not intended to be linear, which was consistent with the women's experiences in this study. Though, there was a progressiveness to the women's movement through the strategies. Being in jobs they did not like for low pay, based on the limitations of their criminal records (adaptation), inspired some participants to pursue more education or counseling (growth) to move up in their careers. Distinction and resistance were strategies engaged as women became more aware of the oppression they had experienced and became better equipped to identify oppression they experienced after exiting. Growth, through support of counselors, experiential learning, and social learning, helped women learn how they should expect to be treated. When Gloria first exited, her counselor pointed out sexual assault Gloria was experiencing. Gloria said, "My comment was, 'How is that any different from the rest of my life?' I could not even recognize sexual harassment…Sometimes in the early stages of exiting, we don't recognize workplace abuses and things that are illegal, because it's so similar to things we've always been dealing with."

Figure 5 provides an analysis of the progress Gloria made through each of the strategy. Analyzing one individual's career progress demonstrates the nonlinear nature of their progression along with the way the strategies build toward resistance. Gloria

readdressed several strategies multiple times throughout her career progression since

exiting.

Strategy	Example
Adaptation	Gloria left the sex trade through a court ordered mandate for drug related charges.
Adaptation	Gloria's first job out of the sex trade was at a construction company managing their office work.
Growth	Gloria was participating in counseling and learning more about sexual harassment and working through the trauma associated with the sexual exploitation she experienced in the sex trade.
Distinction	She left the construction company, because she experienced sexual exploitation. Gloria moved to a job as a survivor leader.
Growth	In her role as a survivor leader, Gloria continued to partake in therapy (EMDR) provided by her employer. She continued to process the trauma she experienced in the lifestyle.
Growth	While working as a survivor leader, Gloria's boss asked her to read TVPA. Reading the legislation inspired Gloria to eventually pursue a college degree focused on public policy and human rights.
Distinction	Gloria eventually determined the burnout she experienced as a survivor leader was too great. After completing her degree she wanted to work for the federal government in policy.
Adaptation	Gloria quickly realized after graduating that she was not going to be able to be hired directly by the government, due to her criminal record. The realization was devastating. However, she was able to work as a consultant. Gloria applied to a government agency as an expert, but had to disclose her survivor status when they said they were going to run a background check. Gloria said, "But I wanted to be deemed as an expert consultant, not a survivor. Because that's what I am."
Distinction	Gloria readdressed distinction by finding a way to be an expert without interference from the criminal record that continued to follow her and create societal oppression. Gloria became her own employer and started her own business, while also working on a contract basis with the government.
Resistance	Through the business she started, Gloria disrupts oppressive policy by consulting with the federal government, and practice by training law enforcement. Gloria refuses to accept speaking engagements without payment, and encourages other survivors to do the same. She feels survivors need to demand a living wage for their expertise as survivor leaders, consultants, and speakers.

Figure 5. Gloria's career progression in the context of transitional learning theory.

This study adds to the findings of Stroobants et al. (2010) by demonstrating the same job can encompass a different strategy when held by different women. How a certain job fits into a transitional learning strategy may depend on the level of oppression experienced by women in their prior experience, as well as the magnitude of employment barriers they may face, such as their criminal history, education level, drug addiction, and appropriateness. For example, Josie had a job in food services, which she really enjoyed. She did not think she was going to be able to get that job because of her criminal record. Josie was satisfied with this job. Josie's previous job, also in food services, could have been classified as adaptation. However, her current job fit better in growth, because Josie sees this job as a stepping stone to future opportunities. For some of the other participants, even upon initially exiting, Josie's job would have been dissatisfying to them and would have been categorized as adaptation.

In the following section, I will provide recommendation for practice and future research, using the conclusions detailed above related to women's transition experiences, their learning experience during transitioning, and the role work played in their transition experience.

Recommendations for Practice

The conclusions developed from the findings in this study support several implications for practice. The implications have been divided into those impact organizations assisting women in exiting the sex trade, employers considering hiring women after they exit the sex trade, and law enforcement.

Organizations

The following recommendations relate specifically to organizations helping women exit the sex trade. Related to income replacement, it is important for organizations to show women how far the money they make outside the sex trade can go, if the learn how to budget. Organizations can acknowledge that women made a lot of money in the lifestyle, but push back related to the stability of that money and how that money was spent. Developing methods to demonstrate the difference and explicitly discuss the difference could be important for women who are first exiting and feeling the pull of knowing they could go make $1,000 quickly.

Related to the role work plays in self-worth, organizations should support women getting a job when they are ready. Having a social enterprise in the organizations where they can work internally until they are ready to work outside of the organization could also be helpful. Women who are not ready to work may benefit from volunteering in a role that will help them gain employable skills prior to finding work. Other scholars (Dalla, 2000; Wahab, 2004) have already clearly demonstrated women's need to receive well-rounded services when exiting, including mental and physical health services and drug rehabilitation. However, this study supports the importance of work in helping women recover from trauma by building their self-worth. Working exposed women to critical experiential and social learning opportunities, even when learning from their mistakes and consequences at work. Their accomplishments at work and personal financial accomplishments because of working were critical in the restoration of their self-worth and value. If mechanisms to allow women to work are not in place, or if

258

women are not ready to work, opportunities to volunteer may similarly accomplish increased self-worth and acquisition of employable skills.

Organizations should be prepared to provide women with information about which careers are available to someone with a criminal record. Several participants in this study pursued courses in a field of interest. After investing time and money in the courses, they found out those careers were not available to someone with a criminal record. Organizations can save women time and money by providing them some career guidance or connecting women to appropriate resources.

Economically sustainable jobs are clearly critical to help women stay out of the sex trade after they choose to exit. However, finding economically sustainable jobs that provide comparable pay and flexibility is hard for women after exiting the sex trade. As presented in the findings, barriers to employment stem from their criminal records, struggles with mental health and emotions management, including PTSD, and even physical appearance, such as tattoos.

Women might benefit from learning traditionally masculine job skills, such as carpentry, electrical work, and plumbing. Such a program exists in India, called Prajwala, which trains survivors of sex trafficking such masculine job skills (Prajwala, n.d.). The income would likely be more sustainable than existing programs, such as the one through which Jillian exited, which teach women to make household goods or jewelry (Sherman et al., 2006).

Additionally, according to Moser (1991), teaching women traditionally feminine job skills can perpetuate sexual division of labor and gender bias that prevents a good

portion of job opportunities from being unavailable to women. Additionally, owning their own businesses in these trades might allow for more flexibility, including flexibility to manage their mental health and emotions, and nullify some of the barriers to working for someone else, such as their criminal record and tattoos.

