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**Author(s):**               **Meredith Dank, Ph.D., Bilal Khan, Ph.D., P. Mitchell Downey, Cybele Kotonias, Deborah Mayer, Colleen Owens, Laura Pacifici, Lilly Yu**

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# Estimating the Size and Structure of the Underground Commercial Sex Economy in Eight Major US Cities

MEREDITH DANK, PHD  
URBAN INSTITUTE

BILAL KHAN, PHD  
JOHN JAY COLLEGE

P. MITCHELL DOWNEY  
URBAN INSTITUTE

CYBELE KOTONIAS  
URBAN INSTITUTE

DEBORAH MAYER  
URBAN INSTITUTE

COLLEEN OWENS  
URBAN INSTITUTE

LAURA PACIFICI  
URBAN INSTITUTE

LILLY YU  
RICE UNIVERSITY

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# Executive Summary

## Purpose and Goals of This Study

In 2010, the National Institute of Justice funded the Urban Institute's Justice Policy Center to measure the size and structure of the underground commercial sex economy in eight major US cities. The goals of this study were to: (1) derive a more rigorous estimate of the underground commercial sex economy (UCSE) in eight major US cities; and (2) provide an understanding of the structure of this underground economy. To date, no reliable data exist to provide national or state policymakers with a verifiable and detailed understanding of underground commercial sex trade networks, or the ways in which these networks interact with one another on the local, state, or interstate level. In addition, there is no information regarding the relationship between the UCSE and the local commercial sex trade or commercial sex activity conducted over the Internet. This study aimed to close the gap in our understanding about the nature and extent of these activities.

## Research Questions

The study was guided by four main research questions:

1. How large is the underground commercial sex economy in eight major US cities?
2. To what extent are the underground commercial sex, drug, and weapons economies interconnected in the eight major US cities?
3. How do the ties between traffickers within the underground commercial sex economy impact the transportation of sex trafficking victims?
4. What are the network characteristics of the traffickers that operate within the underground commercial sex economy?

## Methodology

The study employed a multi-method approach, using both qualitative and quantitative data, and data were collected in the following eight cities: San Diego, Seattle, Dallas, Denver, Washington, DC, Kansas City, Atlanta, and Miami. Existing datasets documenting the market changes for illegal drugs and weapons were analyzed to measure changes in these markets and estimate the overall size of these markets. This was done by measuring changes in a series of "proxy" variables, which we assumed to be proportional to underlying activity. Thus, official national datasets<sup>1</sup> that measured some sort of drug and gun activities over a period of time were collected to measure these changes. Qualitative data was collected through interviews with 119 stakeholders and 142 convicted offenders, including local and federal law enforcement officers, prosecutors, pimps/sex traffickers, sex workers, and child pornographers. Stakeholders and offenders were interviewed about the structure of the UCSE, the profits generated through the UCSE, networking within the UCSE, and changes in the UCSE over time.

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<sup>1</sup> These datasets included National Survey of Drug Use and Health (NSDUH); Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS); Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN); Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF); and National Vital Statistics data (NVSS).

## Main Findings

We highlight 17 main findings which are divided into two groups: (1) sex trafficking and sex work and (2) child pornography.<sup>2</sup> These findings are discussed in more detail in chapter 10.

### Sex Trafficking and Sex Work Findings

1. **Estimates of the UCSE in 2007 range from \$39.9 to \$290 million in the cities included in the study. In five of the seven cities, the size of the UCSE decreased from 2003 to 2007.** During the same time period, the underground drug economy increased in five cities and the underground gun economy decreased in three cities, increased in three cities, and remained the same in one city.<sup>3</sup>
2. **In all eight study sites, there appears to be no connection between weapons trafficking and the UCSE. The overlap with drug trafficking varies by UCSE venue. In five of the study sites, gang involvement in sex trafficking and prostitution seems to be increasing.** Neither offenders nor law enforcement stakeholders offered concrete evidence of a connection between domestic weapons trafficking and domestic sex trafficking or prostitution. The connection between drug trafficking and the UCSE varies by type of sex venue. Twenty-five percent of pimp respondents (controlling street and Internet sex work) worked as drug dealers prior to working as pimps, and 18 percent of respondents continued to deal drugs while they pimped, creating overlap between the profits and networks within each economy. The connections between drug trafficking and indoor commercial sex venues such as brothels and erotic massage parlors are unclear at present and require additional investigation. The involvement of gangs in pimping was cited in five of the eight study sites.
3. **Pimps travel in circuits and utilize social networks to facilitate the transportation of employees to different locations for work.** Pimps transported women and girls along circuits that connect different cities with active UCSEs. Law enforcement respondents reported local, statewide, regional, and national circuits. Offenders reported that connections with pimps in other cities helped them stay informed about law enforcement activities and local events that could affect travel decisions.
4. **Pimps and sex workers cited many of the same factors influencing their decision to become involved in the UCSE. Pimps described neighborhood influence, family exposure to sex work, lack of job options, and encouragement from a significant other or acquaintance as critical factors in their decision to engage in the UCSE.** Sex worker respondents explained, and previous studies have also established, that street-based sex workers become involved in sex work for similar reasons such as economic necessity, family and peer encouragement, childhood trauma, and social acceptance.
5. **Pimps rely on multiple actors to maintain control over UCSE operations. Individuals already under pimp control play a critical role in recruiting other individuals to engage in the UCSE; friends or family members work as drivers or provide security; and complicit legal businesses often enable sex trafficking operations.** Though pimps can operate without the support of additional actors, their assistance often helps pimps expand their operations, maintain tighter control over their employees, and avoid law enforcement detection.
6. **Different forms of coercion and fraud are used by pimps to recruit, manage, and retain control over employees. These forms include feigning romantic interest, emphasizing mutual dependency between pimp and employee, discouraging women from “having sex for free,” and promising material comforts.** These methods are relatively advanced; for example, pimps reported adjusting their recruitment methods in

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<sup>2</sup> Child pornography is separated out from sex trafficking and sex work since we learned early on in the project that child pornography is primarily non-commercialized in the United States and is often traded for free.

<sup>3</sup> Due to the insufficient data about Kansas City, this city was dropped from the estimation analysis (see chapter 3 for more detail).



response to their observations regarding the personal needs, experience, and vulnerabilities of the individuals they intend to recruit.

7. **While pimps have varying levels of knowledge regarding law enforcement tactics and sentencing surrounding sex trafficking, offenders believed that pimping was less risky than other crimes, including drug trafficking.** Though the majority of respondents stated that arrest is the foremost “risk” of pimping, they also routinely reported that they believed pimping was less risky than other crimes.
8. **The widespread availability and rapid expansion of the Internet has redefined the spatial and social limitations of the sex market by introducing new markets for both recruitment and advertisement.** Findings from this study corroborate extant literature on the expansion of Internet use to facilitate sex work. Offenders reported new marketing opportunities for pimps to connect with both recruits and clientele, including online classifieds, social media, and networking websites.
9. **Although interviews with offenders did not uncover elements of organized crime, interviews with law enforcement suggest that the level of “organized crime” and degree of criminal network involvement varies by UCSE venue.** Stakeholders and offenders described pimps that primarily facilitate street and Internet sex work as networked socially, rather than through traditional organized crime structures. Higher levels of organized crime were suspected by law enforcement within erotic massage parlors, strip clubs, and brothels, although these suspicions remain largely unconfirmed.
10. **Findings suggest that the cases of pimping and sex trafficking investigated and prosecuted in the United States represent only a small fraction of the UCSE.** Across sites, criminal justice stakeholders felt the UCSE was much larger than they were able to investigate, due to resource constraints, political will, or lack of public awareness about the prevalence of UCSE crimes. Multiple offenders expressed the sentiment that “no one actually gets locked up for pimping.”

## Child Pornography Findings

1. **Child pornography is an escalating problem and has become increasingly graphic with younger victims.** Both stakeholders and offenders incarcerated on child pornography charges described a growing number of individuals viewing online child pornography. Both stakeholders and offenders pointed to increasingly graphic content, often featuring violent acts against infants and toddlers.
2. **Child pornography is an international crime that transcends real and virtual borders.** Child pornography is a crime that has become global in scope, particularly with the advent of the Internet. Through technology and the Internet, individuals can now download, trade, and produce child pornography with anyone in the world, anytime during the day, seven days a week, which may help offenders elude detection. Sex tourism was also cited by stakeholders interviewed for this study as an international problem that is growing in both scope and scale.
3. **Child pornography is easy to access online and requires little technological savvy to download.** Law enforcement officials and child pornography offenders unanimously agreed that the Internet has made child pornography extremely accessible and that individuals need very little technological knowledge to not only download but also trade child pornography content.
4. **Many child pornography offenders want treatment.** Inmates incarcerated on child pornography charges frequently described their relationship with child pornography as an addiction or sickness. They highlighted the paucity of treatment options within prison, which are only available at certain facilities for inmates close to release.
5. **Child pornography is commonly considered a victimless crime by child pornographers who do not commit contact offenses.** The majority of individuals interviewed for this study who were incarcerated for non-contact child pornography offenses (possession and distribution) claimed to never have engaged in contact offenses with children. Therefore, they believed their crime was “victimless” since they were downloading and/or trading the images—not producing new content.

6. **For offenders, the prevalence of online child pornography communities reinforces and normalizes child pornography offenses.** Many of the offenders interviewed were members of online child pornography communities. These communities allow them to be around like-minded individuals, share child pornography content, and discuss their fantasies, which may or may not involve first-hand contact with children. Online child pornography communities also allow individuals to communicate with one another under a cloak of anonymity.
7. **Due to resource limitations, the least technologically savvy offenders are most likely to be detected.** Both stakeholders and inmates incarcerated on child pornography charges described a variation in collecting behavior and networking levels across Internet child pornography offenders. While some offenders are technologically sophisticated, sharing strategies to evade law enforcement within structured trading networks, other offenders described themselves as “point and click,” using rudimentary methods to download, store, and share child pornography.

## Policy and Practice Implications

The current findings expand our knowledge about the size and structure of the underground commercial sex economy. Further, the findings have implications for policy and practice:

- All states and DC should mandate training to ensure that law enforcement is equipped with the knowledge necessary to identify and pursue cases of human trafficking.
- All states and DC should develop human trafficking task forces or bodies to help coordinate law enforcement strategies statewide.
- All states should include fraud and coercion in their definitions of sex trafficking, and enact statutes that invite broad interpretations of fraud and coercion that include subtle, non-physical forms used to manipulate victims.
- All states and DC should allow law enforcement to use wiretaps to investigate human trafficking offenses.
- Federal law should require that trafficking hotlines are posted on websites hosting service advertisements, including Craigslist.com and Backpage.com. All states and DC should similarly mandate that local newspapers hosting classified advertisements post trafficking hotline information.
- Additional resources should be made available to local and state law enforcement agencies to maintain consistent and visible law enforcement attention to sex trafficking and pursue investigations.
- Cities and counties should address sex trafficking as a complex problem that requires a systemwide response, and schools, law enforcement, and social service agencies must work collaboratively to combat sex trafficking in their communities. Prevention campaigns must ensure that both boys and girls are educated about the role of force, fraud, coercion, and exploitation in sex trafficking.
- In coordination with prosecutors, law enforcement trainings should focus on both victim and offender interview techniques to identify signs of fraud and coercion. Local and federal prosecutors, law enforcement, and judges should be trained on the evidence necessary to prove fraud and coercion according to the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act standards and the legal standards of state human trafficking laws.
- Investigative techniques used to uncover organized crime, drug trafficking, and gangs should be adopted to better uncover the level of organized crime within all forms of the UCSE. Cross-training of narcotics, gang, and prostitution/sex trafficking investigators should be developed and promoted.
- Steps should be taken to increase law enforcement racial, ethnic, and gender diversity, and recruit individuals with fluency in languages spoken by suspected offenders and victims in the local UCSE.
- Authorities in countries where child pornography is being produced, traded, and downloaded, and where sex tourism is occurring, not only need to cooperate with one another but also need to make this issue a priority. One way to accomplish this is by developing and enforcing memoranda

of understandings between the United States and other countries which detail how these offenders will be identified and who will be in charge of the investigation and prosecution.

- Accessible treatment is a vital part of the solution to combat child pornography. Though resources are available for online child pornography behavior, they are not well publicized in the United States.
- Child pornography laws need to be strengthened so that individuals who facilitate or host online child pornography content and communities are held criminally responsible for their actions.
- Due to constantly evolving technology, more resources should be invested in law enforcement to stay up to date on new methods. Additionally, the criminal justice system should properly distinguish between low-level and serious child pornography offenders.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### Purpose of the Study

The global profit generated through human trafficking, which includes both sex and labor trafficking, has been estimated to be approximately \$32 billion a year (Belser 2005). Of that \$32 billion, approximately \$28 billion can be attributed to forced commercial sexual exploitation (Belser 2005). Belser's study is the only published attempt to date to empirically measure the profits generated through human trafficking, and, as the author points out, is based on rough estimates and assumptions. In a more systematic attempt to measure the global commercial sex economy, Kara (2009) estimates that the global commercial sexual exploitation of victims generated \$51.3 billion in revenues in 2007. However, this estimate is again based on a number of estimates and assumptions. The goal of the current study is to derive a more rigorous estimate of the underground commercial sex economy (UCSE) in eight major US cities, as well as provide an understanding of the structure of this underground economy. To date, no reliable data exists to provide national or state policymakers with a verifiable and detailed understanding of underground commercial sex trade networks, or the ways in which these networks interact with one another on the local, state, or interstate level. In addition, there is no information regarding the relationship between the UCSE and the local commercial sex trade or commercial sex activity conducted over the Internet. This study aims to close the gap in our understanding about the nature and extent of these activities.

In 2010, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) funded the Urban Institute to measure the size and structure of the underground commercial sex economy in the United States. In order to meet our goal, we collected data that would allow our research team to estimate the size of the underground commercial sex economy in eight major cities in the United States and the ties across different types of activities within the UCSE. We relied on a multi-method approach using both qualitative and quantitative data to estimate the size of UCSE including:

- Collecting official data<sup>4</sup> on crime related to the underground weapons and drugs economies;
- Conducting semi-structured interviews with convicted traffickers, pimps, child pornographers, and sex workers at the federal, state, and local levels; and
- Conducting semi-structured interviews with local and federal police investigators and prosecutors to inform our analysis of the interrelationship across different types of underground commercial sex activity.

Our research methods and data collection allowed us to generate an aggregate estimate of the underground economy and its sub-economies in eight major US cities, as informed by the insights and experience of local and federal law enforcement and convicted offenders. The interviews explored the known nature and extent of the UCSE in local areas as understood by law enforcement, as well as documented its potential reach and resilience as understood by convicted offenders.

This report documents the findings from the study. The remainder of this chapter includes background on estimating the prevalence of human trafficking in the United States; however, almost all subsequent chapters, with the exception of the methodology chapter (chapter 2), will include their own literature review. Chapter 2 describes the study's research questions and methodology, including how we selected the eight sites, developed the estimation methodology, and identified and ultimately interviewed study participants. Chapters 3 through 9<sup>5</sup> include the findings of the study presented by topic, including the size

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<sup>4</sup> See chapter 2 for a full list of official data sources used for this study.

<sup>5</sup> Chapters 4–6 all contain information documented in our interviews with traffickers and pimps, and each chapter builds off what was discussed in the previous chapter. Thus, they should be read in consecutive order to best understand our findings.

of the underground commercial sex economy in the eight US cities; law enforcement's understanding and involvement in addressing the underground commercial sex economy; the pathways and risks involved in pimping and trafficking; the network characteristics of pimping and sex trafficking; the business structure and methods involved in running an underground commercial sex business; the role of technology and networking in child pornography; and how the underground commercial sex economy has changed over time from the perspectives of sex workers. Finally, chapter 10 provides overall conclusions and implications of the study's findings on policy and practice.

## Background on the Prevalence of Human Trafficking in the United States

A commercial sex act is defined by NIJ as any sex act in exchange for which anything of value is given to or received by any person (e.g., prostitution).<sup>6</sup> Underground commercial sex acts are those acts that state and/or federal law have deemed illegal.<sup>7</sup> Such acts include adult prostitution, sex trafficking of adults and children,<sup>8</sup> and child pornography.<sup>9</sup> Unlawful commercial sex acts overlap with sex trafficking when participation occurs by means of force, fraud, or coercion, or the commercial sex act involves a child under the age of 18.

Although numerous studies and reports examine human trafficking in the United States, reliable empirical research about the phenomenon is limited. A review of over 700 sources in the literature on human trafficking found that less than half (46 percent) contained empirical research (Gozdziak and Bump 2008) and only 12 percent of this research was peer-reviewed. Although the deficiencies of existing estimates of human trafficking are well documented (Government Accountability Office 2006), few attempts have been made to use other sources of data and research to study the prevalence of trafficking in the United States.

In 2006, Caliber Associates developed an estimate of the number of individuals in eight countries who were at risk of being trafficked into the United States; however, the study did not account for victims trafficked domestically/internally (Clawson, Layne, and Small 2006). They found that in order for sound estimates to be generated using statistical approaches, the field needed to collect systematic data on trafficking victimization.

In "Finding Victims of Human Trafficking," researchers at the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) conducted surveys of law enforcement, prosecutors, and victim service providers in 60 US counties and case reviews of potential human trafficking cases in a subset of counties. Researchers were unable to provide an estimate of trafficking victims and potential victims of both labor and sex trafficking due to a lack of systematic recordkeeping and a lack of awareness about human trafficking and anti-trafficking laws, but did conclude that commercial sex economies are concentrated in large urban areas and span a variety of venues, including escort services, massage parlors, Internet advertisements, and street-based prostitution. However, without systematic data, they could not estimate the number of cases (Newton, Mulcahy, and Martin 2008).

In 2009, researchers at Northeastern University, Abt Associates, and the Urban Institute assessed and analyzed data from 207 identified technical reports, published studies, and scholarly articles that included

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6 <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/slooo887.pdf> (see page 4).

7 Underground commercial sex acts do not include adult pornography and adult stripping, both considered part of the legal commercial sex economy.

8 Sex trafficking involves the "recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision or obtaining of a person for the purpose of" a commercial sex act in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person forced to perform such an act is under the age of eighteen" a forced or coerced sex act (TVPA 2000, Section 103, 8a).

9 Debate exists over whether child pornography is a form of sex trafficking (see Small et al. 2008). Since the TVPA states that a "commercial sex act" requires an exchange of value (i.e., drugs or money), it is questionable whether pornography is in all cases a form of human trafficking. For the purposes of our research, we will categorize child pornography as distinct from child sex trafficking.

information about populations that have been trafficked<sup>10</sup> or are at risk for human trafficking to derive an accurate estimate of the problem.<sup>11</sup> However, weaknesses and inconsistencies in the methods and data used prohibited the creation of a reliable estimate. The study found that estimates of the minimum number of victims of trafficking in the United States vary considerably. National data collection and survey studies produce a median estimate of the minimum number of victims each year as low as 3,817 victims, whereas the median estimate of the minimum number of victims produced by economic modeling studies was as high as 22,320 (Farrell et al. 2010).

Human trafficking was only recently classified as a crime in the national Uniform Crime Report (UCR) crime-reporting program in January 2013. As such, up until recently, local law enforcement lacked a standard method for reporting human trafficking arrests and investigations.<sup>12</sup> Even when victims are identified, their cases often do not progress through stages of the criminal justice system to be counted in government statistics because victims who are traumatized or are fearful of retaliation by their traffickers may be reluctant to cooperate with law enforcement investigations (Antonopoulou and Skoufalos 2006; Clawson et al. 2003; Small et al. 2008). Additionally, state enforcement of anti-human trafficking laws often do not match federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) laws or enforcement methods, resulting in many trafficking cases prosecuted as lesser, more familiar charges, such as pandering. Prosecuting and proving an adult sex trafficking case is also difficult and dependent on several factors, including the prosecutor's willingness to apply anti-trafficking statutes and the trafficked individual's willingness to identify as a victim and testify against his or her trafficker (Farrell et al. 2010).

Taken together, these studies had important implications for the current research design. First, they suggested that a bottom-up approach to estimating the underground commercial sex economy would fail in a majority of the counties in the United States due to a lack of knowledge about the definition of sex trafficking. Second, these studies illuminated the reality that official data collection on human trafficking arrests or prosecutions is unreliable since a) it represents the tip of the iceberg for a largely hidden crime and b) it is not collected systematically. This study employs an entirely new approach at estimating the prevalence of the underground commercial sex economy.

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10 Studies limited to those studies that met the federal definition of severe forms of human trafficking, according to the Trafficking Victims Protection Act.

11 Data was also disaggregated by type of trafficking and venue (such as households, brothels, and hotels). For over 80 percent of all identified venues, no systematic sources of information could be found.

12 The exception to this was the Human Trafficking Reporting System (HTRS) designed and operated jointly by researchers at Northeastern University and Urban Institute. HTRS collects systematic, detailed incident-level information on investigations into potential and confirmed cases of human trafficking undertaken by the 42 Bureau of Justice Assistance-funded human trafficking task forces across the country.

# Chapter 2

## Research Questions and Methodology

Little is known about the size of the underground commercial sex economy, how it operates, and UCSE network interactions at the local, state and interstate level. This study is one of the first attempts to systematically and empirically document the size and structure of the underground commercial sex economy in eight major US cities through multiple data collection methods and sources. In this chapter, we describe the study's four research questions, our site selection process, the evolution of how we estimated the UCSE, and the stakeholder and offender interview process.

### Research Questions

This report will answer the following four research questions:

#### UCSE Operations

1. How large is the underground commercial sex economy in eight major US cities?
  - a. How does the size of the underground commercial sex economy in these eight cities compare to the underground drug and weapons economies in these eight cities?
  - b. How have these economies changed over time?
2. To what extent are the underground commercial sex, drug, and weapons economies interconnected in the eight major US cities?

#### Social Networks within the UCSE

3. How do the ties between traffickers within the underground commercial sex economy impact the transportation of sex trafficking victims?
4. What are the network characteristics of the traffickers that operate within the underground commercial sex economy?

### Terminology

When deciding what terminology to use when referring to the various actors involved in UCSE, we knew that whatever terms we used would appease some and offend others. These were not easy decisions to make; however, the research team agreed that it was best to use the terms that the individuals we interviewed (both offenders and law enforcement) preferred, since it was not our place to re-label these actors.<sup>13</sup>

As respondents indicated throughout data collection, the word pimp carries implicit meaning beyond simply "an individual who facilitates and profits from prostitution." These associations cannot be assumed of nor projected on this study's respondents. With this important note in mind, we do employ the term pimp throughout this report. At present, no other broadly understood and comprehensive term exists to identify individuals who engage in pandering and the facilitation of sex work. However, the term pimp is defined herein as someone who facilitates prostitution and profits in some way from that facilitation. In many cases, this includes the use of force, fraud, and/or coercion, particularly when juveniles are involved. In chapters five through seven, we refer to the women and girls who work for pimps as employees,<sup>14</sup> since that is how they were referred to in the interviews.

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<sup>13</sup> See appendix L for more definitions of terms used throughout this report.

<sup>14</sup> We used the term employee (as opposed to sex worker or victim) in the interviews with pimps and traffickers since the questions we asked them were business focused and we felt that this was a neutral term that would encourage respondents to speak with us.

In chapters three through eight, we refer to the individuals engaged in the commercial sex market as sex workers. According to Thukral, Ditmore, and Murphy (2005, 9), sex work is defined as “a term used to refer to all aspects of the lawful and unlawful sex industry.” The term “sex work” is frequently used to encompass the broad array of legal and illegal activities that take place in indoor and outdoor settings in the sex industry, ranging from stripping and dancing to streetwalking to working for escort, massage, and call services. Due to sex work’s broad definition, researchers have recognized the considerable diversity that exists among different types of commercial sex transactions and services. Murphy and Venkatesh (2006, 130) highlight this variability in their study of indoor sex workers, writing that while the individuals in their sample engaged in some form of sex work, the sex workers’ “working conditions, their client base, the specific place in which they conduct their work, their rate, etc. ... all differ, depending on the specific type of sex work in which they are engaged. So, while the term sex worker denotes women who exchange sex for material goods, the condition under which this exchange is conducted varies greatly.”

Scholars have drawn distinctions between indoor and outdoor sex work. Indoor sex work takes place in brothels, homes, strip clubs, and bars, and includes escort and massage services as well as fetish work, including bondage, dominance, sadism and masochism (BDSM). Outdoor sex work encompasses street work that occurs in public spaces, hotels, motels, and cars.

Many scholars use the terms “prostitution” and “sex work” interchangeably as a generic term for any individual who exchanges a sexual act for something of value. Murphy and Venkatesh (2006, 129) define sex workers as “anyone who exchanges sexual intercourse (including oral sex) for money or some other material good.” The National Institute of Justice defines “prostitution” similarly, as “the offering of something of value in exchange for sexual activity. By definition, prostitution is a form of commodification, which in this context is the belief that women generally and/or sexual activity specifically are commercial products” (Moses 2006). Sexual acts are exchanged for a number of items of value, including but not limited to, money, drugs, or other desired objects (Dalla 2000; Schauer and Wheaton 2006).

## Research Design

We used quantitative and qualitative data collection methodologies to answer the research questions outlined above. In order to estimate the size of the UCSE in each study site, we estimated the changes in the markets for illegal drugs and weapons over time, and how they differed across sites. This was done by measuring changes in a series of “proxy” variables, which we assumed to be proportional to underlying activity. Thus, official national datasets<sup>15</sup> that measured some sort of drug and gun activities over a period of time were collected to measure these changes.

We collected qualitative data through interviews with local and federal law enforcement and prosecutors, as well as interviews with convicted traffickers, pimps, and child pornographers, and sex workers involved in court diversion programming, to help us understand the structure and network ties of the underground commercial sex economy at local, state, and interstate levels. We also used the interviews with pimps, traffickers, and sex workers to quantify the amount of profits generated through the UCSE and to create overall UCSE estimates by city.

## Site Selection Process

We employed a targeted, purposive sample of urban areas as study sites for a number of reasons. First, it allowed us to efficiently direct sampling resources. Second, with the exception of Internet-based commerce, the underground commercial sex trade is known to be a phenomenon that is largely concentrated, and most likely observed, in urban settings.<sup>16</sup> We also assumed that convicted traffickers,

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<sup>15</sup> These datasets included the National Survey of Drug Use and Health (NSDUH); Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS); Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN), Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF); and National Vital Statistics data (NVSS).

<sup>16</sup> Focusing only on major cities precludes a nationally representative sample, but because major cities have more experience with cases involving the UCSE and richer data than non-urban areas, this trade-off is justified (Newton et al. 2008).



sex workers, and child pornographers who operated in an urban setting could potentially run operations in non-urban settings. Third, since it was never our intention to estimate the size of the underground commercial sex economy for the entire United States, we decided to select six major cities (later increased to eight)<sup>17</sup> with the goal of providing a replicable estimation model that could be used to estimate the size of the UCSE in other cities. Therefore, we selected eight major cities in the United States in which we interviewed appropriate local and federal law enforcement and prosecutors.

We began with a considerably larger pool of possible sites to select the cities of interest. Starting with a list of the 100 largest metro statistical areas (MSAs) by population as defined by the Census Bureau, we narrowed the options down to a list of 17 potential sites based on the following factors (listed in no particular order):

1. Number of convictions in the Federal Justice Statistics Resource Center (FJSRC) data for UCSE-related offenses (at least 20)
2. Recommendations from UCSE subject experts
3. Existence of a federally-funded human trafficking task force
4. Willingness of local law enforcement to work with researchers on this issue
5. Availability of gun and drug data to be used as proxies
6. Geographic location
7. Where the city falls within known “pimp circuits” in the United States

For the first factor, we looked at sections within Title 18 of the US penal code related to crimes that fall under the UCSE in the FJSRC data, which include 18 §1590 (Trafficking with respect to peonage, slavery, involuntary servitude or forced labor), 18 § 1591 (sex trafficking of children or by force, fraud or coercion), and 18 § 2252A (certain activities relating to material constituting or containing child pornography).<sup>18</sup> For the second factor, we gathered information from national experts on underground commercial sex activities, including individuals from Polaris Project, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), United States Department of State, and the National Institute of Justice. We consulted these national experts regarding potential sites.

After identifying 17 potential study sites, the primary local law enforcement agency in each site was sent an introductory email that described the purpose of our study and asked permission to speak to the appropriate law enforcement officers that worked on human trafficking, child pornography, and prostitution investigations. The introductory email explained that the purpose of the screening call was to determine whether their jurisdiction met the criteria threshold for the study and whether they were interested in participating in the project. They were also informed that the information obtained during the screening would not be used for research purposes (see appendix A for the introductory email and appendix B for the screening guide).

We conducted screening interviews with law enforcement personnel in 12 sites during April and May 2011. Not all jurisdictions were cooperative or responsive, and many of the responsive jurisdictions were unable to participate due to bureaucratic challenges. The screening interviews collected data on the number and types of human trafficking cases that were investigated (and to their knowledge prosecuted) in their jurisdiction, common UCSE offender characteristics, and any changes to the underground commercial sex market in the last five to ten years. In all, we conducted 19 separate interviews with over 35 law enforcement agents from 17 agencies in 12 different metropolitan areas.

Following the screening interviews, we determined which sites would be the strongest candidates for the study. We took into account the cooperativeness of the interviewees and agencies, the size of the reported underground commercial sex economy problem, the number of convictions for underground commercial sex in each jurisdiction, geographical diversity, and the cooperation of surrounding jurisdictions in the same MSA. Based on what we had learned to date, we decided to include a seventh site. Although the

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<sup>17</sup> We had originally proposed six cities, but after further consideration, decided it was in our best interest to expand the number of cities to eight since it would provide us with a larger sample pool and help us to better understand how the UCSE operates in more cities.

<sup>18</sup> For a full list of title section and codes used for the purposes of site selection, please see appendix C.

seven sites were finalized in June 2011, we were contacted by stakeholders in the governor's office of an eighth city that had recently formed a human trafficking task force. This city was interested in participating in any ongoing, national human trafficking research. After several conversations with members of the newly formed task force, we agreed it would be in our best interest to add this eighth site, especially given that this city is known as an origin, transit, and destination city for human trafficking. Therefore, the final eight MSAs included<sup>19</sup>: Washington, DC; Dallas, Texas; Kansas City, Missouri; San Diego, California; Seattle, Washington; Denver, Colorado; Miami, Florida; and Atlanta, Georgia.

Although all eight sites reported significant underground commercial sex economies, their economies differed in a number of important respects:<sup>20</sup>

- Six sites observed gang involvement, while only three of those six said UCSE activity is dominated by gangs.
- Three sites reported significant hierarchical structures in their UCSE that were indicative of organized crime.
- Five sites reported that offenders are frequently in communication with one another.
- Three sites reported that sophisticated money laundering takes place.
- Four sites reported that many sex traffickers are former drug traffickers.
- Four sites (not the same as above) reported that sex traffickers are concurrently dealing drugs.
- Three sites have significant Asian involvement in trafficking.
- Two sites have significant Eastern European involvement.
- Five sites have significant Latino involvement.

In each of these important dimensions, our sample is diverse and ultimately yields important site-to-site variations.

After site selection, we identified the primary law enforcement agencies in each city, and in some cases in the surrounding metropolitan area, that investigated human trafficking, child pornography, and prostitution cases. Our initial target group was local law enforcement,<sup>21</sup> instead of federal law enforcement or prosecutors, since they would be the most knowledgeable about how the local UCSE operates today and how it has changed over time. Federal law enforcement officials tend to be more experienced with how the UCSE operates at the interstate level, and moreover, typically only stay with a local bureau for a specified amount of time. Thus, they would not have the historical or in-depth knowledge that local law enforcement would possess. Likewise, federal prosecutors only prosecute a fraction of the cases that are brought to them by the police and are not in the field every day; therefore, it did not make sense to focus on federal prosecutors as our main stakeholder unit of analysis.

The chief law enforcement officer at each primary law enforcement agency was sent a letter requesting their agency's formal participation in the study (see appendix D for the participation letter). The chief law enforcement officer for each primary agency had to agree, in writing, to the terms of the study protocol outlined in the letter, and designate a staff member responsible for assisting with the coordination of our data collection. This occurred in each of the eight sites selected.

## Stakeholder Interview Process

We conducted stakeholder interviews with a number of relevant parties. We began our data collection process with law enforcement because of their on-the-ground experience with the underground commercial sex market. They understand all the different facets of the underground commercial sex market, particularly how they operate, the individuals within them, and how they have changed over time.

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<sup>19</sup> Law enforcement agencies in all eight sites were informed that the location of the cities would not be confidential and would be disclosed in the final report.

<sup>20</sup> One city is not included in the following breakdown since it was not part of the initial screening process.

<sup>21</sup> This included police, sheriff, and state-level investigation agencies, depending on the structure of the law enforcement departments in the selected sites.

In addition, we conducted interviews with police, postal inspectors, prosecutors, Internal Revenue Service agents, government officials, and public defenders involved in the investigation and prosecution of human trafficking, pimping and pandering, child pornography, and prostitution cases in all eight sites. These interviews concentrated on the research questions, particularly on how the UCSE operates and the network ties within the UCSE. Finally, in addition to these stakeholders, we also interviewed national subject matter experts from Polaris Project, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, Financial Coalition Against Child Pornography, Department of Justice's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, and the US Postal Service.

The in-depth stakeholder interviews provided us with information on (1) characteristics of UCSE offenders; (2) details of UCSE investigations and arrests; (3) evidence of illegal transactions and assets seized; (4) knowledge of UCSE criminal networks; and, (5) UCSE network connections to illegal drugs and weapons economies. They also provided us with a contextual understanding of the local underground commercial sex economy; how much money is generated in the UCSE; how the UCSE impacts sex trafficking—both the demand and network characteristics of offenders involved in the UCSE. Lastly, in order to develop an offender database for interviewing purposes (see the following section for more details), stakeholders were also asked to provide the names of individuals who were convicted of a UCSE-related crime and were currently incarcerated.

Across the eight study sites, we conducted 119 in-depth interviews. The interview breakdown is as follows:

- 62 local law enforcement officers
- 33 federal law enforcement officers (Federal Bureau of Investigations and Homeland Security Investigations agents)
- 6 postal inspectors
- 6 county or state prosecutors
- 6 federal prosecutors
- 3 Internal Revenue Service agents
- 2 government policy advisors
- 1 public defender
- 62 local law enforcement officers
- 33 federal law enforcement officers (Federal Bureau of Investigations and Homeland Security Investigations agents)
- 6 postal inspectors
- 6 county or state prosecutors
- 6 federal prosecutors
- 3 Internal Revenue Service agents
- 2 government policy advisors
- 1 public defender

Most interviews were conducted in person<sup>22</sup> and lasted between one and two hours. The interviews were voice recorded with the permission of the interview participant. Interviewers took detailed notes in the cases where interviewees did not agree to be voice recorded. The interviews were semi-structured to encourage respondents to provide open-ended responses. Appendices E–J includes copies of interview consent forms and interview protocols for all interviewees.

## Offender Interview Process

While official interviews with law enforcement and other stakeholders provide details about human trafficking, child pornography, and prostitution that emerge through investigation, we felt that it was critical to document the perspectives of the underground commercial sex market facilitators to fully understand the nature of the UCSE. These interviews would help us address all the research questions

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<sup>22</sup> In a few cases, interviews could not be arranged while we were on site due to scheduling constraints of the interviewees. These interviews were subsequently conducted over the phone.

and, in particular, help us understand the characteristics of human trafficking operations, the amount of money in the UCSE, the UCSE's impact on trafficking, the ties between traffickers, and UCSE offenders' characteristics. We originally proposed to conduct 30 interviews (traffickers/pimps = 10, sex workers = 10, child pornographers = 10) with individuals convicted of UCSE-related crimes in each of the eight sites (n = 240); however, as will be explained below, we discovered that goal was not feasible early on in the project.

The process of gaining approval to interview incarcerated individuals in federal and state prisons was a long and fairly arduous process. Before we could reach out to the Bureau of Prisons and each site's State Department of Corrections, we needed to draft an interview protocol and create a database of incarcerated individuals we wanted to interview. For the interview protocol, we needed to ensure that the questions were asked in a way that were not offensive, but would still elicit informative responses. We decided the questions would focus solely on the underground commercial sex market and we used business-related terms. For example, when interviewing a pimp or trafficker, the term "employee" was used to describe the individual that worked for that person, as opposed to using "woman," "victim," or "sex worker." The interview protocol included

1. demographic characteristics;
2. how the respondent became involved in the UCSE;
3. the respondent's UCSE market involvement prior to arrest (age, means, and timing of initial engagement, type of involvement);
4. nature and types of UCSE activities which include clients, recruitment locations and employee characteristics, relationship with employees, number of employees, location and volume of activities and transactions, revenue, financial arrangements, use of technology, contact and commercial activities with other actors in the UCSE, cross-border activities, law enforcement involvement, and perception of volume of UCSE in own city and relative volume compared to other US cities; and
5. non-identifying social network data which includes information on individuals who were considered colleagues and those considered competitors.

Please see appendix H for a copy of the protocol. We solicited feedback on the protocol from several subject matter experts and adjusted the questions accordingly.

One important note to highlight: We learned early on from stakeholders that there was very little child pornography sold for profit within the United States, so many of the questions regarding business practices would not apply to any respondents who were child pornographers. As a result, we created a separate section within the protocol that asked questions about the use of technology and networking. We included these questions as part of the larger protocol in case we spoke to any respondents who did profit from child pornography sales.

As we were developing the protocol, we compiled an offender database that included individuals who had been convicted of UCSE-related crimes at both the state and federal levels and who were currently incarcerated or on probation for one or more of these charges. We were informed at the onset of the project that we would need to present a list of names of individuals we would like to interview to the Federal Bureau of Prisons and to each state's department of corrections, if we were granted approval to conduct interviews with these individuals. Because there are a limited number of individuals who have been convicted of human trafficking in the United States, we expanded our search to include the federal charges listed in appendix C, in addition to charges used by county and state prosecutors, such as pimping, pandering, and maintaining houses of prostitution. For respondents charged with prostitution-related offenses, our strategy was to approach prostitution court diversion programs and/or probation departments in each of the eight cities to help us identify individuals willing to speak about their involvement in the UCSE. As a result, we were not required to generate a list of potential respondents who had been convicted on prostitution-related charges.

We started our list by searching for online published news stories and press releases on individuals who were arrested, adjudicated, and/or convicted on UCSE-related charges in the eight cities and their surrounding metropolitan areas. We reached out to the Human Trafficking Clinic of the University of Michigan Law School, since they had recently launched the Human Trafficking Law Project (HTLP), a

database that documents cases of human trafficking in the United States. We also used our subscription to CourtLink to gain access to court documents for these cases.<sup>23</sup> Lastly, we asked stakeholders in each of the eight cities to suggest potential respondents who were convicted on UCSE-related charges. Our final database consisted of 298 men and women from the eight cities of interest, convicted at both the federal and state levels, and located in facilities across the country.

Once all the stakeholder site visits had been completed and we had compiled our list of potential offender respondents, we completed the necessary paperwork and human subject protection packages for submission to the Federal Bureau of Prison's Bureau Research Review Board (BRRB) and the state departments of corrections' Institutional Review Boards (IRB) of Washington, California, Texas, and Colorado. As part of the human subjects protection package, we were required to provide an inmate consent form that explained the purpose of the study and the risks and benefits to participating in this study. The consent form explained that participation in the interview was voluntary and that the participant's responses would not be attributed to them or shared with law enforcement officials in a way that would lead to individual identification. Please see appendix E for a copy of the consent form.

We received approval from the four state departments of corrections relatively quickly; however, it took eight months—and several revisions—to gain approval from the Federal Bureau of Prison's BRRB. The biggest change to the original proposal was including an oversample from the general inmate population as to not single out individuals who committed sex offenses, which could create a risk to their well-being. Thus, an oversample list was created for each BOP facility visited.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, we initially proposed providing a monetary incentive to the inmates that agreed to speak with us, but all the agencies denied this request with the exception of the Colorado Department of Corrections (DOC) which allowed us to place \$10 in each participant's commissary.

Rather than requiring us to obtain consent from each incarcerated individual prior to going to the facility, the BOP and California, Colorado and Texas DOCs allowed us to place the names of the inmates we wanted to interview on a call out list.<sup>25</sup> This way, we could read the consent form person and they could decide at that moment if they wanted to participate. Two weeks prior to visiting the facility, we sent the individuals on our list (and in the case of BOP facilities, individuals on the oversample list) a letter informing them of our study, that their participation was voluntary, and when we expected to visit their facility (see appendix K for a copy of this letter). On the day of the scheduled interview, potential participants were called individually to the interview area, which usually took place in an attorney room located in the visitation room or a room in the education building.<sup>26</sup> At that time, we read the consent form and they decided whether or not to participate. Interviews lasted between 30 to 90 minutes, depending on the participant's involvement in the UCSE and their willingness to disclose information. The majority of interviews were conducted with two researchers,<sup>27</sup> with one leading the interview and the other transcribing the interview directly onto a laptop, since audio equipment was not allowed into the facility.

Because we learned from stakeholders early on that the commercial side to child pornography in the United States had dramatically reduced over the last five to ten years, we decided to focus our efforts on interviewing convicted pimps and traffickers. We abandoned our goal to interview 80 individuals (10 from each site) who had been convicted of crimes related to child pornography.

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<sup>23</sup> CourtLink includes court documents from court cases in the United States (local, state, and federal; civil and criminal). We received a subscription to CourtLink pro bono from Lexis Nexis.

<sup>24</sup> Interviews with individuals that made up the oversample are not included in this report.

<sup>25</sup> Washington State and Georgia required participant consent prior to visiting the facility which created a number of challenges, particularly since it was difficult to convey the purpose, benefits, and risks of the study through a letter sent through the mail.

<sup>26</sup> The only requirement to where the interview took place was that no one could be within earshot of the interview. However, a correctional officer was always within sight.

<sup>27</sup> Toward the end of the project, in order to reduce costs, the principal investigator conducted six site visits on her own.

Additionally, it became difficult to identify 10 sex workers in each of the research sites,<sup>28</sup> and we were unable to achieve our goal of interviewing 80 sex workers. Not every site had a diversion program for individuals arrested on prostitution-related charges, nor were there probation officers specifically assigned to these individuals. As a result, we were able to interview a very limited number of sex workers. Those who agreed to be interviewed were read a similar consent form as the inmates (see appendix I for this version of the consent form) and each received a \$50 gift card for their participation. We interviewed a total of 142 sex traffickers/pimps,<sup>29</sup> child pornographers, and sex workers. See table 2.1 for the breakdown of interview types by site.

**Table 2.1 Interview Type by Site**

	<b>Pimps/Traffickers</b>	<b>Child Pornographers</b>	<b>Sex Workers</b>
Denver, CO	7	5	11
Washington, DC	6	3	8
San Diego, CA	17	3	0
Miami, FL	7	3	0
Seattle, WA	3	3	3
Dallas, TX	15	7	6
Kansas City, MO	4	6	0
Atlanta, GA	13	2	8
Oversample <sup>30</sup>	1	1	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>36</b>

In order to maintain offender respondent confidentiality in chapters 5–9, each respondent was assigned an alpha-numeric code based on the city of arrest. The pimps/traffickers and child pornographer alpha-numeric city codes were separated from the sex worker alpha-numeric city code in order to ensure confidentiality.

## The Evolution of UCSE Estimate

In order to estimate the underground commercial sex economy in the eight sites and address our first two research questions regarding its operations, we began by considering approaches used to estimate other underground or illicit economies, such as drug or weapons markets. We determined that these techniques were not appropriate for our context but sought to adapt them.

To illustrate our general approach, consider the following illustration. Jane and Bob both spend money only on apples, bananas, and carrots. Jane spent \$30 this week and \$20 last week, while Bob spent \$30 this week and \$40 last week. We refer to information such as “This week, Bob spent \$15 on bananas” as absolute information. In contrast, we refer to information such as “This week, Jane spent half as much on apples as last week” as relative information. We often seek absolute information, but have no available sources of that information. The key is that with enough relative information, we can determine absolute numbers.

In other words, with enough sources of relative information, we can say how much money Jane and Bob each spent on apples and bananas, this week and last week. Because we have two people (Jane and Bob), three items (apples, bananas, and carrots), and two time periods (this week and last), we need  $2 \times 3 \times 2 = 12$  pieces of relative information, as well as how much was spent in total. With enough pieces of relative

<sup>28</sup> Not every site had a prostitution diversion program or probation officers that were able to identify and/or recruit individuals who had been charged with prostitution-related crimes.

<sup>29</sup> Two of the oversample interviews met the criteria of our main sample, with the exception that they were not from one of the eight main cities. However, since they provided crucial information to understanding the UCSE, we kept them in the qualitative portion of the study, but they were not included in the estimate.

<sup>30</sup> Two respondents who were identified as part of our BOP oversample also disclosed participating in UCSE-related activities. They were not from one of the eight sites and are not included in the estimate (chapter 3). However their experiences are documented in the qualitative chapters (chapters 5-9).

information, one can calculate exactly how much Jane or Bob spent on apples, bananas, and carrots each week.

Our method was an application of this general approach. Suppose that one can estimate the size of the underground economy<sup>31</sup> as a whole, which will be discussed later in this section. If we assume that this underground economy includes underground commercial sex, drug, and weapons markets, then we have three items. We can use relative information on these three items to decompose aggregate spending into its components. That is, instead of relying on absolute numbers (such as the number of participants in the underground commercial sex economy), we can use relative information of the form, “The underground commercial sex economy in Atlanta is 10 percent bigger today than five years ago.” We believe relative information can be more reliable.

There are two types of relative information that we sought to use: cross-city comparisons and over-time comparisons. If we have two time periods, eight cities, and three items (sex, drugs, and weapons), then we need  $2 \times 8 \times 3 = 48$  pieces of relative information. Through our interviews, we were able to obtain relative information on the underground commercial sex economy from pimp interviews. We believed many pimps would be able to say, on the basis of their experience, something to the effect of “The underground commercial sex market in Atlanta increased by 20 percent between 2003 and 2007.” Similarly, since many pimps operated in multiple cities, we believed that interviews would be able to provide judgments such as, “In 2007, the underground commercial sex market in Miami was twice what it was in Denver.”

However, this information alone is not enough to estimate the actual sizes of the underground commercial sex markets in any of the cities at any of the points of time. Because the underground economy is made up of different types of activities, to estimate the size of each component, we need relative information about each component. In other words, we need analogous information on the drug and weapons markets. To obtain this information, we rely on proxy variables. Formally, we require that proxies are proportional to the underlying activity. This is best demonstrated by an example. For instance, if the number of drug-related emergency room visits in Dallas is 30 percent higher than that in Seattle, it might imply that the drug market in Dallas is 30 percent larger than that in Seattle. If we have enough pieces of relative information (specifically, 48 of them) and estimates of the total size of the underground economy (using methods developed by past researchers), then we can calculate the total size of the underground commercial sex economy, the illicit drug market, and the illicit weapons market in each city during each year.

This was our original proposed methodology; however, we soon encountered several key challenges. First, our original plan involved using methods of past researchers to estimate the size of the underground economy. Unfortunately, upon closer inspection, it was clear that these approaches required data and assumptions that were only viable for national-level analyses. While a large and well-developed literature has sought to estimate the size of the underground economy, we found no studies that did so at the local level, nor any studies that had proposed methods that could be used for this.

Instead, we decided to rely on a dataset maintained by the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. This dataset includes currency distributions and collections through a number of locations around the country. The idea was that this subnational data on currency could be used to estimate the cash in circulation for areas surrounding each of our eight cities. With estimates of total currency in circulation, we could add a fourth item: “other uses of cash.” We would need to identify a proxy for this fourth item, but other than requiring us to collect  $2 \times 8 \times 4 = 64$  pieces of relative information instead of 48, this would have a minimal impact on our approach. There was one important implication. Since we would base our estimates on currency calculations, we would be restricted to only studying the cash-based illicit markets for sex, drugs, and guns. Extensive interviews with UCSE experts and stakeholders and relevant research suggested that this was not a major limitation.