Organizations must show, or continue to show, the compassion that the organizations in this study did to women exiting. Receiving nonjudgmental support is critical for women exiting. Organizations should be prepared to fill the role of a family in providing unconditional love and support. An open-door policy demonstrates unconditional love, without enabling. Ensuring women are prepared to leave will help increase organizations success rates.

Religiously-affiliated organizations may struggle to provide support perceived as nonjudgmental. Policies such as requiring participants to attend church and tithe may not be well-received by all participants. Some might find such practices oppressive and not "meeting participants where they are."

Labor oriented organizations (Worthen, 2011) may not fully address the sexual trauma and exploitation women experience in the sex trade, if sex is viewed solely as work. None of the participants in this study viewed their experience in the sex trade as work. Their views evolved overtime and this became clearer to them when they had been out of the sex trade for some time. Organizations may best serve women by allowing them to classify their time in the sex trade however is comfortable when the women first exit, but at the same time address any trauma women may have experienced.

It is important for these organizations to perform a needs assessment upon first engagement. The needs assessment should include: (a) an assessment of an individual's preparedness to leave and clear communicates to women about the challenges and commitment necessary to leave the lifestyle; and (b) an assessment to identify the services and support necessary for an individual participant. When resources are limited, a needs assessment may ensure resources are allocated to participants who are truly ready to exit. A needs assessment should also allow organizations to provide women with more holistic support, such as housing, mental health and emotional needs, and plans for finding work. Additionally, for several participants, identification of their sexual exploitation was critical in order for them to address their mental health needs and recover from drug addiction. A needs assessment should allow organizations to connect women to the resources more effectively they need. In summary, a needs assessment will allow organizations to more effectively meet women where they are after exiting.

Addressing sexual trauma may be necessary in order for women to recover from drug addiction in addition to the psychological impact, such as PTSD, of being in the sex trade. Organizations focused on drug addiction recovery need to be trained in recognizing and being sensitive (trauma-informed) to the sexual exploitation some addicts experience. Treating the sexual exploitation could be critical in lasting addiction recovery as well.

These organizations should evaluate who is volunteering with participants and the role of survivor leaders and peer educators. Survivors can evaluate practices to

261

ensure they are not mimicking a trafficker's methods by serving on boards, in leadership roles within the organization, and as peer educators. Allowing women to be their authentic selves during their transition process may be critical to preventing relapse.

Organizations employing survivors as leaders, consultants, or even a speaker at a fundraising event should pay survivors a living wage, or fair wage for one off events, in order to not mimic a trafficker by taking advantage of their free labor. Organizations struggling to budget funds to pay survivor leaders, educators, or consultants could consider restructuring as a social enterprise to help sustain the organization.

Employers

The following recommendations apply to employers considering hiring women who have exited the sex trade. Employers should willing to accept women with a criminal history and likely with drug addiction in their past. Accepting women with only prostitution charges will exclude a large part of the population exiting the sex trade. Women's charges will often be seemingly unrelated to the sex trade, such as drug charges, disorderly conduct, and/or theft. These charges are all consistent with charges women reported receiving while in the lifestyle.

Employers should be patient with women working through emotional and mental challenges. Employers may need to be prepared to establish a safe and caring environment, with strictly enforced policies about sexual harassment. As is inappropriate in any workplace, but is known to happen, sex jokes, stories about strip club attendance, and other conversations inappropriate for the workplace should not be allowed. Employers may allow women to be involved in setting policy, so they know

262

the policies themselves and feel more comfortable others will follow the policies.

Providing a safe and caring workplace also means providing fair consequences for

women who are not adhering to appropriate workplace behavior. Work was a critical

place for women to learn from experience, including from their mistakes. Expectations

should be realistic at first, women may demonstrate anger, frustration, depression, but

establishing fair and clearly defined consequences will help them adapt to workplace

expectations.

Additionally, related to emotions, employers should take care to understand

emotions can interfere or distort learning (Illeris, 2004). Being aware of the emotional

challenges women face after exiting is critical to help recognize emotional blocks to

learning and start to work through them (Dirkx, 2008). Employers should allow women

paid leave to address the trauma they may have experienced and receive continued

support, such as counseling, physicians appointments, even massages or other tools to

manage stress. In their role as educators or trainers, employers should respect women's

prior experiences. Employers could benefit from adopting the tenet of adult learning to

utilize and build on women's prior experiences (Knowles, 1980). Women bring many

talents from their prior experiences in and out of the sex trade. Women were particularly

talented in areas of sales. The bring resourcefulness and resilience to solving problems

and are not easily discouraged when faced with resistance or being told no. Women

exiting the sex trade may also possess empathy. However, the women may need

encouragement and assistance in transferring the skills they used in the sex trade to other

environments. Acknowledging their skills and fostering their talents will likely also build self-worth and increase women's engagement in their work.

Policy Makers and Law Enforcement

The following recommendations apply to law enforcement personnel including officers, probation officers, and attorneys. These individuals should do everything possible to not re-victimize survivors. They should educate themselves as well as juries about the pull to the lifestyle (the "bling-bling") and the lifestyle mindset when it comes to women's relationship with their traffickers.

These individuals should adopt survivor-empowered and trauma-informed language and behavior when interacting with a survivor. Laws are moving in the direction of targeting pimps and traffickers rather than the individuals subject to their authority; law enforcers should ensure that practice is moving the same way. These professionals should educate themselves related to victim identification, and perform a needs assessment to understand the lifestyle of someone coming in for drug charges or theft charges. They should watch for bruises or other signs of being in an abusive relationship, and should always dig deeper to see if women they are arresting or counseling could be engaged in prostitution.

In broader policy, unequal pay and unequal employment opportunities and training for women is a contributing factor to women engaging in the sex trade. While income is not the only reason women engage in the sex trade, this study shows there are other psychological and emotional contributors, income is a significant driver. Additional policy and programming to create more equity in pay, opportunity, and

general treatment of women will be critical for eliminating the negative impacts of the sex trade on women.

Treatment of sexual assault victims in the criminal justice system, along with pervasive gender bias, also contributes to the negative impacts of the sex trade. Women do not feel supported by the criminal justice system to report sexual exploitation. Participants talked about law enforcement knowing their pimps and never arresting them, but arresting the women. Policy and practice of law enforcement need to be encouraging of women to come forward with any injustices they have experienced. Policy in many areas seems to be moving in this direction, but more can be done to support survivors.

Future Research

Several recommendations for future research are founded based on the findings in this study. The following sections provide recommendations for future research related to participant selection, types of organizations, and additional areas for investigation.

Participant Selection

Future research could benefit from considerations related to participant selection. First, an additional study should be completed using more diverse participants. The organizations supporting women in exiting were all led by White women. White women may have felt more comfortable exiting through an organization than women of color. Additionally, I am a White woman, which may have further narrowed the participant diversity as women of color may not have been comfortable talking to me. Participant

selection for this study was difficult, so despite my efforts, racial diversity was not achieved. Future researchers may find more racially diverse populations through the court or prison system than through nonprofit organizations.