We believed that the necessary data from the Federal Reserve could be obtained through a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request. Unfortunately, our request (and subsequent appeal) was denied. Therefore, we chose to adapt national-level data to localities. We calculated the national ratio of currency

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<sup>31</sup> The underground economy includes all illicit, underground economies—not just commercial sex, drugs, and guns.

in circulation (throughout the country) to gross domestic product (GDP). Adjusting for population, we applied this ratio to city-level GDP, available from the Bureau of Economic Analysis. This yields an estimate of currency in circulation for each metropolitan area in our sample.

With estimates on total currency for each city in our sample, we needed information on the relative size of the various underground economies (as well as on other uses of cash<sup>32</sup>). Our original approach involved using interview data for the relative size of the underground commercial sex economy and proxies for the other cash categories. Unfortunately, during initial pilot interviews, we determined that pimps would not be able to express the relative size of different markets across cities or over time. Since this posed a serious problem, we sought instead to estimate the relative size based on the available interview data. The total amount of underground commercial sex market revenue is the product of average income per sex worker, multiplied by the number of sex workers. The interview data provided ample information to estimate the average income per sex worker. The problem, then, is to estimate the *relative* size of the sex worker population.

To do so, we employed the conceptual approach of a gravity model, popularized in social science by (among other applications) migration and trade decisions. Isaac Newton discovered that gravity exists between any two objects and the attraction between those objects could be expressed based on the size of each object and the distance between them. The larger the object, the stronger the pull. The closer they are, the stronger the pull. This approach has been brought to the social science field and applied to a wide variety of issues, including migration and trade. The intuition behind using this method for our purposes is as follows: Suppose there are three objects on a table and you know each object's location. Also, suppose that you are told the strength of the gravitational pull between those objects. Based on the pull's strength between these three locations, you can determine the size of each object.

We adapted this logic and, instead of objects on a table, we considered cities in the United States. Instead of measuring the gravitational pull between the cities, we measured the "pull" on pimps. Consider three cities: Kansas City, Dallas, and Atlanta. A pimp who works in Kansas City is deciding whether to also work in Dallas or Atlanta. His decision will be influenced by the distance to the potential new city and the size of its market. Likewise, pimps in Dallas and Atlanta are deciding whether to work in the other cities. With a large enough number of pimps, we can observe what portion of pimps from each city decided to go to each of the other cities and, because we know how far apart the cities are, we can infer the "pull" of each city.

We used a logistic regression to estimate the propensity to travel of each pimp (the mass of the pimp), the effect of distance on pimps' decision to travel, and the residual appeal of each city. This appeal of each city is a latent variable that leads to sex worker migration decisions. Then we can infer the relative number of sex workers who choose to work in a given city based on the residual appeal estimated in the logistic regression. Note that this gives information *only* on the relative number of sex workers. With the relative number of workers and the average income per worker, we were able to construct a proxy for the size of the underground commercial sex economy.

Our initial method proposed using a single proxy for the relative size of the underground drug and weapons markets, as well as for other uses of cash. However, in reading the literature for potential proxies, we developed a list of multiple appropriate proxies. When looking at these proxies, we realized that they had very different implications for the patterns of underground activity over time and across place. Therefore, we sought instead to aggregate proxies using a simple regression.

Over the course of the study, we collected a variety of proxies by using city-specific data from a number of national-level data collection efforts. In total, we had seven drug proxies (including number of drug users reported in the National Survey of Drug Use and Health [NSDUH]; number of youth encountering drugs reported in the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System [YRBSS]; and number of drug-related visits to the emergency department reported in the Drug Abuse Warning Network [DAWN]), three proxies for guns (including number of students carrying a gun reported in the YRBSS; weapons seized by the Bureau

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<sup>32</sup> "Other" uses of cash include legal economies and underground economies, excluding sex, drugs, and weapons (e.g., fake goods, money laundering).



of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms [ATF]; and the fraction of suicides committed with firearms reported in National Vital Statistics data [NVSS]), and three proxies for “other” (including construction-related employment and food service employment).

However, these proxies are in completely different units. To aggregate across proxies, we must convert them to comparable units. For each proxy, we divided each city and year by the value for Miami in 2003 (since this was the observation with the most data available). For example, one drug proxy was the percent of high school students offered, sold, or given drugs at school, weighted by the population of the MSA. In Atlanta in 2007, this number was 1.6 million,<sup>33</sup> while in Miami in 2003, it was 1.33 million. Dividing Atlanta’s 2007 value by Miami’s 2003 value yields 1.21 (meaning that we estimate 21 percent more drug activity in Atlanta in 2007 than Miami in 2003).

Another proxy was the estimated number of users of illicit drugs. In Atlanta in 2007, this number was 193,000, while in Miami in 2003 it was 148,000. Again, dividing Atlanta’s 2007 value by Miami’s 2003 value yields 1.30 (meaning that we estimate 30 percent more drug activity in Atlanta in 2007 than in Miami in 2003). So although our original data is in different units, dividing by the value for Miami generates values that are of comparable scale.

This normalization allowed us to compare these different proxies and determine whether they had similar patterns over time and across place. We ran a series of regressions separately for each city where we modeled the normalized proxy levels using a separate linear time trend for each city. Each observation was weighted by the inverse standard error of the estimate. This simple regression generated estimates of the relative size of the drug, weapons, and other categories over time and across cities, based on aggregating different sources of available information, accounting for the fact that some sources of information are more accurate than others.

Finally, although the set of cross-city and over-time ratios implies an exact solution, this solution will not be accurate if the ratios aren’t exactly correct. To account for this, we developed a new method, which was a slight adaptation of the method proposed. We allowed the sex ratios and other ratios to vary by up to 20% (since they were based on less reliable information than drugs or guns), and assumed that each component must account for at least 0.1 percent of all cash. Then, we found the ratios that best fit the data and made the cash total as close as possible to the amount of currency in circulation.

In summary, our fundamental approach was to estimate the total size of the cash-based underground commercial sex market, drug market, and gun market using relative information instead of absolute information. This required us to first estimate the total size of the underground economy or (as in the revised approach) the amount of currency in circulation. It also required us to estimate the relative size of the underground commercial sex economy. Initially, we planned to obtain this information directly from interviews, but in a revised approach we estimated it based on interview data about pimp travel networks and circuits. Also, we used a normalized regression to combine a wide array of proxy information for other categories, rather than relying on a single proxy, as was originally proposed. Finally, we used an optimization approach that allowed the true ratios to differ slightly from the estimates. Chapter 3 will describe in more detail the final methodology employed to estimate the underground commercial sex economy in the eight sites, in addition to providing dollar estimates for the underground commercial sex, drug, and gun economies.

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<sup>33</sup> This number is without units and has no meaningful interpretation.

**Table 2.2 Proxy Variables**

Dataset	Variables
Illicit Drugs	
NSDUH	D1: Illicit drug use in the past month among population age 12+ D2: Illicit drug use (other than marijuana) in past month among population age 12+ D3: Cocaine use in past year among population age 12+
YRBSS	D4: Percent of high school students offered, sold, or given drugs at school multiplied by total MSA population
DAWN	D5: Emergency room visits attributed to drug use D6: Emergency room visits at which drug use was mentioned
ADAM	D7: Percent of property crime arrestees who tested positive for any drug, scaled by MSA population
Weapons	
YRBSS	W1: Percent of high school students who carried a gun multiplied by total MSA population
ATF	W2: Number of weapons seized by the ATF
NVSS	W3: Fraction of suicides committed with firearms, multiplied by MSA population
Other	
N/A	O1: Percent of employment in private-sector service industry, scaled by MSA population O2: Percent of employment in construction, scaled by MSA population O3: Percent of employment in food services and drinking establishments, scaled by MSA population

## Limitations of the Study

As with all research, this study is subject to methodological limitations. As discussed previously, our initial objective was to adopt methods that had previously been used to estimate the size of illicit economic activity. After reviewing some of these techniques, we determined that none were suitable for our purposes, and sought to develop a new method that could overcome these challenges. As a result, there are a number of limitations to the method developed. Primarily, these limitations center on the data used for the approach. The theory in itself (building a system of equations and solving the system using ratios implied by proxy variables) is complete, concise, and accurate. Given our definitions of variables, the equality is a tautology and, given the right input data, the method is guaranteed to produce accurate answers. The challenge is finding the right data. Identifying proxy variables is not an exact science, and there is often little or no past literature on which to base our choices. Assumptions and approximations must be made to estimate such ratios, and variable selection, imprecise measurement, and data availability all presented significant challenges.

We believe that this method holds promise for future research seeking to estimate illicit economic activities in multiple geographic entities. However, such research must further explore what proxies should be used, their reliability, and necessary adjustments. Here, we offer a foundation for such considerations based on our own analyses and assumptions, but other researchers might have different preferences and assumptions.

Similarly, we were surprised by the difficulty involved in estimating currency in circulation at the city level. While this quantity is the focus of significant attention at the national level, almost no work seeks to estimate it locally. In the absence of a literature upon which to draw, our estimates are based on what we believed were relatively conservative assumptions. We sought to employ the simplest possible approach, acknowledging that estimating currency is of central importance and erring in favor of transparency over sophistication.

In addition to the limitations with the proxy data used to estimate the UCSE in the eight study sites, there were limitations to how the offender sample was chosen. We were only able to document the business practices, networks and technology use of traffickers and child pornographers who were incarcerated at the time of data collection. Thus, we were limited to speaking to those individuals that were convicted of

crimes related to the UCSE, and as this report will demonstrate, there are many traffickers, pimps, and child pornographers that are not detected by law enforcement that play different roles within the UCSE (e.g., massage parlor and brothel owners and child pornography website facilitators). Therefore, further research is needed to better understand how traffickers and child pornography facilitators that are not convicted of a UCSE-related crime operate in the US underground commercial sex market.

# Chapter 3

## Methodology and Derivation of Illicit Economy Estimates

This chapter will respond to our first research question and sub-questions:

1. How large is the underground commercial sex economy in eight major US cities?
  - a. How does the size of the underground commercial sex economy in these eight cities compare to the underground drug and weapons economies in these eight cities?
  - b. How have these economies changed over time?

Table 3.1 provides the estimated dollar amounts for the cash-based<sup>34</sup> sex, weapons, drugs, and other<sup>35</sup> economies for all eight study sites for 2003 and 2007. Estimates of the UCSE in 2007 range from \$39.9 to \$290 million in the cities included in the study. In all but two cities, estimates of the size of the UCSE in each city decreased from 2003 to 2007.

**Table 3.1 Estimates of Illicit Markets for Sex, Drugs and Guns and UCE/CE for Other Goods (millions)**

City	Year	Sex	Drugs	Guns	Other
Atlanta	2003	\$238	\$104	\$169	\$14,500
Atlanta	2007	\$290	\$117	\$146	\$16,000
Dallas	2003	\$99.4	\$134	\$171	\$16,900
Dallas	2007	\$98.8	\$191	\$171	\$19,000
Denver	2003	\$47.2	\$54.7	\$58.4	\$7,470
Denver	2007	\$39.9	\$63.9	\$47.4	\$7,820
Miami	2003	\$302	\$93.4	\$106	\$15,300
Miami	2007	\$235	\$95.7	\$118	\$14,700
San Diego	2003	\$124	\$105	\$46.6	\$8,490
San Diego	2007	\$96.6	\$96.3	\$47.7	\$8,740
Seattle	2003	\$50.3	\$87.3	\$83.1	\$9,840
Seattle	2007	\$112	\$87.4	\$60.1	\$11,800
DC	2003	\$155	\$111	\$150	\$17,700
DC	2007	\$103	\$103	\$160	\$20,300

This chapter provides a detailed description of the analytic techniques employed to estimate the size of the cash-based underground commercial sex economy (UCSE), in addition to the size of the cash-based underground weapons and drugs economies. However, this chapter **does not** attempt to explain why

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<sup>34</sup> We recognize that the UCSE is not only cash-based, and that some UCSE facilitators accept credit and other material goods as payment. However, as a first step in estimating the UCSE, we focused solely on the cash-based economy.

<sup>35</sup> Other includes the legal cash economy and all other underground economies with the exception of sex, drugs, and weapons.

these economies increased or decreased over this five year period, since such conjecture is beyond the scope of this research project.<sup>36</sup>

## Existing Approaches to Estimate Illegal, Underground Economies

Given the lack of knowledge about the prevalence of sex trafficking, we consulted research on other underground markets to seek techniques that may be adaptable to estimating the size of the illegal commercial sex economy.

Criminologists, economists, and policymakers have been interested in understanding illegal markets and have developed a number of techniques in order to estimate the extent of underground economic activity. Several analyses have improved our understanding of the mechanics of underground markets: Levitt and Venkatesh's (1998) thorough economic analysis of revenue, costs, and operations of a Chicago gang shed light on gang management and violence while Rosen and Venkatesh's (2007) later study examined the tension between choice and coercion in Chicago's sex trade. Similarly, careful examination of government bribery records in Peru has dramatically increased our understanding of the priorities, operations, and strategies of corrupt regimes (McMillan and Zoido 2004). Recently, Bahney and others (2013) have conducted similar analyses using recovered documents from al Qaeda in Iraq to understand organizational, managerial, bureaucratic, and financial structures. Unfortunately, these analyses relied on unique, irreproducible quantitative data. In the absence of these sources, analysts must rely on collecting new qualitative data to understand the mechanics of underground markets. Furthermore, these studies did not successfully produce estimates or models of the size of the illegal activity that could be applied to other cases of illegal markets.

The size of illegal drug markets is more analogous to analysis of the underground commercial sex economy. However, as a recent extensive review commissioned by the European Union (Reuter and Trautmann 2009) demonstrates, it is unlikely that methods developed for this purpose would yield accurate results:

There are a variety of methods for calculating the size of an illicit drug market. The supply-side approach uses estimates about production and how much is seized or lost on the way to its final destination ... There are at least two different methods on the demand side. One is based on self-reported information about what individuals spend on illicit drugs, and the other uses prevalence estimates and combines them with assumptions about quantity consumed and retail prices to generate expenditure estimates. (Kilmer and Pacula 2009, 103)

Due to difficulties identifying sex workers and victims of sex trafficking, we do not expect to derive estimates of the size of the illegal sex economy from relying on the perspectives of these individuals. The second approach that Kilmer and Pacula note is equally unfeasible. This method relies on extensive self-reporting estimates of spending, which are not widely available for illegal sexual activity. As mentioned earlier, commercial sex clients, key actors in the illegal sex economy, are not commonly arrested or charged. Even for arrested clients, the oft-mentioned problems of under-representing difficult-to-reach populations (those without stable addresses or those who rarely respond to surveys) would likely be exacerbated in a study of illegal sexual activity. Second, dishonesty would be a serious concern. For instance, one study which administered a self-report survey about drug use along with a formal drug test found that only 20 percent of cocaine users actually reported using cocaine (Harrison et al. 2007). No analogous test is available to validate responses when investigating participation in illicit sexual activity. The second demand side approach (applying prices to prevalence estimates) relies on a defensible prevalence estimate which does not exist for illegal sexual activity.

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<sup>36</sup> Please see chapter 10 for a brief discussion regarding the need for future research to determine why there are changes in these underground economies.

We also looked to estimates of the illegal weapons economy, another significant underground market, to develop methods. Estimates of the illegal weapons trade, such as the Small Arms Survey, are often survey-driven, a technique demonstrated to be invalid for our purposes. Illegal arms estimates are also derived from identification of trading partners. This is sometimes done through weapons tracing (Bevan 2004). Other researchers have used changes in stock prices of weapons manufacturers in certain circumstances to identify which companies are likely to be trading illegally (DellaVigna and La Ferrara 2007). Neither of these methods has an applicable counterpart for an investigation of the illegal sex economy.

Researchers estimating the prevalence of gun violence in Europe have employed police records (e.g., INTERPOL data), hospital data regarding weapons injuries, and victimization surveys. These methods are unfortunately not applicable to sex trafficking. Law enforcement has only recently been required to report cases of human trafficking to crime reporting databases such as UCR, and record-keeping and understanding about what constitutes human trafficking varies across jurisdictions. Hospitalizations are not adequate to identify all incidents that occur in conjunction with illegal sexual activity, nor would all illegal sex acts necessarily lead to hospitalizations. National victimization surveys would miss difficult-to-reach populations that are particularly important in the underground commercial sex economy. Thus, past estimations of illegal weapons markets present few repeatable methodologies for the purposes of our study.

These techniques rely on bottom-up data (e.g., prevalence estimates, arrest data, surveys of law enforcement, victim service providers, offenders, and victims) that either does not exist or are methodologically unsound and unreliable for estimating the illegal sex economy as a whole. As a result, we turn our attention to studies that have estimated the extent of the underground economy through a top-down approach. Several studies have econometrically estimated the extent of unmeasured activity (see Fleming, Roman, and Farrell 2000) by comparing, for instance, actual electricity usage with that which would be expected given official economic data (Portes, Blitzer, and Curtis 1986). Other studies have compared actual demand for cash with the amount to be expected in the absence of unmeasured activity to determine the amount of cash which is devoted to unmeasured activity (e.g., Tanzi 1999). These approaches, referred to as discrepancy approaches, serve as the foundation for our proposed methodology.

However, though these methods can identify the extent of unmeasured economic activity, they do not allow us to attribute various portions of this underground economy to different types of unmeasured activity (e.g., the drug market, the illegal sex market, or even household labor). Thus, they cannot usefully estimate the size of any specific component, such as the illicit sex economy. Our methodology extends these techniques to overcome this limitation by using known variations in economic activity over time and across space to triangulate estimates of sub-economies.

In this study, we combine elements of top-down and bottom-up approaches. Bottom-up approaches offer important detail about underground activity. Unfortunately, to generate an estimate of the total financial size of an activity, this detailed information (e.g., revenue, profits, etc.) must be combined with estimates of prevalence (e.g., the total number of victims). In the absence of prevalence estimates, it is impossible to estimate the size of the illicit sex economy from bottom-up information alone. Top-down approaches do not rely on prevalence estimates. However, they are generally unable to separate underground activity into sub-components. In the following sections, we describe our approach to use detailed information (as in bottom-up studies) to help disentangle top-down estimates of underground activity.

## Process for Deriving Estimates (Overview)

In section 1.1, we suggest a fundamental “Conservation law” governing the expenditure of cash within dynamically stable systems over finite time intervals. In the context of our study, this conservation law implies a set of 16 simultaneous linear equations relating the values of 80 variables, of which 16 relate to cash-based UCSE in eight cities across two time intervals; the remaining 64 refer to metrics for cash-based economies of drugs, guns, and “other”<sup>37</sup> (non UCSE, drugs, or gun related) expenditures. Because

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<sup>37</sup> Other illicit economies that the estimate could include are selling of fake goods, money laundering, and organ sales.

the underground nature of these economies makes most of these variables almost impossible to measure directly, in section 1.2, we describe the approach of using “linear proxy” variables to estimate cross-city and cross-time ratios. The determination of linear proxies is discussed in sections 1.2.1–1.2.4. Specifically, our proxy for the cash-based UCSE variable requires convolving data on mean weekly pimp cash intake (whose collection is described in section 1.2.1.1) with estimates of pimp population sizes (modeled in a variety of ways, as described in section 1.2.1.2).<sup>38</sup> We also estimate the absolute total cash in circulation in each of the cities and times; this is presented in section 1.4. Together, these efforts yield a system of 448 simultaneous linear inequality constraints in 56 dimensions, as detailed in section 1.6. By searching the space of solutions to this system of constraints, we find the optimal unique point that most closely satisfies the original equations implied by conservation law. This point, presented in section 1.6, encodes the final estimate of the absolute sizes of the cash-based underground commercial sex economy (as well as the economies for drugs and guns). Finally, issues of solution quality and robustness are treated in section 1.7.

## 1.1. The Law of Cash Conservation

We begin with the fundamental **Law of Cash Conservation** (LoCC), which we postulate to hold in every bounded region of space and interval of time for which cash flow processes are in a state of dynamic equilibrium. Formally stated, the law asserts that given a closed region  $c \subset \mathbb{R}^2$  and half-open time interval  $[t, t + \delta)$ :

$$Z(c, t) = S(c, t) + D(c, t) + W(c, t) + O(c, t)^{39}$$

The left-hand side of the equation  $Z(c, t)$  represents the total value of *all* cash exchanged as part of commercial transactions within region  $c$  during the period  $[t, t + \delta)$ . On the right hand side, the quantities  $S(c, t)$ ,  $D(c, t)$ , and  $W(c, t)$  represent the total cash exchanged—in region  $c$  during the time  $[t, t + \delta)$  interval—toward the purchase of underground commercial sex, drugs, and guns, respectively. Finally,  $O(c, t)$  represents the total value of *all other exchanges* of cash for goods or services (unrelated to underground commercial sex, drugs, or guns) in region  $c$  during time interval  $[t, t + \delta)$ . Thus,  $O(c, t)$  includes both legal and illicit economic activity. Because  $Z(c, t)$  is defined to be *all* exchanges involving cash, while  $O(c, t)$  is taken to be *all other* cash exchanges (*excluding* cash exchanged toward the purchase of underground commercial sex, drugs, or guns), the Law of Cash Conservation (LoCC) is in fact, immediately and tautologically true. Two assumptions are implicit, however, in the apparent tautology of the Law of Cash Conservation:

- **Assumption (A1):** Every dollar expended within region  $c$  during time interval  $[t, t + \delta)$  can be unambiguously characterized as having been related to the acquisition of either underground commercial sex, or drugs, or guns, or “none of these”;
- **Assumption (A2):** Cash flow pathways are in a state of dynamic equilibrium within region  $c$  during time interval  $[t, t + \delta)$ .

Since the Law of Cash Conservation is a relation on five variables, if the LoCC is applied to  $n$  disjoint regions at each of  $m$  disjoint time intervals, it yields a system of  $nm$  simultaneous linear constraints on  $5nm$  variables; we shall denote this system as  $\mathcal{L}(n, m)$ , defined as

$$\mathcal{L}(n, m) \triangleq \{Z(c_i, t_j) = S(c_i, t_j) + D(c_i, t_j) + W(c_i, t_j) + O(c_i, t_j) \mid i = 0, 1, \dots, n-1; j = 0, 1, \dots, m-1\}$$

<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately, a paucity of data on sex workers in Kansas City requires that it be dropped from the analysis (see section 1.2.1.1-B).

<sup>39</sup> For example, all cash in the region during 2007 is composed of the cash exchanged for sex, for drugs, for guns, and for everything else purchased with cash.

In this work, the LoCC will be invoked in a variety of regions and time intervals. To start, the region  $\mathbf{c}$  will be taken as any of the following eight ( $n = 8$ ) cities in the United States:

- $c_0$  = Atlanta
- $c_1$  = Dallas
- $c_2$  = Denver
- $c_3$  = Miami
- $c_4$  = San Diego
- $c_5$  = Seattle
- $c_6$  = Washington, DC
- $c_7$  = Kansas City

Furthermore, two ( $m = 2$ ) time intervals will be considered:  $[t_0, t_0 + \delta)$  and  $[t_1, t_1 + \delta)$ . These are chosen as part of the analysis presented in section O–A, and are taken thereafter to be  $t_0 = 2003$  and  $t_1 = 2007$ , and  $\delta = 1$  year.