Additional diversity in experiences could be achieved by including participants who exited without the support of an organization. A goal of this study was to include who exited without formal support. Though many participants did not receive support from an organization specific to sexual exploitation, all women had support of various organizations, such as drug rehabilitation, AA/NA, housing, etc. A follow-up study could include participants who did not receive support from any organization.

A natural suggestion related to participant selection might be to conduct research with women who have been out for less time, as was investigated by Oselin (2009) and Sanders (2007). The women in this study had been out for at least 3 years. However, I recommend using a selection criteria of at least 1 year for any future studies, as women need more time to be established in transitioning out before engaging with researchers. The power dynamic between research and participant, despite efforts to eliminate it, could create a negative experience for women who exited more recently. Additionally, I did not ask women about their time in the sex trade, but some referenced the trauma in the context of the challenges they have faced since exiting. Women with less time out could struggle with readdressing the trauma they experienced in the sex trade. The next section will evaluate additional types of organizations, which could be studied in future research.

Types of Organizations

Additional understanding is necessary about the impact an organizations orientation, including beliefs and assumptions, have on women exiting. Wahab (2004) differentiated between organizations with a victim-focus versus organizations with a criminal-focus. Worthen (2011) differentiated between organizations with a prostitution orientation versus a labor orientation. These orientations frame how organizations view the root causes of the sex trade and the degree of agency women have upon entrance into the sex trade. An organization with a prostitution orientation, much like abolitionists, views all prostitution as forced, even if socio-economic vulnerabilities forced women into prostitution, and is "about male demand for sexual exploitation of women" (Worthen, 2011, p. 90).

Further, some organizations are religiously-affiliated and some are secular. Geographic diversity may allow for a better comparison of religiously-affiliated and secular organizations. A delimitation of this study was participant select was restricted to women who had engaged in the sex trade in Texas. In Texas, the only secular organizations I could find were primarily focused on drug rehabilitation, but treated women exiting the sex trade due to the extensive overlap within the population. Three participants in this study exited through secular drug rehabilitation programs. Other considerations related to participant selection and scope of the study may benefit future research, as discussed in the following section.

Additional Areas for Investigation

There are several additional areas for investigation in future research, including better understanding of relapse and what interventions might reduce relapse rates, using alternative lenses to frame future studies, evaluating nontraditional employment interventions, and finally understanding the dynamics between organizations and participants versus employers and employees.

Understanding relapse. Another critical area for future research is understanding why and how often women relapse. I do not think it is critical to define a final exit. However, there is more to learn about what triggers a relapse, and how many times women typically relapse. The findings could help organizations and court systems better support women and educate women on what may increase their likelihood of relapse.

Specifically, additional insights about methods to reduce relapse rates may be gained by investigating gender-responsive programming (GRP) and trauma-informed care for women exiting the sex trade. GRP has been investigated in women recovering from addiction (Covington et al., 2008) and incarcerated women (Covington & Bloom, 2006; Sandoval et al., 2016). GRP has been shown to have a positive impact on recidivism and sobriety (Messina, Grella, Cartier, & Torres, 2010). The impact of such programing on relapse as well as women's ability to move through the lifestyle mindset could be beneficial to women exiting and the organizations developing programming. The lifestyle mindset largely related to the psychological challenges of transitioning out, which was consistent with the primarily psychological nature of the findings. The

following paragraph discusses some alternative perspectives, which could be investigated in future research.

Using alternative lenses. Further investigation into women's transition experiences could use a more sociological and/or feminist lens. For example, future studies could investigate how the feminist orientation—liberal versus abolitionist—of organization leaders impacts women's transition experiences. Women in this study with strong feminist views recognized sexual harassment, inequality in pay, and limited work opportunities as challenges in their transition experience. Understanding how teaching feminist perspectives to women impacts their experience could be valuable. Somewhat related to feminist perspectives, future research might benefit from evaluating the impact of nontraditional employment interventions on women's success. From a more critical approach, the data could be analyzed through a more sociological lens evaluating the structural inequities impacting individual behavior. For example, the women were largely expected to exit through their individual will, self-discipline, and determination, but sociocultural influences greatly impacted their entrance into the sex trade, their existence in the sex trade, and their lives after exiting.

Evaluating nontraditional employment interventions. Finally, additional research should be conducted related to employment interventions for women after exiting. Knowing which jobs provide the best fit for women after exiting can help them find more financial stability. Investigating additional jobs women could pursue for higher pay, more autonomy, and without restrictions due to a criminal record, such as traditionally masculine jobs including carpenters, plumbers, and electricians.

269

Additionally, organizations, including the organizations in this study specific to addressing sexual exploitation, seem to be more heavily relying on social enterprises to fund the support they provide women and to teach women employable skills. Future researchers could more thoroughly investigate the role of social enterprise in women's transition experiences. Given the critical role organizations play in women's transition experience, the following section will explore opportunities for future research related to the dynamic between organizations and participants.

Dynamic between organizations and participants versus employer and employee. There were some tensions recognized between the organizations helping women exit and the participants. It was often a tension similar to that between a parent and a child. Some participants mentioned feeling rules like not being able to cuss were oppressive in the organizations. However, these rules were not questioned when implemented by an employer. Additional research could investigate why there was a difference between enforcement of rules by employers compared to rules enforced by the organizations where women were living.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented five conclusions related to the two research questions guiding this study. The five conclusions included: (a) women experience a similar transition process after exiting, (b) workplace development opportunities are critical for income and self-worth, (c) support from organizations is critical, but complicated by power dynamics, (d) the nature of learning is experiential and social and takes place in the context of transitioning, and (e) transitional learning theory provides insights into

270

women's learning related to transitioning into legal work. I discussed each conclusion in

the context of existing literature and related studies. I also presented implications for

practice and future research.

REFERENCES

Alpern, S. (2009, March 1). Helena Rubinstein. *Jewish women: A comprehensive historical encyclopedia in Jewish Women's Archive.* Retrieved from https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/rubinstein-helena

Ambrose, S. A., Bridges, M. W., DiPietro, M., Lovett, M. C., & Norman, M. K. (2010). *How learning works: Seven research-based principles for smart teaching.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

American Association of University Women. (2016*). The simple truth: About the gender pay gap* (Fall 2016 Ed.). Retrieved from http://www.aauw.org/aauw_check/pdf_download/show_pdf.php?file=The-Simple-Truth

Anderson, M. L., Goodman, J., & Schlossberg, N. K. (2012). *Counseling adults in transition: Linking Schlossberg's theory with practice in a diverse world* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Springer.