Since, in the context of this work,  $n = 8$  and  $m = 2$ , the LoCC yields a system of  $nm = 16$  simultaneous linear equations on  $5nm = 80$  variables, which we denote by  $\mathcal{L}(8,2)$ . The contents of this system of constraints are explicitly given below:

$$\begin{aligned}
Z(c_0, t_0) &= S(c_0, t_0) + D(c_0, t_0) + W(c_0, t_0) + O(c_0, t_0) \\
Z(c_1, t_0) &= S(c_1, t_0) + D(c_1, t_0) + W(c_1, t_0) + O(c_1, t_0) \\
Z(c_2, t_0) &= S(c_2, t_0) + D(c_2, t_0) + W(c_2, t_0) + O(c_2, t_0) \\
Z(c_3, t_0) &= S(c_3, t_0) + D(c_3, t_0) + W(c_3, t_0) + O(c_3, t_0) \\
Z(c_4, t_0) &= S(c_4, t_0) + D(c_4, t_0) + W(c_4, t_0) + O(c_4, t_0) \\
Z(c_5, t_0) &= S(c_5, t_0) + D(c_5, t_0) + W(c_5, t_0) + O(c_5, t_0) \\
Z(c_6, t_0) &= S(c_6, t_0) + D(c_6, t_0) + W(c_6, t_0) + O(c_6, t_0) \\
Z(c_7, t_0) &= S(c_7, t_0) + D(c_7, t_0) + W(c_7, t_0) + O(c_7, t_0) \\
Z(c_0, t_1) &= S(c_0, t_1) + D(c_0, t_1) + W(c_0, t_1) + O(c_0, t_1) \\
Z(c_1, t_1) &= S(c_1, t_1) + D(c_1, t_1) + W(c_1, t_1) + O(c_1, t_1) \\
Z(c_2, t_1) &= S(c_2, t_1) + D(c_2, t_1) + W(c_2, t_1) + O(c_2, t_1) \\
Z(c_3, t_1) &= S(c_3, t_1) + D(c_3, t_1) + W(c_3, t_1) + O(c_3, t_1) \\
Z(c_4, t_1) &= S(c_4, t_1) + D(c_4, t_1) + W(c_4, t_1) + O(c_4, t_1) \\
Z(c_5, t_1) &= S(c_5, t_1) + D(c_5, t_1) + W(c_5, t_1) + O(c_5, t_1) \\
Z(c_6, t_1) &= S(c_6, t_1) + D(c_6, t_1) + W(c_6, t_1) + O(c_6, t_1) \\
Z(c_7, t_1) &= S(c_7, t_1) + D(c_7, t_1) + W(c_7, t_1) + O(c_7, t_1)
\end{aligned}$$

Clearly, 16 linear equations are insufficient to uniquely specify the values of 80 variables, which is to say,  $\mathcal{L}(8,2)$  is underdetermined. We must proceed by finding additional constraints. Indeed, in the sections that follow, we shall uncover a large number of structured constraints (448, to be precise) on the ratios of variables appearing on the right hand side of the above 16 equations. We will also develop direct estimates of the numerical values of the  $Z$  variables appearing on the left hand sides. We use these variables together to constrain the space of feasible solutions. Then, within that small space of feasible solutions, we will find the unique point or “solution” that most closely satisfies the 16 equations above. In this manner, we shall be able to deduce estimates for all the unknowns.



### 1.1.1 Process for Deriving Estimates (In Depth)

The true value of the cash-based underground commercial sex economy in city  $c_i$  during time  $t_j$  is denoted by  $S(c_i, t_j)$ . As it is almost impossible to measure  $S$  directly, we seek to estimate it. During the estimation process, we will think of it as a formal variable and argue that the variable is subject to particular constraints. When we are thinking of it as a variable, it will be denoted in lowercase:  $s(c_i, t_j)$ . The constraints on  $s(c_i, t_j)$  will often be expressed in terms of directly measurable values of a linear proxy for  $S$ . Such proxies will be indicated via a superscript asterisk, i.e.,  $S^*$ . By solving systems of constraints on the variable  $s(c_i, t_j)$  we hope to obtain an estimate for  $S$  (the value for the size of the cash UCSE); such an estimate will be denoted by a tilde:  $\tilde{S}(c_i, t_j)$ . Analogous notational conventions apply to the formalisms used during the analysis of cash-based underground economies for drugs  $D$ , guns  $W$ , “other”  $O$ , and total cash  $Z$ .

### 1.2. Constraints by Proxy Ratios

Because  $S$ ,  $D$ , and  $W$  represent cash exchanged in a largely “dark transactions” in underground commercial economies of goods and services (that is, for sex, drugs, and guns, respectively), it is difficult to obtain data on the variables directly. Indeed, although the cash value represented by the  $O$  variable captures *predominantly* “visible transactions,” it too is intangible in the sense that we know of no reliable direct measurement of it.

The key insight here is to pursue the possibility of four (4) **proxy** variables each of which may be plausibly assumed to be linearly dependent on  $S$ ,  $D$ ,  $W$ , and  $O$ , respectively. This brings us to the next set of assumptions:

- Assumption (A3-W): There exists a variable  $W^*(c, t)$  which is a linear proxy for the cash exchanged toward the purchase of guns—in region  $c$  during time interval  $[t, t + \delta)$ . We say that a variable  $W^*$  is a **linear proxy** for  $W$  if it (a) sufficiently captures the ratio of cash exchanged for guns in a given city  $c_i$  across two distinct time intervals  $[t_j, t_j + \delta)$  and  $[t_k, t_k + \delta)$ :

$$\frac{W^*(c_i, t_j)}{W^*(c_i, t_k)} \approx \frac{W(c_i, t_j)}{W(c_i, t_k)}$$

and (b) sufficiently captures the ratio of cash exchanged for guns in a given time interval  $[t_j, t_j + \delta)$  across two distinct cities  $c_h$  and  $c_i$ :

$$\frac{W^*(c_i, t_j)}{W^*(c_h, t_j)} \approx \frac{W(c_i, t_j)}{W(c_h, t_j)}$$

Analogous assumptions (A3-D), (A3-O), and (A3-S) must be made regarding the existence of linear proxies  $D^*$ ,  $O^*$ , and  $S^*$  (for  $D$ ,  $O$ , and  $S$ ) respectively. The construction of the four proxies  $S^*$ ,  $D^*$ ,  $W^*$ , and  $O^*$  is treated separately in each of the four sections that follow: 1.2.1. Linear Proxy  $S^*$ , 1.2.2. Linear Proxy  $D^*$ , 1.2.3. Linear Proxy  $W^*$ , and 1.2.4. Linear Proxy  $O^*$ , respectively.

### 1.2.1. Linear Proxy $S^*$

We say that a variable  $S^*$  is a **linear proxy** for  $S$  if it is proportional to  $S$ . In other words, we require that there exists some  $S^*$  such that  $S^*(c_i, t_j) = \theta S(c_i, t_j)$  for some real number  $\theta$  which is invariant over time and place. Note that we do not need to know what  $\theta$  is. In other words,  $S^*$  is a linear proxy if it (a) sufficiently captures the ratio of cash exchanged for sex in a given city  $c_i$  across two distinct time intervals  $[t_j, t_j + \delta)$  and  $[t_k, t_k + \delta)$ :

$$\frac{S^*(c_i, t_j)}{S^*(c_i, t_k)} \approx \frac{S(c_i, t_j)}{S(c_i, t_k)}$$

and (b) sufficiently captures the ratio of cash exchanged for sex in a given time interval  $[t_j, t_j + \delta)$  across two distinct cities  $c_h$  and  $c_i$ :

$$\frac{S^*(c_i, t_j)}{S^*(c_h, t_j)} \approx \frac{S(c_i, t_j)}{S(c_h, t_j)}$$

#### Modification to the Methodology Originally Proposed

The methodology described in our original project proposal sought to estimate the relative sizes of cities' commercial sex markets based on direct reports from pimps who worked in both cities. We had hoped to elicit Likert-scale responses such as

"If the market in Atlanta is a 10, then the market in Kansas City is a 2."

Unfortunately, the subjects (pimps) interviewed were unable to provide information of this form. Subjects were, however, able to provide very specific information about their average weekly gross cash intake. In order to scale this gross cash intake data up to a linear proxy for  $S$ , we needed to construct a linear proxy for the number of pimps that worked in each city in a given time interval.

The revised approach we took was to define the proxy  $S^*(c_i, t_j)$  as a product

$$S^*(c_i, t_j) \triangleq I(c_i, t_j) \cdot G^*(c_i)$$

where  $I(c_i, t_j)$  is the **mean weekly gross cash intake per pimp** (by city and time) and  $G^*(c_i)$  is a linear proxy for **pimp population size**  $G(c_i)$  by city.

#### Example

Suppose we knew that "At any given time, the number of pimps working in Atlanta ( $c_0$ ) versus the number of pimps working in Kansas City ( $c_7$ ) is in a 1.5:1.2 ratio," and we knew that "Pimps in Atlanta report a mean gross cash intake of \$3,000 a week for 2012, while pimps in Kansas City reported \$2,000 a week for 2012." Then taken together, we could deduce:

$$\frac{S(c_0, 2012)}{S(c_7, 2012)} \approx \frac{S^*(c_0, 2012)}{S^*(c_7, 2012)} = \frac{I(c_0, 2012) \cdot G^*(c_0)}{I(c_7, 2012) \cdot G^*(c_7)} = \frac{3000 \cdot (1.5)}{2000 \cdot (1.2)} = 1.875$$

Thus (hypothetically) we could conclude that in 2012, the size of the cash-UCSE in Atlanta is approximately 1.875 times the size of the cash-based UCSE in Kansas City.

This approach requires us to develop a strategy to estimate  $I(c_i, t_j)$ , the mean weekly gross cash intake per pimp (by city and time) and  $G^*(c_i)$ , a linear proxy for pimp population size (by city). These matters are addressed in sections 1.2.1.1. Estimating the Mean Weekly Gross Cash Intake per Pimp and 1.2.1.2. Estimating the Relative Sizes of Pimp Populations, respectively.

### 1.2.1.1. Estimating the Mean Weekly Gross Cash Intake per Pimp

To estimate the mean weekly gross cash intake per pimp (by city and time), we conducted interviews with convicted pimps and sex workers (see chapter 2 for more details). Of the many outcomes of this process, the one that is most relevant to this analysis is a corpus of  $n = 109$  subject (pimps and sex workers) interviews, each quantifying daily and weekly income, customer volume, and years their business operated.

The process of determining weekly pimp revenue in each city was carried out as follows. Following the survey instrument, all pimps were asked to directly estimate their weekly revenue. As a secondary validation of this direct estimate, a bottom-up estimate was also determined. Toward the latter, pimps were asked to estimate the number of sex workers they employed at any given time, as well as the average weekly revenue brought in by an average sex worker while in their employment. In cases where the pimp reported a range of revenues for “average” versus “exceptional” sex workers, the lower figure was used. In cases where the pimp reported separate weekday versus weekend revenue figures, the two were combined to produce a weekly revenue estimate using the formula:

$$(3 * \text{weekday revenue} + 2 * \text{weekend daily revenue}) * \text{number of sex workers employed}$$

If the direct estimate was found to diverge from the bottom-up estimate by more than 25 percent, the lower of the two figures was used. For pimps who were able to provide sufficient data for only one form of estimation, that value (direct or bottom-up) was used. Pimps who could provide data for neither form of estimate were excluded from the process of pimp revenue calculation.

#### A. Splitting Time and the Selection of $t_0, t_1$

Each interviewed subject was questioned about the interval of calendar year(s) in which they were active. In this part of the analysis, we aggregated this interval to the unique median year within it. So, for example, if a pimp or sex worker said they were active from 1990–1996, we assigned the pimp or sex worker the year 1993. In addition, of course, each pimp was asked to identify which of the  $n = 8$  cities they operated from.

In applying the interview data to the construction of cross-time proxy ratio constraints, our strategy is to decide on a **splitting year**  $T$ , and then take  $t_0 = T - \Delta$  and  $t_1 = T + \Delta$ , for suitable choice of  $\Delta$ . Note that each potential choice of splitting year  $T$  partitions the set of interviewed subjects (pimps) into two sets: (i) subjects whose median year of operation lies on or before  $T$ , and (ii) subjects whose median year lies after  $T$ . The “evenness” of this split (with consideration to both number of subjects and cities of operation represented) is of great importance, because it determines the number of cross-city and cross-time sex proxy ( $S^*$ ) ratios that can be generated from the interview data. Clearly we want to choose a splitting year  $T$  that will maximize the evenness of this partitioning, thus maximizing the number of computable ratios. The table below provides the number of sex proxy ratios generated for each candidate choice of splitting year.

**Table 3.2 Number of Sex Proxy ( $S^*$ ) Ratios for Different Choice of Splitting Year (T)**

Splitting Year T	Number of Ratios
1990	20
1995	21
2000	21
2004	21
2005	32
2006	26
2007	25
2008	21
2009	21
2010	20

In light of the above, we take  $T = 2005$ . Having done this, we determine the mean weekly income of pimps operating pre- and post- 2005 by city. This data is tabulated below.

**Table 3.3 Mean Weekly Gross Cash Intake per Pimp**

City	Pre-2005 cases	Pre-2005	Post-2005 cases	Post-2005
Atlanta	4	\$25,875	9	\$32,833
Dallas	4	\$11,625	6	\$12,025
Denver	3	\$39,333	5	\$31,200
Kansas City	1	\$50,000	2	\$5,000
Miami	7	\$21,929	11	\$17,741
San Diego	4	\$16,500	7	\$11,129
Seattle	2	\$6,750	4	\$18,000
DC	5	\$16,700	4	\$11,588

Now, analyzing the survey corpus further, we consider the set of years in which pre-2005 pimps operated, and the set of years in which post-2005 pimps operated. These two sets are clustered near 2003 and 2007, respectively. Accordingly, we take  $\Delta = 2$  and put  $t_0 = 2003$  and  $t_1 = 2007$ .

#### *B. On the Insufficiency of Pimp Income Data from Kansas City*

As is explained below, our estimates of the relative size of the sex economy in each city is based on the decisions of UCSE participants (both pimps and sex workers) to travel to each city. Inter-city travel is quite common among our sample, with 63 percent traveling to at least one other city, and 24 percent working in multiple cities within our sample. Because of the prevalence of this activity, we believe there is much information to be gleaned from travel decisions.

Unfortunately, none of the UCSE participants in our sample travelled to Kansas City. Thus, our method cannot estimate the relative size of Kansas City, and this city must be dropped from estimation. Having dropped  $c_7$  (Kansas City) from the analysis, we shall hereafter consider only seven ( $n' = 7$ ) cities, each in two ( $m = 2$ ) time intervals  $[2003, 2004)$  and  $[2007, 2008)$ , selected based on the analysis presented.

### 1.2.1.2. Estimating the Relative Sizes of Pimp Populations

In our study, we interviewed  $N = 109$  UCSE participants in  $n = 8$  cities. For the sake of exposition, let  $P = \{p_1, p_2, \dots, p_N\}$  be the set of UCSE participants (both pimps and sex workers), and  $C = \{c_0, c_1, \dots, c_{n-1}\}$  be the set of cities. Whenever Kansas City is being excluded from consideration we will specify this by reference to  $n' = 7$  and  $C' \triangleq \{c_0, c_1, \dots, c_{n'-1}\}$ .

As part of the interview protocol, each UCSE participant  $p$  was asked to identify their “home” city  $h(p) \in C$ , that is, the city in which they were principally operating at the time when they were apprehended. Each UCSE participant was also asked to identify the set  $L(p) \subset C$  of all cities, excluding  $h(p)$ , in which they had worked. The set of UCSE participants who call  $c_i$  home is expressible as  $h^{-1}(c_i) \subset P$ . For each city  $c_i$ , we shall denote the subset of UCSE participants who “visited” city  $c_i$ —that is, they spent time in  $c_i$  for work, but did not make it their home—as

$$V(c_i) \triangleq \{p \in P \mid c_i \in L(p)\}$$

A naïve estimation method (which we shall not take, but describe here nonetheless) would be to use the quantity

$$G_0^* \triangleq \frac{|h^{-1}(c_i) \cup V(c_i)|}{|P|}$$

as a proxy for the attractiveness of city  $c_i$  to UCSE participants. This quantity is simply the fraction of the surveyed population  $P$  that either called  $c_i$  their home, or visited  $c_i$  in the course of their work histories. The flaw in this naïve formulation is that our sample of UCSE participants  $P$  consisted of *apprehended* subjects. Such a sampling frame necessarily implies that cities  $c_i$  with strong (resp. weak) law enforcement stance toward sex economy participants would witness larger (resp. smaller) cardinalities for  $h^{-1}(c_i)$ , which, in turn would produce a law-enforcement related bias into the above naïve proxy. Clearly, a more careful construction is needed for the pimp population proxy. Two such constructions are now provided.

#### A. Pimp Population Size Proxy $G_1^*$ : Direct Estimation Method

Let us denote the set of UCSE participants for whom city  $c_i$  is *not* home as

$$N(c_i) \triangleq P \setminus h^{-1}(c_i).$$

We may then estimate the attraction of UCSE participants toward city  $c_i$  as

$$G_1^*(c_i) \triangleq \frac{|V(c_j)|}{\sum_{c \in N(c_i)} |L(c)|}.$$

This definition of  $G_1^*$  considers the number of UCSE participants who visited  $c_j$  for work, as a fraction of the total number of “visits” made by UCSE participants whose home was *not* city  $c_j$ . By excluding all UCSE participants who considered  $c_j$  as home (from both the numerator and denominator), this proxy for pimp population size deftly sidesteps potential biases in the study sample  $P$  stemming from possible non-uniformities in law enforcement policies related to the sex economy. In other words, of all the travel related to the sex market, some portion goes to city  $c_i$  and this portion is denoted  $G_1^*(c_i)$ . The above

**direct estimation method** applied to the survey data generates values of  $G_1^*$  provided in the table below.

**Table 3.4 Proxy  $G_1^*$  for Pimp Population Size**

City	
Atlanta	0.212
Dallas	0.207
Denver	0.054
Miami	0.410
San Diego	0.103
Seattle	0.105
DC	0.139
Kansas City	N/A

A potential objection to the aforementioned proxy  $G_1^*$  is that it does not take into account the distance between UCSE participant's home city and candidate city. Such an objection, if valid, would further argue that the reason Seattle attracted few UCSE participants *could* be that Seattle is far away from the other cities in the sample—and not that it is inherently unattractive. Such a sampling frame necessarily implies that cities  $c_i$  which are central (resp. distant) from the cities in the study would witness larger (resp. smaller) cardinalities for  $V(c_i)$ , which, in turn would introduce a distance related bias into the above  $G_1^*$  proxy. The next proxy remedies this specific potential concern.

#### B. Pimp Population Size Proxy $G_2^*$ : Gravity Model based Estimation

Here we present the **Gravity Model**, a stochastic process that governs the inclination of pimps to work in cities outside of their “home” city. In the limit (of large pimp populations and long timescales), the Gravity Model yields a stationary distribution of the numbers of pimps across cities.

We follow the notational conventions of the previous section, restated briefly here:  $P = \{p_1, p_2, \dots, p_N\}$  is the set of UCSE participants, and  $C = \{c_0, c_1, \dots, c_{n-1}\}$  is the set of cities. Each UCSE participant  $p$  identifies a “home” city  $h(p) \in C$ , as well as the set  $L(p) \subset C$  of cities, excluding  $h(p)$ , which they “visited” in the course of their work history.

For the Gravity Model, we assume that each city  $c_j$  has some exogenously determined (and possibly unobservable) characteristic  $M(c_j)$ , that stands to attract each UCSE participant  $p$  to it, leading them to overcome the costs implied by the distances between their home at  $h(p)$  and  $c_i$ .

Let  $Y_{ik}$  be an indicator variable encoding whether UCSE participant  $p_k \in P$  decided to work in city  $c_i \in C$ . We express  $Y_{ik}$  via a logistic model

$$\Pr(Y_{ik} = 1) = p_{ik} = \frac{e^{A_{ik}}}{1 + e^{A_{ik}}}$$

where  $A_{ik}$  is the “attraction force” between UCSE participant  $p_k$  and city  $c_i$ . Following the formal structure of the gravitational law in Newtonian mechanics, we take the force of attraction to exhibit the following proportionalities

$$A_{ik} \propto \frac{M(p_k) \cdot M(c_i)}{d(h(p_k), c_i)^\lambda}$$

where  $M(p_k)$ —the “mass” of UCSE participant  $k$ —is their propensity to work in multiple cities, estimated as

$$M(p_k) \approx |L(p_k)|.$$

and  $M(c_i)$ —the “mass” of city  $c_i$ — is its propensity to draw UCSE participants toward it,  $d(h(p_k), c_i)$  is the highway distance between the home city of UCSE participant  $p_k$  and the city  $c_i$ , and  $\lambda$  is the decay exponent of the attraction force (as a function of this distance). Inter-city distances between the  $n = 8$  cities of the study are presented in the table below.

**Table 3.5 Inter-City Distances (miles)**

City	Atlanta	Dallas	Denver	Miami	San Diego	Seattle	DC
Atlanta	0	781	1,403	662	2,140	2,638	639
Dallas	781	0	791	1,313	1,358	2,200	1,329
Denver	1,403	791	0	2,067	1,078	1,333	1,664
Miami	662	1,313	2,067	0	2,653	3,331	1,051
San Diego	2,140	1,358	1,078	2,653	0	1,255	2,687
Seattle	2,638	2,200	1,333	3,331	1,255	0	2,756
DC	639	1,329	1,664	1,051	2,687	2,756	0

We estimate the  $M(c_i)$  and  $\lambda$  by a regression analysis of the survey data whose collection was described earlier (see section 0).

Toward this, for each UCSE participant  $p_k \in P$ , and each of their  $n' - 1 = 6$  non-home cities  $c_i \in C \setminus \{h(p_k)\}$ , we introduce a 9-tuple  $\mathbb{X}_{ik} \in \mathbb{R}^9$ :

$$\mathbb{X}_{ik} = (X_0, X_1, \dots, X_{n'-1}, \ln d(h(p_k), c_i), |L(p_k)|).$$

The first  $n' = 7$  coordinates  $X_0, X_1, \dots, X_{n'-1}$  are all 0 with the exception  $X_i = 1$ ; coordinate 8 is the natural logarithm of the distance from  $h(p_k)$  and  $c_i$ ; coordinate 9 is the natural logarithm of our estimate for  $M(p_k)$ .

The resulting  $N(n' - 1) = 763$  points are each augmented by  $Y_{ik}$  (taken as coordinate 10) producing the 10-dimensional dataset

$$\mathcal{D} = \{ (\mathbb{X}_{ik}, Y_{ik}) \mid p_k \in P \text{ and } c_i \in C \setminus \{h(p_k)\} \}$$

which is then subjected to standard logistic regression in order to model the probability that coordinate 10 (the dependent variable)  $Y_{ik} = 1$ , as a linear function of the first 9 (independent variable) coordinates.

We denote the coefficients obtained for the first  $n' = 7$  coordinates  $X_0, X_1, \dots, X_{n'-1}$  via this regression as  $\theta_0, \theta_1, \dots, \theta_{n'-1}$ . Inverting the initial logistic transformation of variables needed for the logistic regression, these  $\theta_0, \theta_1, \dots, \theta_{n'-1}$  coefficients, in turn, yield “mass” estimates

$\tilde{M}(c_0), \tilde{M}(c_1), \dots, \tilde{M}(c_{n'-1})$  for each of the corresponding cities  $c_0, c_1, \dots, c_{n'-1}$ . These mass estimates are listed in column 2 of the table below. Normalizing the  $\tilde{M}(c_i)$  by the median entry (specifically, Washington, DC), we obtain  $G_2^*(c_i)$ , a new proxy for pimp population size. The values of  $G_2^*(c_i)$  are listed



in column 3 of the table below. The coefficient obtained for coordinate 9 is the value  $-1.5$ , which represents the estimated distance decay exponent of the attraction force.

**Table 3.6 Proxy  $G_2^*$  for Pimp Population Size**

City		
Atlanta	6.254	1.192
Dallas	6.079	1.108
Denver	3.379	0.156
Miami	8.049	1.785
San Diego	5.811	0.975
Seattle	5.463	0.805
DC	5.861	1.000
Kansas City	N/A	N/A

By including the distance between a UCSE participant's home city and other candidate cities in the form of the "force of attraction," the Gravity Model yields a proxy for pimp population size which deftly sidesteps potential biases that may arise from assuming that the UCSE participants are blind to distance (as was indeed the case for the initial proxy  $G_1^*$ ). In what follows, we use this  $G_2^*(c_i)$  as our proxy for pimp population size, and then combine with the mean weekly gross cash intake to produce  $S^*(c_i, t_j) \triangleq I(c_i, t_j) \cdot G_2^*(c_i)$ . The computed final values of the sex proxy  $S^*$  are given in the table below. Note that these proxy values are without units and have no inherent interpretation.