Annitto, M. (2011). Consent, coercion, and compassion: Emerging legal responses to commercial sexual exploitation of minors. *Yale Law & Policy Review*, *3*(1), 1-70. Retrieved from http://web.ebscohost.com.

Attwood, G. (2006). Adult education and social capital: Supporting communities in the contextof HIV/AIDS. In S. Merriam, B. C. Courtenay, & R. M. Cervero (Eds.) *Global issues and adult education: Perspectives from Latin America, Southern Africa, and the UnitedStates* (pp. 295-306). San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Baker, L. M., Dalla, R. L., & Williamson, C. (2010). Exiting prostitution: An integrated

   model. *Violence Against Women, 16*(5), 579-600.

   doi:10.1177/1077801210367643

Bandura, A. (1971). *Social learning theory*. New York, NY: General Learning Press.

   Retrieved from http://www.esludwig.com/uploads/2/6/1/0/26105457/

   bandura_sociallearningt heo ry.pdf

Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change.

   Psychological Review, 84(2), 191-215.

Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory.*

   Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Barry, K. (1995). *The prostitution of sexuality*. Retrieved from

   http://muse.jhu.edu/books/9780814786086/

Baumgartner, L. M. (2002). Living and learning with HIV/AIDS: Transformational tales

   continued. *Adult Education Quarterly, 53*(1), 44-59.

   doi:10.1177/074171302237203

Baumgartner, L. M. (2007). The incorporation of the HIV/AIDS identity into the self

   over time. *Qualitative Health Research, 1*7(7), 919-931.

   doi:10.1177/1049732307305881

Baumgartner, L. M. & David, K. N. (2009). Accepting being poz: The incorporation of

   the HIV identity into the self. *Qualitative Health Research, 19*(2), 1730-1743.

   doi:10.1177/1049732309352907

Bernstein, E. (1999). What's wrong with prostitution? What's right with sex work? Comparing markets in female sexual labour. *Hastings Women's Law Journal, 10*, 91-117. Retrieved from http://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/ haswo10&div=11&g_sent=1&collection=journals#99

Biglan, A. (1987). A behavior-analytic critique of Bandura's self-efficacy theory. *The Behavior Analyst, 10*(1), 1-15.

Bilardi, J. E., Miller, A., Hocking, J. S., Koegh, L., Cummings, R., Chen, M. Y., Bradshaw, C. S., & Fairley, C. K. (2011). The job satisfaction of female sex workers working in licensed brothels in Victoria, Australia. *International Society for Sexual Medicine*, *8*(1), 116-122. doi:10.1111/j.1743-6109.2010.01967.x

Breton, M. (2000). The relevance of the structural approach to group work with immigrant and refugee women. *Social Work with Groups, 22*(2/3), 11-29. doi:10.1300/J009v22n02_03

Bridges, W. (1991). *Managing transitions: Making the most of change*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Brown, A. (2015). Mid-career reframing: The learning and development processes through which individuals seek to effect major career changes. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling, 43*(3), 278-291. doi:10.1080/03069885.2015.1028888

Brown, J. S., Collins, A., & Duguid, P. (1989). Situated cognition and the culture of learning. *Educational Researcher, 18*(1), 32-42.

Butler, C. N. (2012). Sex slavery in the Lone Star State: Does the Texas human
trafficking legislation of 2011 protect minors? *Akron Law Review, 45*(4), 843-
882.

Carvajal, D. (2015, Aug. 11). *Amnesty International votes for policy calling for
decriminalization of prostitution.* Retrieved from
http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/12/world/europe/amnesty-international-votes-
for-policy-calling-for-decriminalization-of-prostitution.html?_r=0
streets-to-worlds-best-mom.html

Cavalieri, S. (2011). Being victim and agent: A third-way feminist account of trafficking
for sex work. *Indiana Law Journal, 86*, 1409-1458. Retrieved from
http://ilj.law.indiana.edu/articles/86/86_4_cavalieri.pdf

Chapkis, W. (1997). *Live sex acts: Women performing erotic labor*. New York, NY:
Routledge.

Chlup, D. T., & Baird, I. C. (2010). Literacy from the inside: Learning from and within a
culture of correction. In M. V. Alfred (Ed.), *Learning for economic self-
sufficiency: Constructing pedagogies of home among low-income, low-literate
adults* (pp. 193-211). Scottsdale, AZ: Information Age.

Cho, S-Y., Dreher, A., & Neumayer, E. (2012). Does legalized prostitution increase
human trafficking? *World Development*, *41*(1), 67-82. Retrieved from
http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X12001453

City of Houston. (2014). *Mayor, governor, law enforcement and community organizations launch "Texans United against Human Trafficking."* Retrieved from http://www.houstontx.gov/neighborhoods/trafficking2014.html

Covington, S. S., & Bloom, B. E. (2006). Gender responsive treatment and services in correctional settings. *Women & Therapy, 29*(1), 9–33. doi:10.1300/J015v29n03_02

Covington, S. S., Burke, C., Keaton, S., & Norcott, C. (2008). Evaluation of trauma informed and gender responsive intervention for women in drug treatment. *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs, SACR Supplement 5*, 387-398.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dalla, R. (2000). Exposing the "Pretty Woman" myth: A qualitative examination of the lives of female streetwalking prostitutes. *The Journal of Sex Research, 37*(4), 344-353. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.com

Dalla, R. L. (2006). "You can't hustle all your life": An exploratory investigation of the exit process among street-level prostituted women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 30*, 276-290. doi:10.1111/j.1471-6402.2006.00296.x.

Danailova-Trainor, G. & Belser, P. (2006). *Globalization and the illicit market for human trafficking: An empirical analysis of supply and demand* (ILO Working Paper No. 78). Retrieved from http://natlex.ilo.ch/wcmsp5/groups/public/--- ed_norm/--- declaration/documents/publication/wcms_081931.pdf

Dank, M., Khan, B., Downey, P. M., Kotonias, C., Mayer, D., Owens, C., Pacifici, L., &

    Yu, L. (2014). *Estimating the size and structure of the underground commercial*

    sex economy in eight major US cities. Retrieved from

    http://www.urban.org/uploadedpdf/413047-underground-commercial-sex-

    economy.pdf

Davidson, J. C. (1998). *Prostitution, power, and freedom*. Oxford, UK: Polity Press.

Deer, S., & Josefy, M. A. (2015) *Proceedings from AERC 2015: Anti-human trafficking:*

    A descriptive study of adult education programs in relationship to policy and

    funding. Manhattan, KS: AERC.

Demleitner, N.V. (2005). Is there a future for leniency in the U.S. criminal justice

    system? *Michigan Law Review*, *103*(6), 1231-1272. Retrieved from

    http://www.jstor.com.

Dennis, J. P. (2008). Women are victims, men make choices: The invisibility of men and

    boys in the global sex trade. *Gender Issues, 25*(1), 11-25. doi:10.1007/s12147-

    008-9051-y

Desyllas, M. C. (2007). A critique of the global trafficking discourse and U.S. policy.

    Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare, 34(4), 57-79. Retrieved from

    http://web.ebscohost.com

Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York, NY: Kappa Delta Pi.

Dirkx, J. M. (2008). The meaning and role of emotions in adult learning. *New Directions*

    for Adult & Continuing Education, 120(1), 7-18. doi:10.1002/ace.311

Dubouloz, C. J., Laporte, D., Hall, M., Ashe, B., & Smith, C. D. (2004). Transformation
of meaning perspectives in clients with Rheumatoid arthritis. *American Journal
of Occupational Therapy, 58*(4), 398–407.

Dunn, J. C. (2012). "It's not just sex, it's a profession": Reframing prostitution through
text and context. *Communication Studies, 63*(3), 345-363.
doi:10.1080/10510974.2012.678924

Ensher, E. A., Thomas, C., Murphy, S. E. (2001). Comparison of transitional step-ahead,
and peer mentoring on protégés' support, satisfaction, and perceptions of career
success: A social exchange perspective. *Journal of Business and Psychology,
15*(3), 419-438.

Erikson, E. H. (1980). *Identity and the life cycle*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton &
Company.

Evans, K., Schoon, I., & Weale, M. (2013). Can lifelong learning reshape life chances?
British Journal of Educational Studies, *61*(1), 25-47.
doi:10.1080/00071005.2012.756163

Exner, J. E., Wylie, J., Leura, A., & Parrill, T. (1977). Some psychological
characteristics of prostitutes. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 41*, 474-485.
Retrieved from http://web.ebscohost.com

Farley, M., Baral, I., Kiremire, M., & Sezgin, U. (1998). Prostitution in five countries:
Violence and post-traumatic stress disorder. *Feminism & Psychology, 8*(4), 405-
426. doi:10.1177/0959353598084002

Fenwick, T. J. (2001). Experiential learning: A theoretical critique from five

    perspectives. *Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) Clearing House*

    on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, 385. Retrieved from

    http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED454418

Fiorentine, R. (1999). After drug treatment: Are 12-step programs effective in

    maintaining abstinence? *American Journal Drug Alcohol Abuse, 25*(1), 93-116.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* New York, NY: Bloomsbury.

Glaser, B. G. & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for*

    qualitative research. New Brunswick, NJ: Aldine Transaction.

Gray, D. E. (2014). *Doing research in the real world* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Grover, T. (2015). Presentation from *Human Trafficking Training hosted by Coalition*

    Combatting Human Trafficking Texas Gateway/Destination Cities (CCHT-TX).

    San Antonio, TX.

Harcourt, C., & Donovan, B. (2005). The many faces of sex work. *Sexually Transmitted*

    Infections, *81*, 201-206. doi:10.1136/sti.2004.012468

Harris County District Courts. (2006). *STAR Home*. Retrieved from

    https://www.justex.net/courts/drug/adult/default.aspx

Hart, K. E., & Kritsonis, W. A. Critical analysis of an original writing on social learning

    theory: Imitation of film-mediated aggressive models by: Albert Bandura,

    Dorothea Ross, and Sheila A. Ross (1963). *National Forum of Applied*

    Educational Research Journal, 20(3), 1-7.

History.com (2009). *Elizabeth Cady Stanton.*

http://www.history.com/topics/womens-history/elizabeth-cady-stanton

Hotaling, N., Burris, A., Johnson, B., Bird, Y., & Melbye, K. (2003). Been there done that: SAGE, a peer leadership model among prostitution survivors. *Journal of Trauma Practice, 2*(3/4), 255-265. doi:10.1300/J189v02n03_15

Hughes, D. (2008). Combating sex trafficking: A perpetrator-focused approach. *University of St. Thomas Law Journal*, *6*(1), 28-53. Retrieved from http://www.wunrn.com/news/2009/07_09/07_06_09/070609_trafficking2_files/ Trafficking-Combating-Perpetrator%20Focused%20Approach-D.Hughes.pdf

Hunt, M. O. (2003). Identities and inequalities: Exploring links between self and stratification processes. In P. J. Burke, T. J. Owens, R. Serpe & P. A. Thoits (Eds.), *Advances in identity theory and research* (pp. 71-84). New York, NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenun.

Illeris, K. (2004). Transformative learning in the perspective of a comprehensive learning theory. *Journal of Transformative Education, 2*(2), 79-89. doi:10.1177/1541344603262315

International Labour Organization. (n.d.). *Forced labour: Facts and figures*. Retrieved from http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/lang--en/index.htm.

Jackson, S. (2006). Learning to live: The relationship between lifelong learning and lifelong illness. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 25*(1), 51–73.

Jarvis, P. (1987). Meaningful and meaningless experience: Towards an analysis of
learning from life. *Adult Education Quarterly, 37*(3), 164-172. Retrieved from
aeq.sagepub.com

Jarvis, P. (2012). *Towards a comprehensive theory of human learning: Lifelong learning
and the learning society, volume 1*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Jeffrey, L. A. & MacDonald, G. (2006). "It's the money, honey": The economy of sex
work in the Maritimes. *The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology,
43*(3), 313–27.

Jeffreys, S. (2009). Prostitution, trafficking and feminism: An update on the debate.
Women's Studies International Forum, 32, 316-320.
doi:10.1016/j.wsif.2009.07.002

Keeping, L. M., & English, L. M. (2001). Informal and incidental learning with patients
who use continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis. *Nephrology Nursing Journal,
28*(3), 313–322.

Kessler, D., Dubouloz, C. J., Urbanowski, R., & Egan, M. (2009). Meaning perspective
transformation following stroke: The process of change. *Disability and
Rehabilitation, 31*(13), 1056–1065.

Knowles, M. S. (1980). *The modern practice of adult education: from pedagogy to
andragogy*. New York, NY: Cambridge.

Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: experience as the source of learning and
development.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Kolb, D. A., Boyatzis, R. E., & Mainemelis, C. (1999). *Experiential learning: Previous research and new directions*. Retrieved from http://learningfromexperience.com/media/2010/08/experiential-learning-theory.pdf

Koschmann, T., Glenn, P., & Conlee, M. (2000). When is problem-based tutorial not a tutorial? Analyzing the tutor's role in the emergence of a learning issue. In D. H. Evensen & C. E. Hmelo (Eds.). *Problem-based learning: A research perspective on learning interactions* (pp. 63-74). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Kotiswaran, P. (2011). *Dangerous sex, invisible labor: Sex work and the law in India*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Kralik, D. (2002). The quest for ordinariness: transition experienced by midlife women living with chronic illness. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 39*, 146–154. doi:10.1046/j.1365-2648.2000.02254.x

Kramer, J. (2015, Oct. 19). *Road warrior: After fifty years, Gloria Steinem is still at the forefront of the feminist cause*. Retrieved from http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/10/19/road-warrior-profiles-jane-kramer

Kreber, C. Klampfleitner, M., McCune, V., Bayne, S., and Knottenbelt, M. (2016). What do you mean by "authentic"? A comparative review of the literature on conceptions of authenticity in teaching. *Adult Education Quarterly, 58*(1), 22-43. doi; 10.1177/0741713607305939

Kristof, N. (2013, Oct. 12). *From the streets to the "world's best mom."* Retrieved from

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/13/opinion/sunday/kristof from-the-

Kristof, N. D., & WuDunn, S. (2009). *Half the sky: Turning oppression into opportunity*

for women worldwide. New York, NY: Vintage Books (Random House).