**Table 3.7 Final Values of Proxy  $S^*$**

Year	Atlanta	Dallas	Denver	Miami	San Diego	Seattle	DC
2003	30,835	12,877	6,117	39,141	16,090	5,433	16,700
2007	39,128	13,320	4,852	31,666	10,852	14,489	11,588

### 1.2.2. Linear Proxy $D^*$

Originally, we envisioned using a single variable as a proxy for cross-city and over-time drug market differences. In reading the relevant literature, however, we developed a list of potential proxies. Rather than choosing one, we used regressions to aggregate across different variables.

Let  $d_{it}^k$  be the value of the  $k^{th}$  proxy variable for drug activity, measured in city  $i$  at time  $t$ . For this analysis, we used,  $k = 1, \dots, 7$ ,  $t = 2000, \dots, 2010$ , and  $i = 0, \dots, 6$ . That is, Kansas City is excluded.

Let  $\sigma_{it}^k$  be the standard error of the estimate of the  $k^{th}$  proxy for city  $i$  at time  $t$ . To aggregate across the 7 different drug proxy variables, we relied on a simple linear regression. While this imposes a lot of structure on the proxy information, we believe that it eliminates some of the concerns about noisy measurement. Our plan was to use a single regression for each city, with all proxies modeled as a linear function of time. The problem is that the different proxy variables are in different units, so a linear regression cannot properly combine them.



To account for this, we normalized all variables by the city-year with the most complete data: Miami in 2003 (for two of the seven proxies, we used Miami in 2004 instead). Thus, we define:

$$\tilde{d}_{it}^k = \frac{d_{it}^k}{d_{3,2003}^k}$$

and

$$\tilde{\sigma}_{it}^k = \frac{\sigma_{it}^k}{d_{3,2003}^k}$$

Then, we were able to estimate a simple linear model to estimate the time trend for the drug market (based on time trends in each variable) and a relationship between the sizes of each city (based on the relative level of all proxy variables), which accounts for missing data, imprecision in estimated proxy values, and units that differ across different variables. Specifically, we estimated:

$$\tilde{d}_{it}^k = \alpha_i + \beta_i t$$

Each observation was weighted by  $\frac{1}{\tilde{\sigma}_{it}^k}$ . Note that we allow for a different time trend for each city, and that no term is necessary to adjust for different values of  $k$  because they were all normalized by the Miami, 2003 value. Also, note that (other than discounting less accurately estimated proxies), we give each proxy variable equal weight.

Based on these regression results, we can calculate  $D_{it}^*$  as:

$$D_{it}^* = \hat{\alpha}_i + \hat{\beta}_i t$$

The computed values of the drugs proxy  $D^*$  are given in the table below.

**Table 3.8 Final Values of Proxy  $D^*$**

Year	Atlanta	Dallas	Denver	Miami	San Diego	Seattle	DC
2003	1.038	1.334	0.544	0.931	1.041	0.870	1.099
2007	1.153	1.879	0.630	0.944	0.949	0.862	1.007

### 1.2.3. Linear Proxy $W^*$

We followed the exact same procedure to estimate  $W^*$  with the exception of normalizing by Miami, 2007, instead of Miami, 2003, because it had more complete data. Also, we had fewer weapons proxies, with  $k = 1,2,3$ . The computed values of the guns proxy  $W^*$  are given in the table below.

**Table 3.9 Final Values of Proxy  $W^*$**

Year	Atlanta	Dallas	Denver	Miami	San Diego	Seattle	DC
2003	1.293	1.307	0.446	0.807	0.356	0.628	1.135
2007	1.123	1.317	0.362	0.913	0.368	0.459	1.221

### 1.2.4. Linear Proxy $O^*$

We followed the exact same procedure to estimate  $O^*$  as we did to estimate  $D^*$ . Again, we had fewer proxy variables available, with  $k = 1, 2, 3$ . The computed values of the other proxy  $O^*$  are given in the table below.

**Table 3.10 Final Values of Proxy  $O^*$**

Year	Atlanta	Dallas	Denver	Miami	San Diego	Seattle	DC
2003	0.961	1.121	0.496	1.019	0.564	0.643	0.979
2007	1.120	1.324	0.481	1.027	0.568	0.695	1.179

### 1.3. The Left Hand Side $Z$ : Estimating Total Cash in Circulation

The approach used to estimate total cash in circulation evolved over time. For a more complete description of this process, see chapter 2. In the end, we estimated the average ratio of currency in circulation to real GDP using national data. We then multiplied this ratio by each city's real GDP, available from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, to yield a city-level estimate of currency in circulation.

Because city-level currency data is not available, it must be estimated using national data. A naïve approach might be simply to multiply the national currency-GDP ratio by city-level GDP. In other words, one might calculate city-level currency in city  $i$  at time  $t$  using this formula:<sup>40</sup>

$$CityCurrency_{it} = \left( \frac{NationalCurrency}{NationalGDP} \right) \times CityGDP_{it}$$

However, the currency-GDP ratio varies over time. Specifically, it is likely that the national currency-GDP ratio varies systematically with economic conditions, such as personal income, employment rates, and inflation rates. If cities differ along these dimensions, this information can help generate more accurate estimates of city-level currency volumes.

To identify this systematic variation, we used quarterly data from the St. Louis Federal Reserve Bank's Federal Reserve Economic Data (FRED). We used all available years (1959–2012) and a simple linear model to estimate systematic covariation between economic variables and the national currency-GDP ratio. Specifically, we estimated the following model:<sup>41</sup>

Variable	Coefficient estimate	Standard error	t-statistic
Intercept	0.319***	0.052	6.18
Per capita personal income	-6.96***	1.507	4.62
Per capita real GDP	6.458***	1.309	4.94
Ratio of GDP to personal income	-0.227***	0.048	4.68
Employment-population ratio	-0.084***	0.013	6.5
Business income as percent of total income	0.28***	0.03	9.48
Inflation rate	-0.032***	0.007	4.63
$N = 215 R^2 = .902 Adj.R^2 = .899$			

<sup>40</sup> Alternatively, one might use the national currency-GDP ratio from year  $t$ . This does not substantially change the results.

<sup>41</sup> We experimented with a range of additional variables which had little predictive power. We also considered several specifications of temporal effects (such as linear or quadratic time trends and decade-specific intercepts). These did not significantly change the results.

Using the results of this model, we can estimate currency-GDP ratios for each city that take into account variation over time and across cities in economic conditions associated with currency levels. This yields more accurate estimates of the currency-GDP ratio. In practice, the difference between these regression-based estimates and naïve ones (simply applying the national average currency-GDP) are fairly small.<sup>42</sup> The table below displays these estimates.

City	Year	Regression estimate (in billions of 2005 dollars)	Naïve estimate (in billions of 2005 dollars)	Ratio
Atlanta	2003	12.57	13.21	0.95
Atlanta	2007	13.82	14.78	0.94
Dallas	2003	19.59	16.56	1.18
Dallas	2007	24.23	19.5	1.24
Denver	2003	8.91	7.25	1.23
Denver	2007	9.18	7.97	1.15
Kansas City	2003	4.45	5.07	0.88
Kansas City	2007	4.64	5.48	0.85
Miami	2003	10.31	12.26	0.84
Miami	2007	10.85	14.28	0.76
San Diego	2003	7.79	7.97	0.98
San Diego	2007	8.49	8.98	0.94
Seattle	2003	10.37	10.06	1.03
Seattle	2007	13.05	12.02	1.09
DC	2003	17.83	18.12	0.98
DC	2007	20.81	20.63	1.01

The computed estimates of the cash in circulation  $\tilde{Z}$  are given in the table below.

**Table 3.11 Final Estimates of the Left-hand Side ( $\tilde{Z}$ ): Total Cash in Circulation (billions)**

Year	Atlanta	Dallas	Denver	Miami	San Diego	Seattle	DC
2003	\$13.2	\$16.6	\$7.25	\$12.3	\$7.97	\$10.1	\$18.1
2007	\$14.8	\$19.5	\$7.97	\$14.3	\$8.98	\$12.0	\$20.6

<sup>42</sup> Specifically, we used the average currency-GDP ratio from 2000–2012: 0.0574.

## I.4. The Linear Program

### I.4.1. Sex Proxy Ratio Constraints

For each distinct pair of cities  $c_i, c_k \in \mathcal{C}$  and choice of time index  $j \in \{0,1\}$ , we introduce upper and lower bound ratio constraints bounding the relative sizes of the cash-based sex economies of cities  $c_i$  and cities  $c_k$ .

$$\frac{s(c_i, t_j)}{s(c_k, t_j)} > (1 - \epsilon_s) \frac{S^*(c_i, t_j)}{S^*(c_k, t_j)}$$

$$\frac{s(c_i, t_j)}{s(c_k, t_j)} < (1 + \epsilon_s) \frac{S^*(c_i, t_j)}{S^*(c_k, t_j)}$$

These constraints codify that the ratio of values the sex variables  $s$  must agree with the corresponding ratios of the linear proxy  $S^*$ , up to a **slack margin** of  $\epsilon_s$ . In our analysis, we took  $\epsilon_s = 0.20$ , allowing for a 20 percent deviation of the sex variable ratios from the proxy ratios. The setting of the slack margin was determined to be reasonable based on an analysis of the mean standard deviation of the weekly gross cash intake across pimps across cities/times (which is a constituent of linear proxy  $S^*$ , as described in section 1.2.1).

Additionally, for each city  $c_i \in \mathcal{C}$  we introduce upper and lower bound ratio constraints on the relative change in the cash-based sex economy of  $c_i$  from  $t_0$  to  $t_1$ .

$$\frac{s(c_i, t_1)}{s(c_i, t_0)} > (1 - \epsilon_s) \frac{S^*(c_i, t_1)}{S^*(c_i, t_0)}$$

$$\frac{s(c_i, t_1)}{s(c_i, t_0)} < (1 + \epsilon_s) \frac{S^*(c_i, t_1)}{S^*(c_i, t_0)}$$

This yields a homogeneous system of  $\binom{7}{2} 2 \cdot 2 + 7 \cdot 2 = 98$  linear ratio inequalities on the 14 variables which concern relative sizes cash-based sex economies.

### Example

The tables below (Table 3.12 Cross-City Sex Proxy Ratios) list the cross-city ratios of the sex proxy  $S^*$ , in 2003 and 2007. The table tells us, for example, that in 2003 the proxy for the underground cash-based sex economy in Miami ( $c_3$ ) was 2.10 times what it was in Dallas ( $c_1$ ). This single ratio entry would give rise to two linear constraints:

$$\frac{s(c_3, 2003)}{s(c_1, 2003)} > 0.80 \cdot (2.10) = 1.68$$

$$\frac{s(c_3, 2003)}{s(c_1, 2003)} < 1.20 \cdot (2.10) = 2.52$$

In other words, although the data we have available suggests that the 2003 Miami underground cash-based sex economy is 110 percent larger than that in Dallas, we recognize that there may be some imprecision, and allow for it to be between 68 percent and 152 percent larger. The next table (Table 3.13 Cross-Year Sex Proxy Ratios) lists the cross-year ratios of the sex proxy  $S^*$  (value in 2007 over the value in 2003). The table tells us, for example, that the underground cash-based sex economy in Miami ( $c_3$ ) in 2007 was 81 percent of what it was in 2003. This single ratio entry would give rise to two linear constraints:

$$\frac{s(c_3, 2007)}{s(c_3, 2003)} > 0.80 \cdot (0.81) = 0.65$$

$$\frac{s(c_3, 2007)}{s(c_3, 2003)} < 1.20 \cdot (0.81) = 0.97$$

Note that the entries in the tables below are derived directly from the values on the sex proxy as listed in Table 3.7 Final Values of Proxy

**Table 3.12 Cross-City Sex Proxy Ratios**

2003	Atlanta	Dallas	Denver	Miami	San Diego	Seattle	DC
Atlanta	1.00	0.58	0.20	1.07	0.52	0.18	0.65
Dallas	1.86	1.00	0.48	2.10	1.25	0.42	1.29
Denver	5.04	2.11	1.00	4.20	1.82	0.89	2.73
Miami	0.98	0.60	0.33	1.00	0.53	0.37	0.71
San Diego	1.92	0.80	0.69	2.03	1.00	0.54	1.14
Seattle	5.68	2.37	1.13	4.44	2.15	1.00	2.37
DC	1.59	0.79	0.37	1.70	0.88	0.46	1.00

**Table 3.12 Cross-City Sex Proxy Ratios (continued)**

2007	Atlanta	Dallas	Denver	Miami	San Diego	Seattle	DC
Atlanta	1.00	0.67	0.56	0.91	0.28	0.37	0.30
Dallas	1.97	1.00	0.68	1.76	1.07	1.04	0.93
Denver	4.53	1.87	1.00	3.93	1.79	1.92	1.69
Miami	1.14	0.67	0.45	1.00	0.67	0.64	0.67
San Diego	3.61	0.99	0.60	1.96	1.00	1.04	0.91
Seattle	2.70	0.96	0.77	1.71	1.04	1.00	0.88
DC	3.38	1.07	0.71	1.92	1.13	1.14	1.00

**Table 3.13 Cross-Year Sex Proxy Ratios**

City	2007/2003
Atlanta	1.2689
Dallas	1.0344
Denver	0.7932
Miami	0.8090
San Diego	0.6745
Seattle	2.6667
DC	0.6939

#### 1.4.2. Drug Proxy Ratio Constraints

For each distinct pair of cities  $c_i, c_k \in \mathcal{C}$  and choice of time index  $t \in \{0,1\}$ , we introduce upper and lower bound ratio constraints bounding the relative sizes of the cash-based drug economies of cities  $c_i$  and cities  $c_k$ .

$$\frac{d(c_i, t)}{d(c_k, t)} > (1 - \epsilon_D) \frac{D^*(c_i, t)}{D^*(c_k, t)}$$

$$\frac{d(c_i, t)}{d(c_k, t)} < (1 + \epsilon_D) \frac{D^*(c_i, t)}{D^*(c_k, t)}$$

These constraints codify that the ratio of values the drug variables  $d$  must agree with the corresponding ratios of the linear proxy  $D^*$ , up to a **slack margin** of  $\epsilon_D$ . In our analysis, we took  $\epsilon_D = 0.01$ , allowing for a 1 percent deviation of the drug variable ratios from the drug proxy ratios. The setting of the slack margin was determined to be reasonable based on the fact that several coherent low-level proxies for drugs were aggregated to form  $D^*$  (see section 1.2.2. Linear Proxy  $D^*$ ).

Additionally, for each city  $c_i \in \mathcal{C}$  we introduce upper and lower bound ratio constraints on the relative change in the cash-based drug economy of  $c_i$  from  $t_0$  to  $t_1$ .

$$\frac{d(c_i, t_1)}{d(c_i, t_0)} > (1 - \epsilon_D) \frac{D^*(c_i, t_1)}{D^*(c_i, t_0)}$$

$$\frac{d(c_i, t_1)}{d(c_i, t_0)} < (1 + \epsilon_D) \frac{D^*(c_i, t_1)}{D^*(c_i, t_0)}$$

This yields a homogeneous system of  $\binom{7}{2} 2 \cdot 2 + 7 \cdot 2 = 98$  linear ratio inequalities on the 14 variables which concern relative sizes of cash-based drug economies.

### An Example of Drug Proxy-based Ratio Constraints

The tables below (Table 3.14 Cross-city Drug Proxy Ratios) list the cross-city ratios of the drug proxy  $D^*$ , in 2003 and 2007. The table tells us, for example, that in 2003 the proxy for the underground cash-based drug economy in Seattle ( $c_5$ ) was 0.50 times what it was in Atlanta ( $c_0$ ). This single ratio entry would give rise to two linear constraints:

$$\frac{d(c_5, 2003)}{d(c_0, 2003)} > 0.99 \cdot (0.50) = 0.49$$

$$\frac{d(c_5, 2003)}{d(c_0, 2003)} < 1.01 \cdot (0.50) = 0.51$$

The next table (

Table 3.15 Cross-Year Drug Proxy Ratios) lists the cross-year ratios of the drug proxy  $D^*$  (value in 2007 over the value in 2003). The table tells us, for example, that the underground cash-based drug economy in San Diego ( $c_4$ ) in 2007 was 6% higher than it was in 2003. This single ratio entry would give rise to two linear constraints:

$$\frac{d(c_4, 2007)}{d(c_4, 2003)} > 0.99 \cdot (1.06) = 1.05$$

$$\frac{d(c_4, 2007)}{d(c_4, 2003)} < 1.01 \cdot (1.06) = 1.07$$

Note that the entries in the tables below are derived directly from the values of the Drugs Proxy as listed in Table 3.8 Final Values of Proxy D\*.

**Table 3.14 Cross-city Drug Proxy Ratios**

2003	Atlanta	Dallas	Denver	Miami	San Diego	Seattle	DC
Atlanta	1.00	1.28	0.52	0.90	1.00	0.84	1.06
Dallas	0.78	1.00	0.41	0.70	0.78	0.65	0.82
Denver	1.91	2.45	1.00	1.71	1.91	1.60	2.02
Miami	1.12	1.43	0.58	1.00	1.12	0.93	1.18
San Diego	1.00	1.28	0.52	0.89	1.00	0.84	1.06
Seattle	1.19	1.53	0.63	1.07	1.20	1.00	1.26
DC	0.94	1.21	0.50	0.85	0.95	0.79	1.00

2007	Atlanta	Dallas	Denver	Miami	San Diego	Seattle	DC
Atlanta	1.00	1.63	0.55	0.82	0.82	0.75	0.87
Dallas	0.61	1.00	0.34	0.50	0.51	0.46	0.54
Denver	1.83	2.98	1.00	1.50	1.51	1.37	1.60
Miami	1.22	1.99	0.67	1.00	1.01	0.91	1.07
San Diego	1.21	1.98	0.66	0.99	1.00	0.91	1.06
Seattle	1.34	2.18	0.73	1.10	1.10	1.00	1.17
DC	1.14	1.87	0.63	0.94	0.94	0.86	1.00

**Table 3.15 Cross-Year Drug Proxy Ratios**

City	2007/2003
Atlanta	1.11
Dallas	1.41
Denver	1.16
Miami	1.01
San Diego	0.91
Seattle	0.99
DC	0.92

### 1.4.3. Gun Proxy Ratio Constraints

For each distinct pair of cities  $c_i, c_k \in \mathcal{C}$  and choice of time index  $j \in \{0,1\}$ , we introduce upper and lower bound ratio constraints bounding the relative sizes of the cash-based gun economies of cities  $c_i$  and cities  $c_k$ .

$$\frac{w(c_i, t_j)}{w(c_k, t_j)} > (1 - \epsilon_w) \frac{W^*(c_i, t_j)}{W^*(c_k, t_j)}$$

$$\frac{w(c_i, t_j)}{w(c_k, t_j)} < (1 + \epsilon_w) \frac{W^*(c_i, t_j)}{W^*(c_k, t_j)}$$



These constraints codify that the ratio of values the gun variables  $w$  must agree with the corresponding ratios of the linear proxy  $W^*$ , up to a **slack margin** of  $\epsilon_w$ . In our analysis, we took  $\epsilon_w = 0.01$ , allowing for a 1 percent deviation of the gun variable ratios from the gun proxy ratios. The setting of the slack margin was determined to be reasonable based on the fact that several coherent low-level proxies for guns were aggregated to form  $W^*$  (see 1.2.3. Linear Proxy  $W^*$ ).

Additionally, for each city  $c_i \in C$  we introduce upper and lower bound ratio constraints on the relative change in the cash-based gun economy of  $c_i$  from  $t_0$  to  $t_1$ .

$$\frac{w(c_i, t_1)}{w(c_i, t_0)} > (1 - \epsilon_w) \frac{W^*(c_i, t_1)}{W^*(c_i, t_0)}$$

$$\frac{w(c_i, t_1)}{w(c_i, t_0)} < (1 + \epsilon_w) \frac{W^*(c_i, t_1)}{W^*(c_i, t_0)}$$

This yields a homogeneous system of  $\binom{7}{2} 2 \cdot 2 + 7 \cdot 2 = 98$  linear ratio inequalities on the 14 variables which concern relative sizes of cash-based gun economies.

### An Example of Gun Proxy-based Ratio Constraints

The two tables below (Table 3.16 Cross-City Gun Proxy Ratios) list the cross-city ratios of the guns proxy  $W^*$ , in 2003 and 2007. The table tells us, for example, that in 2003 the proxy for the underground cash-based drug economy in DC ( $c_6$ ) was 1.27 times what it was in Atlanta ( $c_0$ ). This single ratio entry would give rise to two linear constraints:

$$\frac{w(c_6, 2003)}{w(c_0, 2003)} > 0.99 \cdot (1.27) = 1.26$$

$$\frac{w(c_6, 2003)}{w(c_0, 2003)} < 1.01 \cdot (1.27) = 1.28$$

The next table (Table 3.17 Cross-Year Gun Proxy Ratios) lists the cross-year ratios of the guns proxy  $W^*$  (value in 2007 over the value in 2003). The table tells us, for example, that the underground cash-based gun economy in Miami ( $c_3$ ) in 2007 was 12 percent higher than it was in 2003. This single ratio entry would give rise to two linear constraints:

$$\frac{w(c_3, 2007)}{w(c_3, 2003)} > 0.99 \cdot (1.12) = 1.11$$

$$\frac{w(c_3, 2007)}{w(c_3, 2003)} < 1.01 \cdot (1.12) = 1.13$$

Note that the entries in the tables below are derived directly from the values of the Guns Proxy as listed in Table 3.7 Final Values of Proxy  $W^*$ .

**Table 3.16 Cross-City Gun Proxy Ratios**

2003	Atlanta	Dallas	Denver	Miami	San Diego	Seattle	DC
Atlanta	1.00	1.01	0.34	0.62	0.28	0.49	0.88
Dallas	0.99	1.00	0.34	0.62	0.27	0.48	0.87
Denver	2.90	2.93	1.00	1.81	0.80	1.41	2.55
Miami	1.60	1.62	0.55	1.00	0.44	0.78	1.41
San Diego	3.63	3.67	1.25	2.27	1.00	1.76	3.19
Seattle	2.06	2.08	0.71	1.28	0.57	1.00	1.81
DC	1.14	1.15	0.39	0.71	0.31	0.55	1.00

2007	Atlanta	Dallas	Denver	Miami	San Diego	Seattle	DC
Atlanta	1.00	1.17	0.32	0.81	0.33	0.41	1.09
Dallas	0.85	1.00	0.27	0.69	0.28	0.35	0.93
Denver	3.10	3.64	1.00	2.52	1.02	1.27	3.37
Miami	1.23	1.44	0.40	1.00	0.40	0.50	1.34
San Diego	3.05	3.58	0.98	2.48	1.00	1.25	3.32
Seattle	2.45	2.87	0.79	1.99	0.80	1.00	2.66
DC	0.92	1.08	0.30	0.75	0.30	0.38	1.00

**Table 3.17 Cross-Year Gun Proxy Ratios**

City	2007/2003
Atlanta	0.87
Dallas	1.01
Denver	0.81
Miami	1.13
San Diego	1.03
Seattle	0.73
DC	1.08

#### 1.4.4. Other Proxy Ratio Constraints

For each distinct pair of cities  $c_i, c_k \in \mathcal{C}$  and choice of time index  $j \in \{0,1\}$ , we introduce upper and lower bound ratio constraints bounding the relative sizes of the cash-based “other” economies of cities  $c_i$  and cities  $c_k$ .

$$\frac{o(c_i, t_j)}{o(c_k, t_j)} > (1 - \epsilon_o) \frac{O^*(c_i, t_j)}{O^*(c_k, t_j)}$$

$$\frac{o(c_i, t_j)}{o(c_k, t_j)} < (1 + \epsilon_o) \frac{O^*(c_i, t_j)}{O^*(c_k, t_j)}$$

These constraints codify that the ratio of values the other variables  $\mathbf{o}$  must agree with the corresponding ratios of the linear proxy  $\mathbf{O}^*$ , up to a **slack margin** of  $\epsilon_{\mathbf{o}}$ . In our analysis, we took  $\epsilon_{\mathbf{o}} = 0.20$ , allowing for a 20% deviation of the other variable ratios from the other proxy ratios. The setting of the slack margin was determined by considering the variation in low-level proxies aggregated to form  $\mathbf{O}^*$  (see section

#### 1.2.4. Linear Proxy $O^*$ ).

Additionally, for each city  $c_i \in \mathcal{C}$  we introduce upper and lower bound ratio constraints on the relative change in the cash-based gun economy of  $c_i$  from  $t_0$  to  $t_1$ .

$$\frac{o(c_i, t_1)}{o(c_i, t_0)} > (1 - \epsilon_o) \frac{O^*(c_i, t_1)}{O^*(c_i, t_0)}$$

$$\frac{o(c_i, t_1)}{o(c_i, t_0)} < (1 + \epsilon_o) \frac{O^*(c_i, t_1)}{O^*(c_i, t_0)}$$

This yields a homogeneous system of  $\binom{7}{2} 2 \cdot 2 + 7 \cdot 2 = 98$  linear ratio inequalities on the 14 variables which concern relative sizes of cash-based “other” economies.

#### An Example of Other Proxy based Ratio Constraints

The two tables below (Table 3.18 Cross-City Other Proxy Ratios) list the cross-city ratios of the other proxy  $O^*$ , in 2003 and 2007. The table tells us, for example, that in 2003 the proxy for the underground cash-based other economy in Seattle ( $c_5$ ) was 1.37 times what it was in Denver ( $c_2$ ). This single ratio entry would give rise to two linear constraints:

$$\frac{o(c_5, 2003)}{o(c_2, 2003)} > 0.80 \cdot (1.37) = 1.10$$

$$\frac{o(c_5, 2003)}{o(c_2, 2003)} < 1.20 \cdot (1.37) = 1.64$$

The next table (

Table 3.19 Cross-Year Other Proxy Ratios) lists the cross-year ratios of the other proxy  $O^*$  (value in 2007 over the value in 2003). The table tells us, for example, that the underground cash-based other economy in San Diego ( $c_4$ ) in 2007 was 10 percent higher than it was in 2003. This single ratio entry would give rise to two linear constraints:

$$\frac{o(c_4, 2007)}{o(c_4, 2003)} > 0.80 \cdot (1.10) = 0.88$$

$$\frac{o(c_4, 2007)}{o(c_4, 2003)} < 1.20 \cdot (1.10) = 1.32$$

Note that the entries in the tables below are derived directly from the values of the Other Proxy as listed in Table 3.7 Final Values of Proxy  $O^*$ .

**Table 3.18 Cross-City Other Proxy Ratios**

2003	Atlanta	Dallas	Denver	Miami	San Diego	Seattle	DC
Atlanta	1.00	1.17	0.52	1.06	0.59	0.67	1.02
Dallas	0.86	1.00	0.44	0.91	0.50	0.57	0.87
Denver	1.94	2.26	1.00	2.06	1.14	1.30	1.98
Miami	0.94	1.10	0.49	1.00	0.55	0.63	0.96
San Diego	1.71	1.99	0.88	1.81	1.00	1.14	1.74
Seattle	1.49	1.74	0.77	1.58	0.88	1.00	1.52
DC	0.98	1.14	0.51	1.04	0.58	0.66	1.00

2007	Atlanta	Dallas	Denver	Miami	San Diego	Seattle	DC
Atlanta	1.00	1.18	0.43	0.92	0.51	0.62	1.05
Dallas	0.85	1.00	0.36	0.78	0.43	0.52	0.89
Denver	2.33	2.76	1.00	2.14	1.18	1.45	2.45
Miami	1.09	1.29	0.47	1.00	0.55	0.68	1.15
San Diego	1.97	2.33	0.85	1.81	1.00	1.22	2.08
Seattle	1.61	1.90	0.69	1.48	0.82	1.00	1.70
DC	0.95	1.12	0.41	0.87	0.48	0.59	1.00

**Table 3.19 Cross-Year Other Proxy Ratios**

City	2007/2003
Atlanta	1.17
Dallas	1.18
Denver	0.97
Miami	1.01
San Diego	1.01
Seattle	1.08
DC	1.20

#### 1.4.5. Positivity Constraints

Finally, sufficient reasoning about the semantics of the variables yields additional constraints requiring that their values be positive and well-separated from 0. Toward this, for each city  $c_i \in \mathcal{C}$  and choice of time index  $j \in \{0,1\}$ , we have

$$\begin{aligned}
 s(c_i, t_j) &\gg 0 \\
 d(c_i, t_j) &\gg 0 \\
 w(c_i, t_j) &\gg 0 \\
 o(c_i, t_j) &\gg 0
 \end{aligned}$$

We implement these 56 lower-bound linear inequalities using  $v(c_i, t_j) > \gamma \cdot \tilde{Z}(c_i, t_j)$  with  $\gamma = 1/1000$  and  $v \in \{s, d, w, o\}$ . This expresses the lower bound and positivity requirement at a scale that is appropriate to the problem, which is necessary to avoid numerical instabilities in the *lp\_solve* linear program optimizer. In other words, we assumed that at least 0.1 percent of all currency in circulation is spent on each category, for each city and year.

#### I.4.6. An Objective Function Based on the Law of Cash Conservation

The previous sections (1.4.1. Sex Proxy Ratio Constraints to 1.4.5. Positivity Constraints) described the set of  $98 \cdot 4 + 56 = 448$  linear inequalities that must be simultaneously satisfied. Assuming the feasible set is non-empty (i.e., there is at least one assignment of values to the 56 unknowns which satisfies these 448 inequalities), then there are likely to be infinitely many solutions. This is simply because the nonempty intersection of these 448 halfspaces will, in general, be a convex subspace of  $\mathbb{R}^{56}$ . To specify a unique solution from within the (infinite) feasible set, we must further specify an **objective function**  $E$  that we wish to minimize over the feasible set. In this setting, we take  $E$  to be the average relative divergence from the Conservation Law:

$$E \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \frac{1}{14} \sum_{c_i \in C; j \in \{0,1\}} \left| 1 - \frac{[s(c_i, t_j) + d(c_i, t_j) + w(c_i, t_j) + o(c_i, t_j)]}{\tilde{Z}(c_i, t_j)} \right|$$

Note that:

1.  $E$  is non-negative, since it is the sum of 14 non-negative quantities.
2.  $E = 0$  if and only if the following 14 LoCC-based equalities hold precisely:

$$\begin{aligned} \tilde{Z}(c_0, t_0) &= s(c_0, t_0) + d(c_0, t_0) + w(c_0, t_0) + o(c_0, t_0) \\ \tilde{Z}(c_1, t_0) &= s(c_1, t_0) + d(c_1, t_0) + w(c_1, t_0) + o(c_1, t_0) \\ \tilde{Z}(c_2, t_0) &= s(c_2, t_0) + d(c_2, t_0) + w(c_2, t_0) + o(c_2, t_0) \\ \tilde{Z}(c_3, t_0) &= s(c_3, t_0) + d(c_3, t_0) + w(c_3, t_0) + o(c_3, t_0) \\ \tilde{Z}(c_4, t_0) &= s(c_4, t_0) + d(c_4, t_0) + w(c_4, t_0) + o(c_4, t_0) \\ \tilde{Z}(c_5, t_0) &= s(c_5, t_0) + d(c_5, t_0) + w(c_5, t_0) + o(c_5, t_0) \\ \tilde{Z}(c_6, t_0) &= s(c_6, t_0) + d(c_6, t_0) + w(c_6, t_0) + o(c_6, t_0) \\ \tilde{Z}(c_0, t_1) &= s(c_0, t_1) + d(c_0, t_1) + w(c_0, t_1) + o(c_0, t_1) \\ \tilde{Z}(c_1, t_1) &= s(c_1, t_1) + d(c_1, t_1) + w(c_1, t_1) + o(c_1, t_1) \\ \tilde{Z}(c_2, t_1) &= s(c_2, t_1) + d(c_2, t_1) + w(c_2, t_1) + o(c_2, t_1) \\ \tilde{Z}(c_3, t_1) &= s(c_3, t_1) + d(c_3, t_1) + w(c_3, t_1) + o(c_3, t_1) \\ \tilde{Z}(c_4, t_1) &= s(c_4, t_1) + d(c_4, t_1) + w(c_4, t_1) + o(c_4, t_1) \\ \tilde{Z}(c_5, t_1) &= s(c_5, t_1) + d(c_5, t_1) + w(c_5, t_1) + o(c_5, t_1) \\ \tilde{Z}(c_6, t_1) &= s(c_6, t_1) + d(c_6, t_1) + w(c_6, t_1) + o(c_6, t_1) \end{aligned}$$

3. Each LoCC-based equality that fails to hold precisely contributes to  $E$  the absolute value of the relative discrepancy between its left and right hand sides (over 14).

By minimizing  $E$  then, we effectively seek to find the unique point within the feasible set (i.e. a point which satisfies the 448 linear inequalities) that also minimizes the absolute normalized discrepancy between the left and right hand sides of the 14 equalities implied by the Law of Conservation of Cash.

### 1.4.7. Techniques for Solving the Linear Program

We use the non-commercial (LGPL2 license) linear programming solver *lp\_solve*, written in ANSI C by Michel Berkelaar, which is known to efficiently solve problems with up to 30,000 variables and 50,000 constraints.

### 1.5. Geometric Intuition

The picture that follows (Figure 1 A Geometric Representation of the Optimization Problem) attempts to illustrate the problem at an intuitive level. Although the figure is just 2-dimensional (the axes shown in black), in actuality, our problem is 56-dimensional (7 cities times 2 times 4 economic unknowns, namely sex, drugs, guns, and other). One might imagine then that the two black axes shown in the figure are just 2 of the 56, say the UCSE in Dallas ( $c_1$ ) in 2003 (on the x-axis), and the UCSE in Miami ( $c_3$ ) in 2003 (y-axis).

We know from Sex Proxy Ratios analysis (see section 1.4.1. Sex Proxy Ratio Constraints) that the ratio of UCSE in Dallas and the UCSE in Miami in 2003 is

$$\frac{s(c_3, 2003)}{s(c_1, 2003)} \approx 2.10$$

and accounting for 20 percent slack in the estimation of this ratio via  $S^*$ , we can assume that the ratio lines in the range [1.68, 2.52]. Thus, the ratio constraint defines a feasible “wedge” (shown in green), the region between

$$\begin{aligned} y &\geq 1.68 x \\ y &\leq 2.52 x. \end{aligned}$$

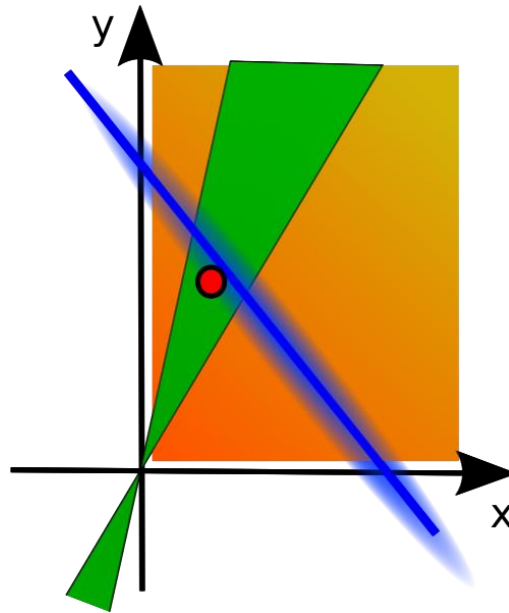
Given that we have 448 ratio constraints (each between two variables), in actuality there are 224 such green wedges, all emanating from the origin in 56-dimensional space.

The semantics of our variables necessitates that only solutions in the all-positive quadrant be considered. We depict this by showing the positive quadrant in orange. In 56 dimensions, the all-positive quadrant comprises a tiny  $1/2^{56}$  fraction of the entire space. Formally, this is done with the positivity constraints in section 0.

Finally, we have the equations that arise from the Law of Cash Conservation. These are non-homogeneous (since they each contain a non-zero constant term Z) and so they do not pass through the origin. There are 14 such non-homogeneous equations, each relating 4 variables; the figure shows just one of the 14, in blue.

In principle, it is unlikely that the 14 LoCC equations will have a simultaneous solution, so the linear program seeks to find the unique point that is both “feasible” (i.e., in the intersection of all the green wedges) but also minimizes its divergence from the LoCC equations (i.e., minimizes its total distance to the blue constraints). The quality of the solution is evaluated via E, the average distance from the solution point to the 14 LoCC equations.

**Figure 1 A Geometric Representation of the Optimization Problem**



## 1.6. Solution of the Linear Program

Below are the 56 coordinates of the unique solution to the 448 constraint linear program, as reported by *lp\_solve*.

**Table 3.20 Estimates of UCE for Sex, Drugs and Guns and UCE/CE for Other (millions)**

City	Year	Sex	Drugs	Guns	Other <sup>a</sup>
Atlanta	2003	\$238	\$104	\$169	\$14,500
Atlanta	2007	\$290	\$117	\$146	\$16,000
Dallas	2003	\$99.4	\$134	\$171	\$16,900
Dallas	2007	\$98.8	\$191	\$171	\$19,000
Denver	2003	\$47.2	\$54.7	\$58.4	\$7,470
Denver	2007	\$39.9	\$63.9	\$47.4	\$7,820
Miami	2003	\$302	\$93.4	\$106	\$15,300
Miami	2007	\$235	\$95.7	\$118	\$14,700
San Diego	2003	\$124	\$105	\$46.6	\$8,490
San Diego	2007	\$96.6	\$96.3	\$47.7	\$8,740
Seattle	2003	\$50.3	\$87.3	\$83.1	\$9,840
Seattle	2007	\$112	\$87.4	\$60.1	\$11,800
DC	2003	\$155	\$111	\$150	\$17,700
DC	2007	\$103	\$103	\$160	\$20,300

<sup>a</sup> Other includes the legal cash economy and all other underground economies with the exception of sex, drugs, and weapons.



Where the above table shows actual dollar figures,<sup>43</sup> the table below provides percentile figures (e.g., drugs accounted for 0.98% of Dallas's cash economy in 2007).

**Table 3.21 Estimates of UCE for Sex, Drugs and Guns (percent)**

City	Year	Weapons	Drugs	Other	Sex
Atlanta	2003	1.13	0.70	96.59	1.59
Atlanta	2007	0.88	0.70	96.67	1.75
Dallas	2003	0.99	0.77	97.66	0.57
Dallas	2007	0.88	0.98	97.64	0.51
Denver	2003	0.77	0.72	97.90	0.62
Denver	2007	0.59	0.80	98.10	0.50
Miami	2003	0.67	0.59	96.84	1.91
Miami	2007	0.78	0.63	97.04	1.55
San Diego	2003	0.53	1.19	96.86	1.42
San Diego	2007	0.53	1.07	97.32	1.08
Seattle	2003	0.83	0.87	97.81	0.50
Seattle	2007	0.50	0.73	97.84	0.93
DC	2003	0.83	0.62	97.70	0.85
DC	2007	0.77	0.50	98.23	0.50

### 1.6.1. Sex (UCSE) Rankings

Here we present the data from the previous table, slightly differently, showing the rank ordering of cities based on the estimated UCSE size in 2003 and 2007.

City	Year	Sex (millions)	Normalized
Miami	2003	\$302	7.6
Atlanta	2003	\$238	6.0
DC	2003	\$155	3.9
San Diego	2003	\$124	3.1
Dallas	2003	\$99.4	2.5
Seattle	2003	\$50.3	1.3
Denver	2003	\$47.2	1.2
Atlanta	2007	\$290	7.3
Miami	2007	\$235	5.9
Seattle	2007	\$112	2.8
DC	2007	\$103	2.6
Dallas	2007	\$98.8	2.5
San Diego	2007	\$96.6	2.4
Denver	2007	\$39.9	1.0

<sup>43</sup> All dollar figures are in terms of chained 2005 dollars.

Importantly, these estimates are of the total UCSE, not UCSE spending per person. That is, they are not adjusted for population. Therefore, part of the reason Dallas has 2.5 times the activity of Denver in 2007 is that the population of the Dallas metropolitan area was 2.5 times that of the Denver metropolitan area.

However, the numbers do not simply reflect population differences. For instance, although Miami and Washington, DC have approximately the same metropolitan area population (5.5 and 5.3 million, respectively), Miami has about twice as much UCSE activity as Washington, DC.

### 1.6.2. Drugs Economy Rankings

Here we present the data from the previous table, slightly differently, showing the rank ordering of cities based on the estimated underground commercial drug economy size in 2003 and 2007.

City	Year	Drugs (millions)	Normalized
Dallas	2003	\$134	2.1
DC	2003	\$111	1.7
San Diego	2003	\$105	1.6
Atlanta	2003	\$104	1.6
Miami	2003	\$93.4	1.5
Seattle	2003	\$87.3	1.4
Denver	2003	\$54.7	0.9
Dallas	2007	\$191	3.0
Atlanta	2007	\$117	1.8
DC	2007	\$103	1.6
San Diego	2007	\$96.3	1.5
Miami	2007	\$95.7	1.5
Seattle	2007	\$87.4	1.4
Denver	2007	\$63.9	1.0

Again, these are not per capita estimates, so population accounts for a large part of the differences.

### I.6.3. Guns Economy Rankings

Here we present the data from the previous table, slightly differently, showing the rank ordering of cities based on the estimated underground commercial gun economy size in 2003 and 2007.

City	Year	Guns (millions)	Normalized
Dallas	2003	\$171	3.6
Atlanta	2003	\$169	3.6
DC	2003	\$150	3.2
Miami	2003	\$106	2.2
Seattle	2003	\$83.1	1.8
Denver	2003	\$58.4	1.2
San Diego	2003	\$46.6	1.0
Dallas	2007	\$171	3.6
DC	2007	\$160	3.4
Atlanta	2007	\$146	3.1
Miami	2007	\$118	2.5
Seattle	2007	\$60.1	1.3
San Diego	2007	\$47.7	1.0
Denver	2007	\$47.4	1.0

As before, these numbers do not reflect per capita weapon spending. The results are broadly consistent with expectations. Dallas and Atlanta lead, being large cities located in states with relatively lax gun laws. While it is initially surprising to see such large activity in Washington, DC (which has particularly stringent gun laws), less than 15 percent of the population of the DC metropolitan area actually lives in the District itself. Finally, it is worth noting that almost all cities witnessed a small decline in the cash-based weapons market between 2003 and 2007.

## I.7. Solution Quality and Robustness

### Solution Quality

The solution obtained was presented in section 1.6. Solution of the Linear Program. The quality of this solution may be evaluated by noting that the values of the objective function at the solution point is

$$E = 0.0576$$

implying that on average, each of the 14 equalities experienced a 5.76 percent imbalance. Equivalently, in the solution presented in section 0, *on average*, in each of the 14 LoCC equations, the sum of the right-hand side variables is <6 percent away from the left-hand side variable representing total cash Z. The total error across all 14 equations was then  $14E = 0.807$ .

## Solution Robustness

In the course of the analysis, certain parameters are chosen. These include the following slack margins:

Parameter	Value
$\epsilon_S$	0.20
$\epsilon_D$	0.01
$\epsilon_W$	0.01
$\epsilon_O$	0.20

It is natural to inquire as to the extent that these parameter settings influence the solution vector. The table below shows how solution quality changes as  $\epsilon_O$  and  $\epsilon_S$  are decreased.

$\epsilon$	E
0.01	18.83%
0.05	15.35%
0.10	11.64%
0.15	8.54%
0.20	5.76%
0.25	3.57%

In the above tables, we see a clear trade-off in the slack margins for the sex proxy and other proxy ratios, and the quality of the solution. Recall that deviations from the Conservation Law are necessarily due to failures in Assumption (A1) and/or (A2). If we believe that a 6 percent deviation in the law to be credible (in terms of the extent to which A1/A2 are, in practice, violated), then we must be prepared to accept that our proxy ratios for UCSE and “other” needed to be adjusted by <20 percent. Next we make visible the way in which those adjustments to proxy ratios were made in the process of solving the linear program.

Below, we list the percentages by which specific inter-city sex proxy ratios were adjusted in the process of solving the linear program:

Cross-city Sex Proxy Ratio Adjustment (Percent)							
2003	Atlanta	Dallas	Denver	Miami	San Diego	Seattle	DC
Atlanta	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	20.00	20.00
Dallas	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	20.00	20.00
Denver	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	20.00	20.00
Miami	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	20.00	20.00
San Diego	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	20.00	20.00
Seattle	-16.67	-16.67	-16.67	-16.67	-16.67	0.00	0.00
DC	-16.67	-16.67	-16.67	-16.67	-16.67	0.00	0.00

2007	Atlanta	Dallas	Denver	Miami	San Diego	Seattle	DC
Atlanta	0.00	0.00	10.71	0.00	20.00	4.03	20.00
Dallas	0.00	0.00	10.71	0.00	20.00	4.03	20.00
Denver	-9.68	-9.68	0.00	-9.68	8.39	-6.04	8.39
Miami	0.00	0.00	10.71	0.00	20.00	4.03	20.00
San Diego	-16.67	-16.67	-7.74	-16.67	0.00	-13.31	0.00
Seattle	-3.87	-3.87	6.43	-3.87	15.35	0.00	15.35
DC	-16.67	-16.67	-7.74	-16.67	0.00	-13.31	0.00

The table suggests that three cities required significant adjustment: San Diego, Seattle, and Washington, DC. The estimated relative size of the other four cities appears broadly consistent with the other information (i.e., proxy variables and estimated currency in circulation). Relative size may have been less accurately estimated in San Diego and Seattle due to their location. These two cities are further away from the others in our sample. If distance decay was misspecified at all, we would expect this error to be magnified in the cities that were furthest away from the others. The *lp\_solve* approach appears to be correcting for this problem.

Below, we list the percentages by which specific inter-city other proxy ratios were adjusted in the process of solving the linear program:

<b>Cross-city “Other” Proxy Ratio Adjustment (Percent)</b>							
<b>2003</b>	<b>Atlanta</b>	<b>Dallas</b>	<b>Denver</b>	<b>Miami</b>	<b>San Diego</b>	<b>Seattle</b>	<b>DC</b>
Atlanta	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.64	20.00
Dallas	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.64	20.00
Denver	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.64	20.00
Miami	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.64	20.00
San Diego	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.64	20.00
Seattle	-1.61	-1.61	-1.61	-1.61	-1.61	0.00	18.07
DC	-16.67	-16.67	-16.67	-16.67	-16.67	-15.30	0.00

<b>2007</b>	<b>Atlanta</b>	<b>Dallas</b>	<b>Denver</b>	<b>Miami</b>	<b>San Diego</b>	<b>Seattle</b>	<b>DC</b>
Atlanta	0.00	0.38	13.63	0.00	7.53	18.09	20.00
Dallas	-0.37	0.00	13.21	-0.37	7.12	17.65	19.55
Denver	-12.00	-11.67	0.00	-12.00	-5.38	3.92	5.60
Miami	0.00	0.38	13.63	0.00	7.53	18.09	20.00
San Diego	-7.00	-6.65	5.68	-7.00	0.00	9.83	11.60
Seattle	-15.32	-15.00	-3.78	-15.32	-8.95	0.00	1.61
DC	-16.67	-16.35	-5.30	-16.67	-10.39	-1.59	0.00

Sub-national currency data in the United States is fairly poor. As a result, it is not entirely surprising that several cities received substantial adjustments in order for the “other” ratios to be consistent with the other information.

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# Chapter 4

## Stakeholder Perspectives on the Underground Commercial Sex Economy

### Introduction

The US underground commercial sex economy comprises a multitude of venues and activities. These venues and activities include street and online sex work, escort services, massage parlors, and brothels. The UCSE has changed significantly over time—it used to mainly consist of street prostitution, whereas over the last decade, a majority of the business takes place on the Internet. Although there are sex workers<sup>44</sup> who work independently and voluntarily within the UCSE, there are a growing number of facilitators who operate underground commercial sex businesses in the United States and who represent a number of different ethnicities and nationalities. These facilitators, who are commonly referred to as pimps and traffickers, are known to use force, threats, and manipulation to recruit and control their employees. In many cases, they network with one another in order to maximize their profits and minimize their risk of being detected by law enforcement.