Kuo, M-H. C., Yamnill, S., & McLean, G. N. (2008). The dilemma of prostitution in

Taiwan and Thailand from an NHRD perspective. *Human Resource*

Development International, 11(5), 493-505. doi:10.1080/13678860802417635

Le Cornu, A. (2005). Building on Jarvis: Towards a holistic model of the processes of

experiential learning. *Studies in the Education of Adults, 37*(2), 166-181.

Retrieved from http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.lib

ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048/eds/detail/detail?sid=12548668-862f-4224-a185-

9a4a7c0f18bc%40sessionmgr4005&vid=11&hid=4111&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWR

zLWxpdmU%3d#AN=507831922&db=ef

Lee, J. & Deutsch, L. (2014, May 28). *13 of Maya Angelou's best quotes.* Retrieved

from http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation- now/2014/05/28/maya-

angelou-quotes/9663257/

Lent, R. W. (2016). Self-efficacy in a relational world: Social cognitive mechanisms of

adaptation and development. *The Counseling Psychologist, 44*(4), 573-594.

doi:10.1177/0011000016638742

Lepore, J. (2014). *The secret history of Wonder Woman.* New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Lewis, J. J. (2016, May 4). *Josephine Baker biography.* Retrieved from

http://womenshistory.about.com/od/bakerjosephine/p/josephine_baker.htm

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Lindeman, E. (1926). *The meaning of adult education*. New York, NY: New Republic

Love, S. R. (2006). Illicit sexual behaviour: A test of self-control theory. *Deviant Behavior*, *27*, 505-536. doi:10.1080/01639620600781464

Lucas, A. M. (2005). The work of sex work: Elite prostitute's vocational orientations and experiences. *Deviant Behavior*, *26*, 513-546. doi:10.1080/01639620500218252

Ludwig, M. (2015, Oct. 28). *Inside the sensational business of "rescuing" sex workers*. Retrieved from http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/33414-inside-the-sensational-business-of-rescuing-sex-workers

MacKinnon, C. A. (1983). Feminism, Marxism method, and the state: Toward feminist jurisprudence. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, *8*(4), 635-658. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173687

Macy, R. J., & Johns, N. (2011). Aftercare services for international sex trafficking survivors: Informing U.S. service and program development in an emerging practice area. *Trauma,Violence, & Abuse*, 12(2), 87-98. doi:10.1177/1524838010390709

Manopaiboon, C. B. (2003). Leaving sex work: Barriers, facilitating factors and consequences for female sex workers in northern Thailand. *AIDS Care, 15*(1), 39. Retrieved from http://lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=pbh&AN=9087840&site=ehost-live

Mansson, S., & Hedin, U. (1999). Breaking the Matthew effect on women leaving prostitution. *International Journal of Social Welfare, 8*(1), 57. Retrieved from http://lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=3253653&site=ehost-live

Maruatona, T. (2006). Adult literacy education and empowerment in Africa: Problems and perspectives. In S. Merriam, B. C. Courtenay, & R. M. Cervero (Eds.), *Global issues and adult education: Perspectives from Latin America, Southern Africa, and the United States* (pp. 344-355). San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Maxwell, J. A. (2009). Designing a qualitative study. In L. Bickman & D. J. Rog (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of applied social research methods* (2nd ed.) (pp. 214-253). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

McCray, K., Wesely, J. K., & Rasche, C. E. (2011). Rehab retrospect: Former prostitutes and the (re)construction of deviance. *Deviant Behavior, 32*(8), 743-768. doi:10.1080/01639625.2010.514224

McLeod, S. A. (2016). *Bandura - social learning theory*. Retrieved from www.simplypsychology.org/bandura.html

McNaughton, C. C., & Sanders, T. (2007). Housing and transitional phases out of 'disordered' lives: The case of leaving homelessness and street sex work. *Housing Studies, 22*(6), 885-900. doi:10.1080/02673030701608043

Melton, K. (2016). Presentation from *2nd Annual AACAT Human Trafficking Conference*. San Antonio, TX.

Merriam, S. B. (2005). How adult life transitions foster learning and development. *New Directions for Adult & Continuing Education, 108*(1), 3-13. doi:10.1002/ace.193

Merriam, S. B., & Bierema, L. L. (2014). *Adult learning: Linking theory and practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B., Caffarella, R. S., & Baumgartner, L. M. (2007). *Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Messina, N., Grella, C. E., Cartier, J., & Torres, S. (2010). A randomized experimental study of gender-responsive substance abuse treatment for women in prison. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment, 38*, 97–107. doi:10.1016/j.jsat.2009.09.004

Minster, C. (2016, March 14). *Biography of Maria Eva "Evita" Peron*. Retrieved from http://latinamericanhistory.about.com/od/historyofsouthamerica/a/evita.htm

Moser, C.O. (1991). Gender planning in the third world: Meeting practical and strategic needs. In R. Grant & K. Newland (Eds.), *Gender and international relations*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Mueller, D. (2012). *Treatment courts and court-affiliated diversion projects for prostitution in the United States.* Retrieved fromhttp://chicagohomeless.issuelab.org/resource/treatment_courts_and_court_affiliated_diversion_projects_for_prostitution_in_the_united_states

O'Hagan, M. (2009). Leadership for empowerment and equality: A proposed model for mental health user/survivor leadership. *The International Journal of Leadership in Public Services, 5*(4), 34-43. doi:10.5042/ijlps.2010.0110

Okech, D., Morreau, W., & Benson, K. (2011). Human trafficking: Improving victim identification and service provision. *International Social Work*, *55*(4), 488-503. doi:10.1177/0020872811425805

Oselin, S. S. (2009). Leaving the streets: Transformation of prostitute identity within the prostitution rehabilitation program. *Deviant Behavior, 30*(4), 379-406. doi:10.1080/01639620802258485

Oselin, S. S. (2010). Weighing the consequences of a deviant career: Factors leading to an exit from prostitution. *Sociological Perspectives, 53*(4), 527-550. doi:10.1525/sop.2010.53.4.527

Potterat, J. J., Woodhouse, D. E., Muth, J. B., & Muth, S. Q. (1990). Estimating the prevalence and career longevity of prostitute women. *The Journal of Sex Research, 27*(2), 233-243.