This chapter is based on interviews with 119 stakeholders who represent various law enforcement departments and government agencies in the eight study sites. We document the perspectives and observations of these stakeholders around the underground commercial economy in their jurisdiction. More specifically, we discuss changes in the UCSE over the last five to ten years; income generated in this economy; facilitator and sex worker characteristics; networks between facilitators; and lastly, connections between the underground weapons, drugs, and sex economies.

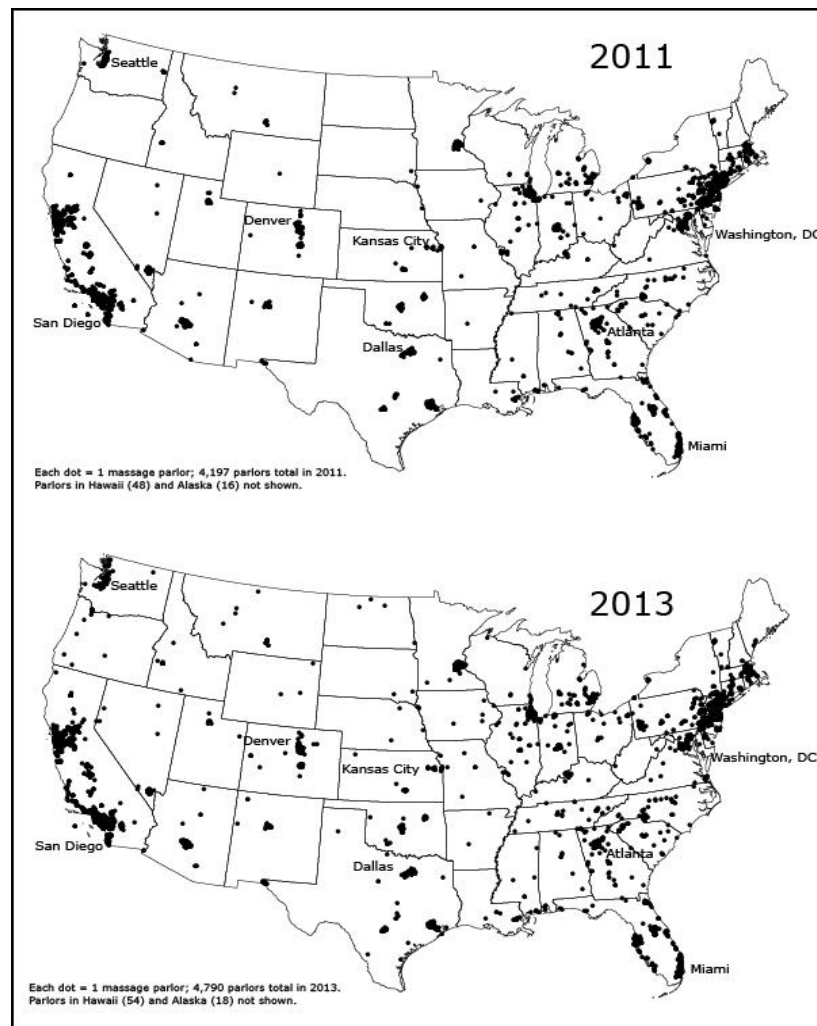
In addition to documenting the perspectives of the stakeholders, this chapter also provides maps of erotic massage parlor locations in each of the eight study sites for the years 2011 and 2013. The massage parlor locations were downloaded from the website [www.eroticmp.com](http://www.eroticmp.com) which provides the addresses of massage parlors, in addition to client reviews of the women that work in them.<sup>45</sup> Although we do not attempt to provide reasons as to why there is displacement or a change in the number of massage parlors in each of the cities, we did want to show a visual representation of just how prevalent they are (and in some cases are not) in the study sites. As shown in figure 4.1, the number of erotic massage parlors is increasing in the United States (from 4,197 in 2011 to 4,790 in 2013), and they are proliferating beyond the West and East coasts where the majority of them are clustered.

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<sup>44</sup> Please see chapter 2 for a discussion on terminology

<sup>45</sup> Although there was no way for us to know the legitimacy of the postings on this website, the individuals that post on [eroticmp.com](http://eroticmp.com) state that they closely monitor the site to ensure that the information posted is valid and legitimate.

**Figure 4.1 Number of Erotic Massage Parlors in 2011 and 2013**





### **Main Findings from this Chapter Include:**

**Trends:** Cases of child and adult sex trafficking and prostitution were uncovered in all cities. Erotic Asian massage parlors and Latino brothels were found in almost every city and all cities reported difficulty in determining the extent to which adult sex workers were voluntarily employed in prostitution or victims of sex trafficking. Sex trafficking of minors, often runaway youth, occurred primarily by pimps and rarely through Latino brothels or Asian massage parlors.

**Social Networks:** Street and Internet pimps were not commonly found to work closely together in an organized crime network, but were found to be highly networked in a social capacity, sharing information about cities' markets, warning one another about law enforcement activity, and trading or buying victims between each other.

**Weapons:** A connection between sex trafficking, prostitution, and weapons trafficking was not reported to exist in these sites, although some stakeholders did report that in a few cases pimps/traffickers were found to carry weapons.

**Drugs:** Stakeholders reported that street and Internet pimps commonly had prior arrests or incarcerations for drug dealing and may have turned to pimping because they perceived it as less risky.

**Gangs:** The connection between gangs and sex trafficking varies by city. In some study sites (Denver, San Diego, Seattle, and Washington, DC), gang involvement in sex trafficking was uncovered. In some cases, rival gangs were found to be cooperating with one another to engage in sex trafficking.

**Prices:** Prices charged for underground commercial sex across cities were fairly consistent and often depend on the racial and ethnic background of the victim. Age and drug addiction also plays a role in the price structure.

**Venues:** Erotic Asian massage parlors and Latino brothels were found to be operating in almost every city in our study. The extent to which sex trafficking or prostitution was occurring through these venues varied. Nevertheless, the pricing structure and operation of these venues was fairly consistent.

## **Findings by City**

### **Miami, Florida**

Sixteen individuals were interviewed about the local underground commercial sex economy in Miami, Florida. Representatives from the following agencies were interviewed: Miami-Dade Police Department, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Attorney General's Office, and the US Attorney's office.

According to local and federal law enforcement, venues facilitating sex trafficking of adults and minors and adult prostitution in Miami include: massage parlors, escort services, brothels, nightclubs and strip clubs, open-air or street-based markets, Internet-based advertisements, hotels, and homes (see table 4.1). Over the past five years, stakeholders have noticed a shift toward more Internet-facilitated prostitution and sex trafficking. Brothels are primarily operated by individuals from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, or El Salvador and managed by individual families, rather than large criminal networks. Erotic massage parlors are typically run by Chinese nationals and are highly organized, with direct links back to China. Online prostitution is facilitated by pimps or women who work for escort agencies. Although pimps in the Miami metro area network with one another, they primarily work independently and are not highly organized. Law enforcement has not seen a direct link between weapons, drugs, and sex trafficking.

**Table 4.1 Stakeholder Perceptions of the UCSE in Miami, FL**

Venue	Offender profile	Employee profile	Evidence of prostitution	Evidence of trafficking	Pricing	Open/Closed customer base	Customer profile	Link to gangs, drugs, weapons, or organized crime
Street	N/A	Drug-addicted US citizen men and women <sup>a</sup>	X		\$15	Open	Men of all races/ethnicities	Those selling themselves are often drug-addicted
Brothels	Latino	Latina women	X	X	\$25/10–15 min.	Closed by ethnicity	Latino men (often migrant farmworkers)	Uncovered cases linked back to offenders in Mexico transporting victims through Texas, Atlanta, Florida, and New York
Internet	US citizen	US citizen minors and adults; pimp-controlled and non	X	X	\$150–300/hr. (same for minors and adults)	Open	Men of all races/ethnicities	Pimps may be former or current drug dealers; operate in circuits throughout the United States (Miami on circuit with Atlanta, New York, Dallas, Houston, Las Vegas, Orlando, Jacksonville, Seattle, and cities in California)  Gang activity (historically the Bloods)
Escort	Foreign national groups (Eastern European)	US citizen women and minors; foreign national women (e.g., J1, H2B visa holders); pimp controlled and non	X	X	\$600–1,000/hr.	Open	Men of all races/ethnicities + wealthy	Evidence of organized crime
Erotic massage parlors	Chinese men and women <sup>b</sup>	Chinese women <sup>b</sup>	X	X	Owner charges a “house fee” to rent the room. Charge for sexual activity dependent on the activity. Tip goes to woman performing sex act.	Open	Men of all races/ethnicities	Evidence of organized crime (multiple massage parlors controlled by few individuals)
Strip clubs/topless bars <sup>c</sup>	Eastern European	Eastern European women	X	X	Unknown—law enforcement unable to infiltrate	Closed legalized commercial sex establishments	Eastern European men	Evidence of organized crime—law enforcement unable to infiltrate

<sup>a</sup> Over the past 5 years this has shifted from US citizen minors to primarily drug-addicted women and men. US citizen minors are now being advertised online.

<sup>b</sup> This has changed over the past few years as they used to be operated by Latino men and women advertising Latina women.

<sup>c</sup> Not all strip clubs/topless bars in Miami are run by Eastern Europeans. This refers only to a subset of the clubs that law enforcement has reasonable suspicion that human trafficking may be occurring, but lacks the investigative manpower and resources to infiltrate.

## Brothels

Law enforcement reported that Miami brothels are primarily operated by Hispanic or Latino men and women. Women have been found to be both voluntarily involved in prostitution and sex trafficked in brothels, with minors also sex trafficked in brothels. Women and girls are typically from Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala. Law enforcement stated that women working in brothels are now are working voluntarily, but had been smuggled to the United States when they were minors and then forced into the underground commercial sex trade to pay off their smuggling debts. One law enforcement officer reported,

What we've been seeing in the last one [investigation] we did is a lot of the girls were doing it voluntarily at that point, [but] had been trafficked [smuggled and then trafficked] in seven, eight years ago. They paid their debt off and they stayed down there. They know how to make money now so they do it voluntarily. They're much older now, not very attractive, it's kinda like this is all they got. (Miami Law Enforcement Official)

He further explained that women and girls would be recruited in and transported from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, or El Salvador by individual families rather than large criminal networks. They are then linked up with a coyote or smuggler who would facilitate travel across the border. It was noted that Mexican drug cartels help facilitate the smuggling of women and children from Mexico and are highly organized compared to the smuggling of women and children from other parts of Latin America.

Different border crossing patterns have been observed in these cases—some have gone to Cuba and others have crossed through Texas or California. Despite the method of passage, once individuals arrive in the United States, it is common for them to be transported to New York or New Jersey before being shipped down to South Florida. This pattern is believed to mirror the pattern of travel for migrant farmworkers following seasonal crop cycles, as these farmworkers are reportedly the largest client base of Latino brothels. Prices charged are usually about \$25 for 15 minutes. At one brothel, law enforcement observed upwards of 60 to 80 daily customers.

Brothel cases with no evidence of force, fraud, or coercion to substantiate human trafficking charges are prosecuted at the state level, rather than the federal level. In these cases, authorities use state laws on deriving proceeds from prostitution to shut down brothel owners' operations.

## Internet

Internet-facilitated trafficking and prostitution in Miami usually takes the form of escort service websites—as well as websites such as Craigslist, Backpage, or Eros—advertising individuals who may or may not be controlled by a pimp. In Miami, online escort services are typically described as “high-end” in that the prices charged are higher—\$600 to \$1,000 per hour—and therefore the customers tend to be wealthier. Law enforcement noted that escort services investigations have revealed sex trafficking and prostitution of women and girls, primarily Eastern European foreign nationals and a few US citizens. Foreign national women in the United States on a variety of visas, such as J1 visas and H2B visas, have been found to be sex trafficked. Law enforcement also reported that the escort services may be connected through a transnational organized crime network. The highly organized criminal networks and limited law enforcement resources (even of the task force), presented a challenge to dismantling these networks, as described by a law enforcement official below:

We only just started scratching the surface. Quite honestly, I don't know if we have the resources to take it so far and then everybody's going to be scrambling ... Because you are going into a different, an organized crime portion ... doing more than what we do, basically surveillance, doing undercover operations. Now you're doing more wiretaps, following the money, doing a money laundering case to try to tie into an organized crime. So these cases last a lot longer in these economic times. I know our department couldn't do it alone. And even as a task force, it's going to be hard for us to come up with the resources to do something like that. (Miami Law Enforcement Official)

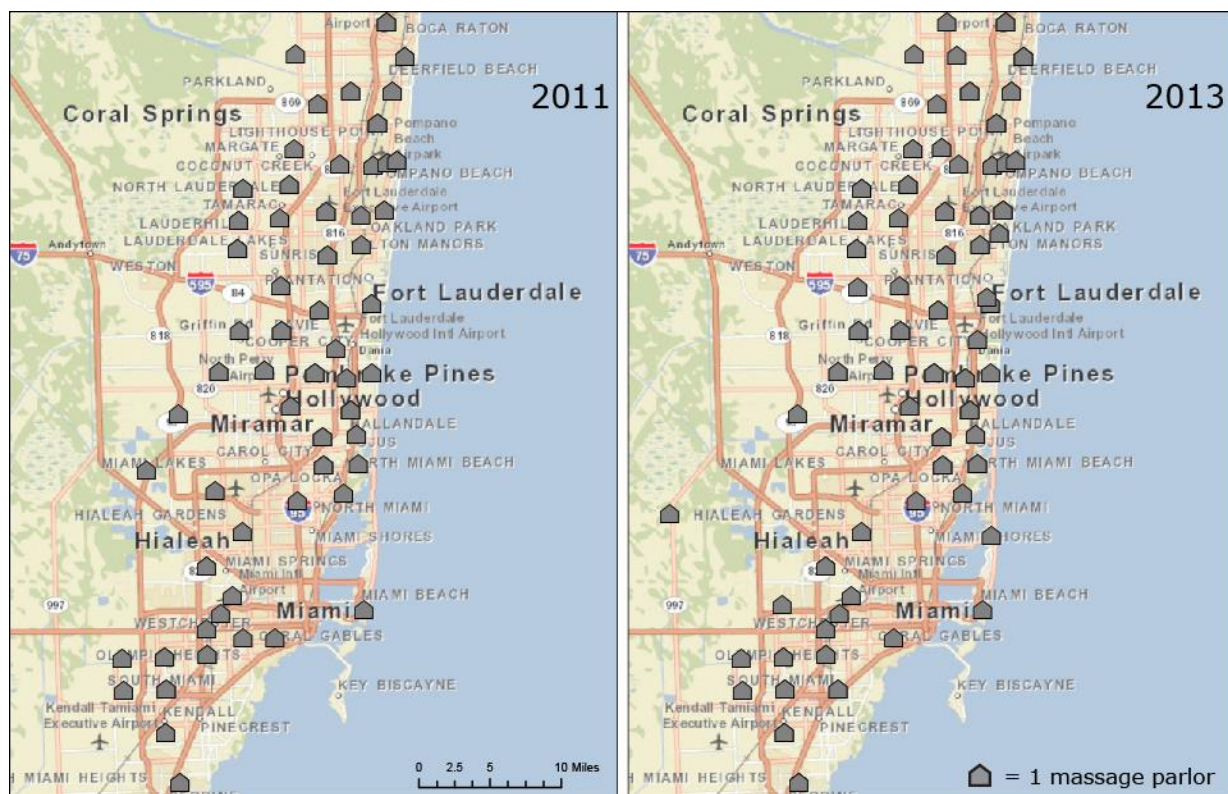
The role of the State Department's Diplomatic and Security Services office was cited as critical to investigating commercial sexual exploitation cases with transnational components.

Websites such as Craigslist, Backpage, and Eros advertise commercial sex in Miami and were noted by law enforcement as more expensive than brothels or street-based commercial sex, but less expensive than escort services. Police officials reported that on average, prices in Miami range from \$150 to \$300 on these sites and are similar whether the individual advertised is a minor or an adult. Minors and adults advertised on these sites are both US citizens and foreign nationals. Law enforcement reported sex trafficked US citizen minors are now advertised online whereas five years ago, they would be out on the street.

## Erotic Massage Parlors

Massage parlors also operate as fronts for prostitution and sex trafficking in Miami. As illustrated in figure 4.2, erotic massage parlors are abundant in the Miami metro area, and the number has increased slightly over the last two years. According to law enforcement, the massage parlors have changed over time in the nationalities of the owners and employees. Whereas a few years ago, the massage parlors advertised Hispanic women, they were now operated by Chinese nationals advertising Chinese women. Massage parlors operate similar to escort services in that the owner charges a "house fee" to rent the room and a charge per sexual activity. Any amount tipped would go to the woman performing the act. With respect to networks, law enforcement has reported uncovering cases where one convicted offender operated seven different massage parlors across the city.

**Figure 4.2 Erotic Massage Parlors in the Miami Metro Area**



Perhaps specific to Miami, the other venue that facilitates sex trafficking and prostitution are clubs on the beach that cater to Eastern European clientele. While there have been no solid investigations of these clubs so far, law enforcement has reason to suspect they are involved in trafficking and prostitution. As one law enforcement official observed:

The other thing we do have is in the beach, certain clubs on Miami Beach with Eastern European clientele, and there are women being sent in there from the escort services or whatever, they are going in there specifically for the purpose of picking up dates for prostitution. Now whether that's organized or not, we haven't had one of those because that's a word of mouth situation unless you get an informant telling you who's doing what ... I think there's something to it but we haven't gotten into it yet. Unless you get somebody who is in that circle, in that club, who knows how it's working. But I'm sure even with some of the juveniles that we're getting, they are also hitting the clubs on Miami Beach. They just go from club to club looking for dates. Usually their pimp is close by. Sorta kinda doing the street walking mode, except that they're going inside the club and trying to come out with a date. (Miami Law Enforcement Official)

Since law enforcement has yet to investigate a case involving clubs facilitating sex trafficking and/or prostitution, law enforcement was unaware of how much money is exchanged in these establishments.

## **Street**

Street-based prostitution and sex trafficking in Miami has changed significantly over the past five years from primarily involving US citizen minors to currently involving drug-addicted, US citizens. Constant over this time period is that the street is the venue that offers commercial sex activities for the lowest prices, which could be as low as \$15 for a sex act. Law enforcement surmised that this change was a result of the Internet, as well as a possible deterrent effect of law enforcement investigations:

[Street-based prostitution has] probably the lowest prices. We're not really seeing as many street walkers, the girls are going inside to the strip clubs and massage parlors and the Internet because I think they're getting more money inside and the police aren't as prevalent on the inside of those places. Five years ago, we used to have mostly minors working the tracks, which really doesn't happen as much anymore. It's changing, the cycle and trend is changing. Once we see something, we'll start hitting it really hard, and then they'll change the way they're doing things. (Miami Law Enforcement Official)

This law enforcement official continued to say that most of the minors they now see are pimp-controlled and are advertised online via the Internet.

## **Network Characteristics**

Miami was reported to be "on a circuit" with major cities including Atlanta, New York, Dallas, Houston, Las Vegas, Orlando, Jacksonville, Seattle, and cities in California. Miami prosecutors successfully prosecuted Latino brothel cases that involved Mexican national offenders and victims that crossed multiple jurisdictions—beginning in Mexico and then through Texas, Georgia, Florida, and New York.

As reported above, the networks of those operating massage parlors, escort services, and beach clubs are thought to be transnational, involving Chinese and Eastern European organized crime, respectively. However, these networks have proven more difficult to uncover due to resource constraints. As a result, less is known about their network characteristics.

Law enforcement reported less of a link between sex trafficking and prostitution and child pornography, but did state that in cases where a trafficker or pimp has pictures of a minor advertised on the Internet or in their possession, they have historically been charging them with child pornography offenses.

Gang involvement in sex trafficking as part of gang initiations was reported by law enforcement in Miami as a more recent and increasing trend. When asked whether sex trafficking by gangs was particular to any one gang, law enforcement reported, "Historically, the Bloods. Any big gang will typically get in if there's a lot of money to be made. It's a lesser charge for them." As a potential sign of growing gang involvement in sex trafficking in Miami, law enforcement reported an open investigation into another gang involved in both drug trafficking and sex trafficking in a nearby county.

The link between the underground commercial sex economy and drugs and weapons trafficking was reportedly tenuous. Law enforcement reported that many current pimps/traffickers were former drug

dealers, but had moved into sex trafficking rather than continuing to operate drug and sex trafficking simultaneously, as described below,

We have found that a lot of our pimps used to be ex-drug dealers and are now moving into pimping out girls. It's more lucrative and harder to get caught, more prone to get caught dealing drugs. (Miami Law Enforcement Official)

In addition to past histories dealing drugs, pimp networks operating in Miami were described as more social in nature, rather than networked in a more organized crime fashion, as is found in other forms of the underground commercial sex economy (e.g., erotic massage parlors or escort services) in Miami. Social networks among pimps were described as both a mechanism to compete with each other, but also to stay aware of law enforcement activities. Law enforcement reported pimps' tendency to hide assets by renting cars or homes in other individuals' names:

You have to understand that a lot of these pimps, they all talk to each other, and read each other's case files, so they know that if something is in a third party's name that we can't seize it, and if they rent we can't take it. And it's just harder for us to track them down because nothing's in their name ... We'll go in with search warrants and you'll find other pimps' criminal histories and booking photos in the trash, especially when we hit them with a juvenile or trafficking. They know we're out there without a doubt, and they're doing everything they can to avoid us. ...

We've had one pimp that sat in jail, he read his whole case and when we went to debrief him, he's like, "Yeah on that day I saw you guys and I didn't really do that on that day," and he was telling us that he saw us, what kind of car we were in, stuff like that. We have pimps talking to other pimps—it's not an organized network, it's a social network. ...

We've had pimps look up the attorneys to know if they are going to take the plea or not, if they had a high winning rate ... happened on the last one, he was like, "Oh no, this guy has a 98 percent winning rate, I'm going to go ahead and take the plea." They actually look up, when their girls get arrested, they see what their bond is, see what they're charged with. They're very savvy. (Miami Law Enforcement Official)

Law enforcement went on to describe that the social networks among pimps are thought to be born out of their prior connections as drug dealers and gang members; however, the competition among them with respect to sex trafficking did not involve the violence common among drug traffickers:

They party together, go to the beach together, go to the club together, and have the girls outside when they go inside, have the girls come inside ... I don't know if it's so much a network as a social network. It's a social network, but they definitely communicate, there's communication between all the pimps. But it's kind of contrary to the traditional belief of where a pimp is against another pimp and he's by himself. It's more of a wolf-pack mentality now where they all hang together. It's almost like if they're all making money, it's fine, but as long as we're making it ... They're competitive, but they're more competitive about my ring is bigger than your ring, and my girl brought me this, and I didn't have to do anything for this, my clothes, my sneakers, is better than what you've got. That's how they're competitive. (Miami Law Enforcement Official)

However, considerable violence toward victims was common with respect to competition among pimps/traffickers—including the selling or trading of a victim to another pimp/trafficker. As stated by law enforcement,

**Respondent:** But the rules are still in place, where they're [person working for them] not allowed to look at another pimp, not allowed to talk to another pimp. But yet what we've found in our recent cases is how the pimps are maybe sometimes exchanging girls with another pimp.

**Interviewer:** For money?

**Respondent:** For money or another girl. Or if one gets locked up, the other one will take over. (Miami Law Enforcement Official)

## Dallas, Texas

Fifteen individuals were interviewed about the local underground commercial sex economy in Dallas, Texas. Representatives from the following agencies were interviewed: Dallas Police Department, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the US Attorney's office, and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

According to interviews with local, state, and federal law enforcement officials (investigators and prosecutors), the UCSE in Dallas is mainly composed of pimp-controlled online and street-based sex trafficking and voluntary prostitution, with an increasing number of erotic massage parlors (see table 4.2). A practice relatively unique to Dallas is that non-Asian pimps run some massage parlors and send some of their women and girls to work in massage parlors owned and operated by Asians. Although there have been some cases involving Latino brothels, they are not thought to be as prevalent as in comparison to other cities in Texas (e.g., Houston). Cases of sex trafficking and prostitution have also been found behind fronts for legal commercial sexualized services such as topless bars. The operators in each of these distinct venues will often network with others operating similar businesses in order to maximize profits and keep the "merchandise" fresh and new.