Prajwala. (n.d.). *Rehabilitation*. Retrieved from http://www.prajwalaindia.com/rehabilitation.html

Preissner, K. L. (2013). *"A group of me's": Adult learning through group process: The experience of participants in a teleconference-delivered multiple sclerosis fatigue management program*. Retrieved from Proquest Dissertations and Theses Global.

Rager, K. B. (2003). The self-directed learning of women with breast cancer. *Adult Education Quarterly, 53*(4), 277-293. doi:10.1177/0741713603254030.

Rager, K. B. (2007). Gender as a context for interpreting the self-directed learning

 experiences of prostate and breast cancer patients. *International Journal of*

 Qualitative Studies in Education, 20(5), 565-583.

 doi:10.1080/09518390701207210

Roe-Sepowitz, D. E., Hickle, K. E., Pérez Louber, M., & Egan, T. (2011). Adult

 prostitution recidivism: Risk factors and impact of a diversion program. *Journal*

 of Offender Rehabilitation, 50(5), 272-285. doi:10.1080/10509674.2011.574205

Rogers, B. (2014, Oct. 16). *DA announces new court to help prostitutes.* Retrieved from

 http://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston- texas/houston/article/DA-

 announces-new-court-to-help-prostitutes-5828104.php

Romero, I. (2016, Dec. 9). *Esperanza Court Program celebrates first class of graduates:*

 Court program offers hope, help to prostitutes. Retrieved from

 http://www.ksat.com/news/esperanza-court-program-celebrates-first-class-of-

 graduates

Rosen, E., & Sudhir, A. V. (2008). A perversion of choice: Sex work offers just enough

 in Chicago's urban ghetto. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 37*(4), 417-

 441.

Rotter, J. B. (1954). *Social learning and clinical psychology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ:

 Prentice Hall.

Rummel, L. (2016). Presentation from *2nd Annual AACAT Human Trafficking*

 Conference. San Antonio, TX.

Sanders, T. (2007). Becoming an ex–sex worker: Making transitions out of a deviant

career. *Feminist Criminology, 2*(1), 74-95. doi:10.1177/1557085106294845

Sandoval, C. L., Baumgartner, L. M., & Clark, M. C. (2016). Paving paths toward

transformation with incarcerated women. *Journal of Transformative Education,

14*(1), 34-52. doi:10.1177/1541344615602758

Schunk, D. H. (1996). *Learning theories: An educational perspective* (6th ed.).

Boston,MA: Pearson.

Seib, C., Dunne, M. P., Fischer, J., & Najman, J. M. (2012). Predicting job satisfaction

of female sex workers in Queensland, Australia. *International Journal of Sexual

Health*, *24*(1), 99-111. doi:10.1080/19317611.2011.632073

Shapiro, F. (1995). *Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing: basic principles,

protocols, and procedures*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Sharp, S. F., & Hope, T. L. (2001). The professional ex—Revisited. *Journal of

Contemporary Ethnography*, *30*, 678-703.

Sherman, S. G., German, D., Cheng, Y., Marks, M., & Bailey-Kloche, M. (2006). The

evaluation of the JEWEL project: An innovative economic enhancement and

HIV prevention intervention study targeting drug using women involved in

prostitution. *Aids Care, 18*(1), 1-11. doi:10.1080/09540120500101625

Showalter, E. (2016, Nov. 14). *Blanche Wiesen Cook concludes her biography of

Eleanor Roosevelt.* Retrieved from

http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/20/books/review/eleanor-roosevelt-the-war

years-and-after-blanche-wiesen-cook.html

Staddon, J. E. R. (1984). Social learning theory and the dynamics of interaction. *Psychological Review, 91*(4), 502-507.

Stanley, A. (2006, April 26). *The legacy of Billie Jean King, an athlete who demanded equal play.* Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/26/arts/television/the-legacy-of-billie-jean-king-an-athlete-who-demanded.html

Stroobants, V., Jans, M. & Wildemeersch, D. (2010). Making sense of learning for work. Towards a framework of transitional learning. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 20*(1), 114-126. doi:10.1080/02601370010008318

Stryker, S. & Burke, P. J. (2000). The past, present, and future of an identity theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, *63*(4), 284-297.

Texas Legislature. (2015). *Texas Penal Code 20A. Trafficking in Persons*. Retrieved from http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/PE/htm/PE.20A.htm

Thistle Farms. (n.d.). *About Thistle Farms*. Retrieved from http://www.thistlefarms.org/index.php/about-thistle-farms

Thurman, J. (2009, Sept. 14). *Missing woman: Amelia Earhart's flight.* Retrieved from http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2009/09/14/missing-woman

Tisdell, L. (2003). *Exploring spirituality and culture in adult and higher education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Torraco, R. J. (2005). Writing integrative literature reviews: Guidelines and examples. *Human Resource Development Review, 14*(3), 356-367.

Tryon, W. W. (1981). A methodological critique of Bandura's self-efficacy theory of

   behavior change. *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry, 12*,

   113-114. doi:10.1016/0005-7916(81)90003-3

Tsiaperas, T. (2015, Jan.). *Specialty court in Dallas County gives prostitutes a way out*

   of jail and off the streets, too. Retrieved from

   http://www.dallasnews.com/news/news/2015/01/22/specialty-court-in-dallas-

   county-gives-prostitutes-a-way-out-of-jail-time-and-off-the-streets-too

United Nations. (2004). *United Nations convention against transnational organized*

   crime and the protocols thereto. Retrieved from

   http://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNTOC/Publications/TOC%20Conve

   ntion/TOCebook-e.pdf

U. S. Agency for International Development. (2013). Counter-trafficking in persons field

   guide. Retrieved from

   http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2496/CTIP_Field_Guide_Fin

   al_April%205%202013.pdf.

U. S. Attorney's Office. (2015). *Human trafficking rescue alliance.* Retrieved from

   http://www.justice.gov/usao-sdtx/human-trafficking-rescue-alliance

U.S. Department of State. (2000). Victims of trafficking and violence protection act of

   2000. (October 28). Retrieved from http://www.state.gov/j/tip/laws/61124.htm

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (2016). *PTSD: National Center for PTSD:*

   Complex PTSD. Retrieved from http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/PTSD-

   overview/complex-ptsd.asp

Wahab, S. (2004). Tricks of the trade: What social workers can learn about female sex

    workers through dialogue. *Qualitative Social Work*, *3*, 139-160.

    doi:10.1177/1473325004043378

Whitfield, S. (2016, May 9). *Houston announces plan to fight human trafficking.*

    Retrieved from http://www.khou.com/news/crime/houston-announces-plan-to-

    fight-human-trafficking/182953574

Worthen, M. (2011). Sex trafficking or sex work? Conceptions of trafficking among anti

    trafficking organizations in Nepal. *Refugee Survey Quarterly, 30*(3), 87-106.

    doi:10.1093/rsq/hdr007

SUMMARY OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES ON TRANSITIONING OUT OF THE SEX TRADE

Author(s)	Level	Sample	Transition Factors	Learning Factors	Journal
Baker, Dalla, and Williamson (2010)	Street	N/A – model development based on researchers experiences with other studies (see Dalla w)	6 stage model (see Figure 3): Immersion, Awareness (visceral and conscious), Deliberate Preparation, Initial Exit, Reentry (if applicable), and Final Exit. Individuals may move through the model sequentially or may revisit stages, especially after reentry. General models considered by scholars: • Stages of Change (SC) model by Prochaska, DiClemente, and Norcross (1992), • The Role Exit (RE) model by Fuchs Ebaugh (1988) Prostitution/Sex Work Specific Models: • Sanders's (2007) typologies (see below) • Mansson & Hedin's (1999) model see in Chapter II text on transition	N/A	Violence Against Women
Dalla (2006)	Street	Follow-up study with 18/43, 3 years later; 5/18 remained out	Common themes were significant in women exiting, whether they remained in or not: • Relationship (new) and emotional attachments (old) • Support from professional service providers • Economics and employment	N/A	Psychology of Women Quarterly
McCray, Wesely, and Rasche (2011)	Street and drug addicts	10 currently in rehabilitation	The authors identified the usefulness of connecting women's old identity in prostitution with their identity as addicts as they transitioned out of prostitution. Attributing prostitution to addiction allowed women to distance themselves from the stigma and regret associated with their deviant identity when they became sober, resulting in a successful and more lasting transition out.	N/A	Deviant Behavior
Oselin (2009)	Street	7 currently in rehabilitation program, 1 graduate	When first entering the PRP, participants were under the control of the PRP. Participants were required to attend job training workshops, group and individual counseling sessions, and meetings with PRP staff. Women were also required to obtain part-time employment. Women transitioned in three phases: rookies, in-betweens, and experts.	The study provides valuable insights into the role organizations play in women's learning as they transition out. Specifically, criticized the organizations for teaching and expecting women to behave in a traditional, middle class manner. Attributed change in identity to change in behavior. The longer participants were in the PRP the more closely they mirrored the way PRP staff talked and behaved, which according to Oselin made them experts. The change in identity could involve social learning and/or behaviorism.	Deviant Behavior
Oselin (2010)	Street	36 current in rehabilitation at 4 centers across the US	This study focused on why women transitioned out of prostitution. The primary reasons involved turning points, such as	N/A	Sociological Perspectives

			arrest, hospitalization, and pregnancy or childbirth. Sanders (2007) also cited pivotal events as a reason for transitioning. Although not one of the three critical findings, Dalla (2006) also recognized pivotal events as influential.		
Sanders (2007)	Street and Indoor (sauna)	15 street; 15 indoor (sauna) – 13 of which remained out for 18 months – 12 years	Sanders identified four typologies for how women exit sex work. • Reactionary routes out – pivotal, and usually traumatic events triggered leaving • Gradual planning – deciding to leave and then planning an exit • Natural progression – aging out or being overwhelmed by too many burdens related to the industry • Yo-yo pattern – reentry back into the industry after attempting to exit	Used a symbolic interactionist perspective to understand how individuals made meaning of their behaviors and social interactions. Connections could be made with the social interactions and social cognitive theory. The reflection on behavior and social interactions also provide support for experiential learning.	Feminist Criminology
Sherman et al. (2006)	Street	54 injection drug users engaged in street prostitution	Though the study was not specific to women's transition experiences, it was accepted in the inclusion criteria of the integrative literature review, because 29% of participants in the pilot program discontinued engagement in prostitution. The purpose of the program was to reduce HIV risk behavior and not to encourage or help women transition out of prostitution.	Sherman et al. piloted an educational program to reduce HIV risk behaviors in women. Social cognitive learning theory was used to shape the learning objectives and delivery methods. The program specifically focused on increasing women's self-efficacy, including job self-efficacy as a means to reduce HIV risk behaviors. Women were taught business skills through the making and selling of jewelry.	AIDS Care
Wahab (2006)	Street	12 currently in rehab or graduation; 19 program staff	Primarily focused on the program from an organization development perspective and not the women's experience transition. The experience was focused on how they perceived the organization – organization's objectives, strengths, weaknesses.	The study provides some insights into the role organizations play in women's learning as they transition out.	Qualitative Social Work: Research and Practice

APPENDIX B

PSEUDONYM EXPLANATION

Pseudonym	Individual inspiring the pseudonym	Description
Jillian	Jill Lepore	Lepore (2014) is the author of The Secret History of Wonder Woman, which documents the feminist inspirations behind the Wonder Woman comics.
Elizabeth	Elizabeth Cady Stanton	An American suffragette, who founded the first women's right convention in the world (History.com staff, 2009).
Billie	Billie Jean King	A tennis professional who played against Bobby Riggs in the "Battle of the Sexes." King fought a bigger battle against inequality of the court in her fit for equal pay (Stanley, 2006).
Josie	Josephine Baker	An American signer and civil rights activist, Baker received honors for her service in France during World War II working in intelligence with the Red Cross for the French Resistance and as a performer for the troops (Lewis, 2016).
Helena	Helena Rubinstein	A Polish American entrepreneur who started a makeup line in the early 1900s when very few women owned businesses (Alpern, 2009).
Amelia	Amelia Earhart	A pioneer in air travel, Earhart was the first pilot to fly solo across the Pacific. She famously disappeared during an attempt to fly around the equator, the longest around the world flight to date. Before her tragic flight, Earhart accumulated many aviation firsts among men and women (Thurman, 2009).
Clara	Clara Barton	Founder of the American Red Cross and lifelong humanitarian, Barton is one of the most famous women in history (History.com staff, 2009b).
Elle	Eleanor Roosevelt	Named "the first lady of the world," Roosevelt was a human rights activist (Showalter, 2016, p. 1). After serving as

		the First Lady of the United States, Roosevelt served as in the U.S. delegation for the first UN assembly.
Eva	Eva Peron	Known to her supporters as Evita, Peron was a strong advocate for the poor in Argentina. She even considered running for Vice President with great support from the working class (Minster, 2016)
Gloria	Gloria Steinem	A women's rights activist for over fifty years, Steinem has "introducing millions of girls and women to the feminist cause" (Kramer, 2015, p. 1). She has traveled the world helping women empower themselves and giving them a voice.