**Table 4.2 Stakeholder Perceptions of the UCSE in Dallas, TX**

Venue	Offender profile	Employee profile	Evidence of prostitution	Evidence of trafficking	Pricing	Open/ Closed customer base	Customer profile	Link to gangs, drugs, weapons, or organized crime
Street		Drug-addicted, non-pimp-controlled men and women	X		\$5–10	Open	Men of all races/ethnicities	Drug addiction among sex workers
	US citizens (some generational pimps)	Women and minors		X	\$60/oral sex \$120/sexual intercourse	Open	Men of all races/ethnicities	Pimps may be current or former drug dealers Pimps may be gang members
Internet	US citizens (some generational pimps)	Women and minors; pimp controlled and non	X	X	\$60/oral sex \$120/sexual intercourse	Open	Men of all races/ethnicities	Pimps may be current or former drug dealers Pimps may be gang members
Brothels	Latino men and women	Latina women primarily from Central America	X	X <sup>a</sup>	\$20–25/15 min. (half to brothel owner, half to sex worker)	Closed (restricted by ethnicity)	Latino men targeted by brothels through hand delivery of “business cards” advertising fake businesses with brothel phone number	Some brothels found to be drug trafficking methamphetamine, cocaine, and ecstasy  Range of loosely organized local brothels to highly networked brothels with ties across country Challenging for law enforcement to trace back recruitment to other countries



**Table 4.2. Continued**

Erotic massage parlors	Chinese and Korean men and women <sup>b</sup>	Women from Thailand and the Philippines	X	X	\$60–100/house fee + fee for sexual service (if pimp-controlled, all goes to pimp; if Asian-operated, half goes to brothel owner and half goes to sex worker (unless worker is working off smuggling debt then all goes to brothel) + tips (if trafficked don't keep, non-trafficked keep)	Open	Men of all races/ethnicities (many networked socially through online “erotic massage parlor” review boards)	Highly organized—women working in massage parlors are rotated on a circuit—mostly from Dallas, TX to Flushing, NY; Seattle, WA; San Francisco and Los Angeles, CA; Philadelphia, PA; and Atlanta, GA  Some massage parlors involved in drug trafficking  No weapons/gangs link
Topless bars	Russian men	Unknown – thought to be Eastern European women	X		Unknown	Closed-legalized commercial sex establishment	Russian/Eastern European men	Believed to be more highly organized than the Asian massage parlors and internationally connected—law enforcement unable to infiltrate due to resource, and language barriers
Escort services	Madam or individually operated	Women	X		\$500/hr. \$4,500/night	Closed	Wealthier men, must have recommendations and passwords	Law enforcement does not prioritize for investigation because they do not believe escort services are connected to Part I offenses, and resource and operational restrictions make it difficult to infiltrate

<sup>a</sup> Law enforcement believes there is trafficking, but so far has been unable to prove it.

<sup>b</sup> Unique to Dallas, non-Asian pimps operate some massage parlors and/or rent rooms from Asian owners

## Street and Internet

Prices charged in the Dallas market for street-based prostitution and sex trafficking vary by neighborhood as well as the incidence of trafficking versus prostitution. One law enforcement official described how prices vary based on a number of factors:

I think that some of that would also have to go on the actual lady that is working. Some of them out there, if you're doing it solely to support a drug habit, you'll probably get your \$5 or \$10 girls that will sell themselves for that price. If you've got a pimp involved with that then you're going to start seeing the \$60 for maybe the oral and then the prices will go up from there for the actual sexual intercourse. So you've got a big variance and as you said, certain neighborhoods where the clientele, they're paying \$5, that's usually going to be around where there's a lot of drugs or it's a poorer neighborhood. You're not really going to get that up on the main, what we consider to be the drag for prostitution. That's probably where you're going to have the girls that are being placed out there by pimps. (Dallas Law Enforcement Official)

As described above, at the low-end of the market are drug-addicted, non-pimp-controlled adult women and men. These individuals reportedly charge \$5 to \$10 for oral sex and are mostly addicted to crack cocaine, methamphetamine, and cocaine. According to officials, drug-addicted men and women are typically not controlled by a pimp for some of the following reasons:

Their drug dealer is their pimp. And they're making the money for themselves for the drugs. And the pimp doesn't want their girls on drugs because then you can't control them. The drugs control them and then she'll rip him off. (Dallas Law Enforcement Official)

Law enforcement surmised that men are less pimp-controlled due to the absence of the emotional connection commonly found between male pimps and female sex workers:

I would say that the males don't have pimps as much. They are either doing it to survive or they are doing it for a drug habit as well. Now I think that the reason why they don't have pimps is because you look at them and it is pimping, there is a not an emotional connection made between male to male. (Dallas Law Enforcement Official)

At the high-end of the street-based market are adults and minors who operate on the street and Internet and typically charge around \$60 to \$120 per hour for sexual intercourse. These adults and minors are typically trafficked and not drug-addicted. When asked if the minors on the street are controlled by a pimp, one law enforcement official explained:

Well just look at them; really a juvenile can't do it. You'll hear a lot of them say that they're quote renegades but I've never seen a renegade. I mean they'll all say it. But if you actually just look at the dynamics of it, they can't do it without help. They can't book hotel rooms, they can't get cards, they can't get the credit cards to put the Internet ads out. They have to have an adult to do all of that. For certain, there is almost always an adult behind it somewhere who is controlling it. (Dallas Law Enforcement Official)

Dallas law enforcement officials have conducted a number of operations to determine whether prices are higher for minors compared to adults and have found that the prices are consistent and that most clients are not preferential offenders (i.e., pedophiles):<sup>46</sup>

I don't know that the average trick on the street is looking, or john or customer, is looking for a kid. When they come around the corner, they don't care whether it is the 15-year-old kid or the 25-year-old woman or the 35-year-old woman. They just want to victimize whatever is coming around the corner. And we can support that through the operation

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<sup>46</sup> It should be noted that the TVPA was amended in 2008 to strike "knowingly" from the definition so that traffickers could be held accountable for child sex trafficking even if they claimed they didn't know the victim was a minor. Prior to this change, claiming that the defendant did not know the victim was under 18 was used as a defense strategy in child sex trafficking cases.

that we've done because when we've put the decoy out there and made her younger, almost all the time, once they have the burden of knowledge of what the age is, they drive off, that doesn't mean that they still wouldn't have done it, but once they have the burden of knowledge that she was this age, they drive off. So in my experience that tells me that they're not preferential offenders looking at kids, they're just looking to victimize somebody. ... Literally, out of about 30 to 40 people, only two or three actually [took the bait]. Which tells us that it sounds good in studies, but that's just not the reality. (Dallas Law Enforcement Official)

Law enforcement officials noted that the advent of the Internet presented the biggest change in the dynamics of the street-based and overall commercial sex economy in Dallas over the past decade. Officials believed that the Internet has shifted many of the adults and minors previously found on the street indoors. This has resulted in somewhat hiding the prevalence of the issue, as the number of adults and children visible on the streets has decreased in some areas.

The ages of the individuals trading sex depends on the venue. Officials reported that minors (particularly ages 14 to 17) are typically found in street-based or Internet-facilitated venues. Older victims (ages 20 to 40) are typically found behind businesses such as erotic massage parlors, brothels, or topless bars.

The characteristics of pimps have changed slightly over time. In the 1990s, they used to be more easily identifiable by their clothing and cars. During that time, they would host "pimp parties." The majority of the pimps uncovered in the Dallas street-based and Internet market are African American males. According to officials, on average they are about 25 to 30 years old and many have had a father or an uncle who was a pimp. While older pimps may only be involved in pimping, the younger pimps, referred to by law enforcement as "tennis shoe pimps" may also be involved in drug sales or a gang.

Although there may be some pimps that are also gang members, law enforcement has not seen a sizeable or organized connection between gangs and sex trafficking. As one law enforcement official noted,

We've seen a couple gangs try it but the problem is with traditional prostitution when the gangs try it, they can't. When a pimp gets a girl, his job is to make money off of her, the sex is just a way to control her and make money. The gangs they get a girl in, they can't decide—do they all want to have sex with her, do they all want to do drugs with her, and generally what they do, is they all do sex with her, they all do drugs with her, and by the time they're all done, she's so messed up, you know they can only make 40 or 50 bucks. I just think that it's the whole structure of gangs that why they can't make that work. We don't see a lot of gangs on the kid side—now if they ever figured it out, we'd be in trouble. (Dallas Law Enforcement Official)

Pimps operating on the street and Internet often travel in a known circuit. Police noted that the circuit may change depending on law enforcement tactics; that is, when law enforcement beefs up their investigations and arrests of pimps in one city, pimps start moving to cities with less enforcement. According to Dallas law enforcement, Oklahoma City has the strongest link to Dallas. Pimps go back and forth to Oklahoma City and women and girls are either recruited there or come to Dallas independently. Dallas-based pimps also operate in or originate from Miami, Atlanta, and Midwestern cities, like St. Louis. If pimps are unable to accompany the women and girls that work for them to the other cities, they typically send a person that is second in command or their "bottom." The bottom is typically a woman who is exploited by the pimp and also involved in recruiting and controlling other women and girls. This phenomenon presents a gray area in that the woman appears as both a victim and an offender. According to law enforcement, while they acknowledge this gray area, they take the position that if the woman is actively involved in recruitment, they will hold the woman accountable and she will be charged.

Street and Internet-based pimps also set daily quotas. These quotas typically vary by the race of the woman, with white women required to meet higher quotas than women of other races. Law enforcement stated that pimps generally set daily quotas of about \$100 per day, and as high as \$700 to \$1,500 on the weekend. One law enforcement official discussed a case involving a pimp that had a \$1,000 daily quota and how this led to other types of crime:

**Respondent 1:** \$1,000 a day [quota]—doesn't matter how you got it—as long as you got it. So these girls were stealing, and that's where prostitution encompasses all aspects of crime because a girl's got to make a grand, it doesn't matter how she does it. So they take watches, so two or three girls, two of 'em are robbing him and the other ones are going through the [truck] and taking all the stuff out of there—they get an ATM card. You've got the robberies, you've got the burglaries, you've got the personal thefts, all these part one offenses surrounding this one issue. Do white [women] have to make more? [to another law enforcement official in the room]

**Respondent 2:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** White girls have to make more. And the weekend quota is higher?

**Respondent 1:** I think that it was just every day. You'll see some of them say \$700 but on the weekends I have to make \$1,000 or \$1,500 or something really crazy. But I think for the majority \$1,000 a day, and you didn't come home until you had it. What we witnessed ... if they didn't come back with it they were going to get beat. And they've seen the others get beat or they been beat themselves so they're going to do whatever they can to make sure that they come home with \$1,000. (Dallas Law Enforcement Officials)

Dallas officials had knowledge of about three to four pimps exploiting larger groups of victims (10 to 20), while the rest (majority) exploited between one and three victims. The money made from trafficking is largely cash-based and pimps have been known to use Green Dot cards so that cash isn't traceable through bank accounts. Assets of street-based/Internet pimps are reportedly typically difficult to seize by law enforcement since pimps purposefully hide their assets to avoid seizure. For example, if pimps own houses, they are typically under someone else's name. And although they tend to drive expensive cars, the cars are usually leased. In addition, law enforcement reported that for tax purposes, some of the pimps they encounter have record labels or modeling businesses. In addition to tax purposes/money laundering, these businesses also serve a recruitment purpose, as described below:

It's part of their dream that their selling, it's part of their recruitment process. We're going to make all of this money, we're going to make this record label, and we're going to be bigger than West Coast Records or whatever. (Dallas Law Enforcement Official)

It was reported that the Internet has enabled street-level pimps to recruit women and girls by presenting themselves as legitimate business owners, if those businesses appear on the Internet. However, the recruitment process would vary depending on the characteristics of the woman or girl:

For some, they need the grooming process, I think that our society changes ... but if you get a runaway from the West End, you give her a place to stay, you give her some food, you [get her to turn in] two days. ... One of the other things is the Myspace, and MocoSpace. Believe it or not, people still use them, and the ones that are using them are usually younger, and pimps are on there like crazy. We just had one two weeks ago, that we got a call from [police department] and when we interviewed the girl, she took the laptop and opened it up, showed us, and there she was taking self-pictures of her in her thong and a little top on and I'm like, "Ok, and who put these on?" She says, "Oh I did." She goes, "Yeah, this is a hook-up site." That's what she was using as a hook-up site. So that's another way that they're getting them. They'll befriend them, it's glorified now to be a pimp, you look at the TV shows, "Pimp my Ride." Pimp this, pimp, it's in songs, everything is pimp, pimp, pimp, and so when these guys do that, you've got these screwed up girls who don't know any better and they'll think that it's cool and they'll hang out with them, and they'll start smoking with them and after that they'll say, "Oh you want to try it?" "Yeah, I'll try it." (Dallas Law Enforcement Official)

Although African American men comprise the majority of street and Internet-based pimps in Dallas, officials reported that there has been a fairly recent increase in young Hispanic girls trafficked by adult Hispanic female family members. Behind these cases, the adult female trafficker is almost always addicted to methamphetamine and is trafficking their daughter for drug money.

## **Brothels**

Brothels are present in Dallas, although according to law enforcement, they are not as prevalent as in some other cities in Texas (such as Houston). Brothels are typically run by Latinos and comprised primarily of Latinas. Latino brothels in Dallas are typically located in residences, rather than in the cantina bars found in other Texas cities. Brothels predominantly target Latino men and hand out business cards that say “construction” or “restaurant” with a phone number. According to law enforcement, these business cards are easy to spot they look very basic and provide little information. When men call the phone number, they are sent to a location, which is typically a house located in a poor neighborhood. Over time, law enforcement has noticed a slight shift in operations where brothels no longer operate out of a house, but visit clients in apartment complexes. Prices are about \$20 to \$25 for 15 minutes. Half the proceeds go to the “house” or person(s) running the brothel and the sex worker keeps the other half. In terms of the level of demand, one law enforcement official stated, “We have had one who told us that she, in her own words, wasn’t trafficked, and was doing all of that on her own ... on a very good day she would be seeing four guys an hour.”

Most of the women inside the brothels are from Central America. With respect to whether they are trafficked or voluntarily involved in prostitution, one official remarked,

It’s been investigated as trafficking, and we just haven’t gotten to that part yet. I know there is still one that is going on that they are looking into and every time that it seems like trafficking something pops up where it is not. It’s just hard to get it, because a lot of the times these women do move pretty frequently, because if they have the same basic clientele, the same people coming, they’re going to drop off once they notice the same ladies still there. (Dallas Law Enforcement Official)

It was reported that some Dallas brothels are highly organized and networked across the country, and others are less highly organized. Until now, law enforcement has not been able to link these brothels back to people organizing and recruiting in other countries. However, because there were a couple cases under investigation at the time of the interview, law enforcement officials were unable to elaborate on the specific nature of these more organized cases.

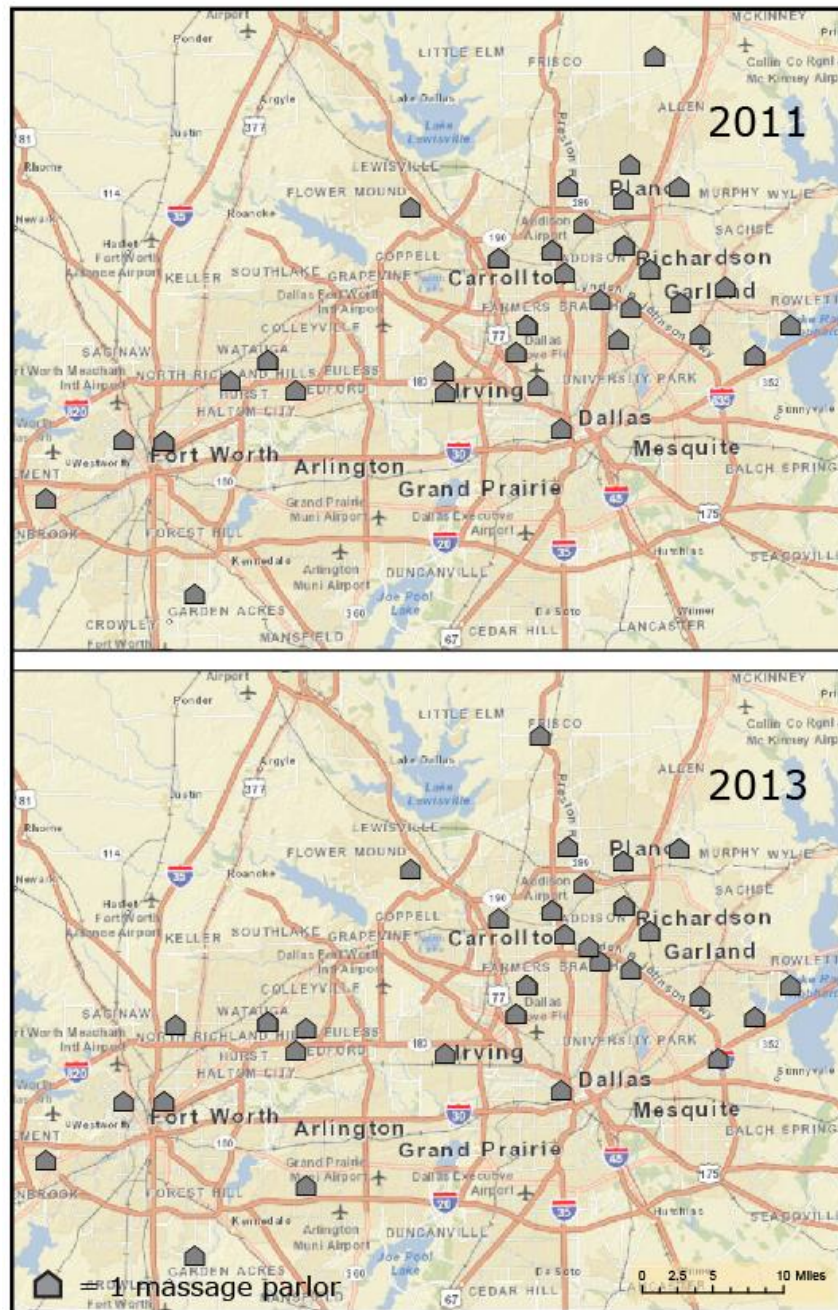
There has been some overlap discovered between Latino brothels and drug trafficking and drug use. Law enforcement noted that they have discovered Latino brothel cases linked to the sales of cocaine, methamphetamine, and ecstasy.

## **Erotic Massage Parlors**

The relatively loose organization of Latino brothels differs drastically from the highly organized structure of massage parlors operating as fronts for prostitution and sex trafficking in Dallas. Similar to other cities in the study, these massage parlors are typically operated by Asians, specifically Chinese and Koreans. However, unlike other cities in the study, Dallas is unique in that some massage parlors are operated by non-Asian pimps or operated by Asians who rent rooms out to non-Asian pimps. As illustrated in figure 4.3, there are a number of erotic massage parlors in the Dallas metropolitan area, but over the last two years they have moved farther north from the Downtown Dallas area toward Plano.

Sex trafficking has been uncovered in some of the massage parlors in Dallas. While erotic massage parlors are typically operated by Chinese and Koreans, the women recruited to work in the massage parlors are typically from Thailand and the Philippines. According to law enforcement, these women are recruited fraudulently for a job (not involving prostitution) in the United States. They pay a recruiter for the job—essentially bonding the women in debt—and then upon arrival in the United States, they are coerced into trading sex at massage parlors.

**Figure 4.3 Erotic Massage Parlors in the Dallas Metro Area**



It was reported that to keep clients interested, women are often rotated to different massage parlors throughout cities on a circuit. Cities found to be networked with illegitimate massage parlors to Dallas include Flushing, New York; Seattle, Washington; San Francisco and Los Angeles, California; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Atlanta, Georgia.

Although sex trafficking has been found and is suspected in massage parlors, law enforcement noted that the percentage of women trafficked in massage parlors is small relative to those voluntarily involved in prostitution. One official estimated that of the cases they have seen, 70 percent of the women are voluntarily involved in prostitution and about 30 percent are sex trafficked. Proving whether the women involved are sex trafficked or voluntarily involved in prostitution is difficult:

I think what we are really talking about is prostitution, and a very small percentage is being trafficked. It's not that easy to get to that point. Kind of like what I said earlier, they might have done it, they might have come over here from let's say China, they don't know what they are going to be doing, but they're kind of on the hook for the ride to get here. Then they get a massage license, maybe, then they start working in there, and it turns into prostitution and it changes once they get arrested. And they get out [once] they've paid off their debt, but then they come back to it, so it's prostitution. Trafficking aspect is very hard to prove because most of the girls don't want to do this, but some of them are happy to do it because they are sending money home. (Dallas Law Enforcement Official)

Law enforcement acknowledged the often blurred lines between women that were initially sex trafficked in massage parlors and then voluntarily continued working in prostitution after they paid their debts. According to officials, there are more benefits attached to the lifestyle of working in massage parlors than for women and children trafficked by pimps on the street/Internet (although this is arguably relative). Women working in massage parlors may have more freedom of movement, be granted gym memberships, and be able to afford expensive clothes, depending on how long they have been employed by the massage parlors, the massage parlor owner's level of trust with the women, and whether the women's debts are paid off. This can make it difficult for law enforcement and service providers to provide services for them:

Sometimes you'll get the younger ones that are actually in the massage parlors, but like I said, those are going to be true trafficking victims. And they will stay in the business because unfortunately, once they've worked in the business for so long, they've made a certain amount of money, to try to get them to come out of that culture is extremely difficult. I've interacted with some of the victims and they're living on a different scale. But that's their lifestyle that they've been accustomed to. So going to work at a regular job, making regular money, that's not an easy transition for them and they don't go into that very willingly. (Dallas Law Enforcement Official)

However, another official went on to challenge the definition of what would be considered "coercive" under the legal elements necessary to prove that prostitution is coerced and therefore amounts to sex trafficking:

So let's say that it is a case with a vast majority of these girls in massage parlors that they're not suffering from physical assault and threats and things of that nature. But it's that, it's that game. After years and years of living in this, you don't come from here anyway. It's that coercion. It's that constant coercion. And so they may not have that lack of freedom of movement, they can go to the gym, they can do this. But at the end of the day, are they still under someone's control? Yeah. (Dallas Law Enforcement Official)

There was a clearer distinction between victim and offender when it came to cases of women previously sex trafficked who then became massage parlor owners and were actively involved in the recruitment of others into the underground commercial sex trade. In these cases, law enforcement could understand the background of the offender as a prior victim, but charged them if they were actively involved in sex trafficking others.

Whether the women working in massage parlors are trafficked or voluntarily involved in sex work, massage parlors in Dallas have been found operating as fronts for illicit commercial sex and have been found to be networked with one another in Dallas and in other cities and states. The owners of these establishments make a significant amount of money and operate in a highly organized manner (relative to street and Internet-based pimps and Latino brothels). The pricing structure within massage parlors in Dallas is the same whether operated by foreign national Asians or Americans:

\$60 to \$100, you're paying that automatically and that's going to the house. And even in the American places that we've had, that's been the norm. Any massage parlor or something like that, \$60 to \$100 goes to the house no matter what. The rest of the money, within Americans, they usually keep it or they send it to a pimp but with the Asians, it's usually half theirs or it goes off to the trafficker. Or pay 'em back for what they consider to be their debt. (Dallas Law Enforcement Official)



Women who are trafficked must turn their tip money over to a pimp or, in the case of foreign national women, to pay back their smuggling debts to the massage parlor owner or other individuals such as recruiters or smugglers. Massage parlor workers voluntarily involved in sex work are reportedly able to keep their tips. It was stated that on average, women would make \$40 out of every \$200 per client, so the owners of the massage parlors make disproportionately more than the workers (both those trafficked and voluntarily involved in sex work).

Law enforcement noted that owners of erotic Asian massage parlors are very business savvy, investing their money in local ethnically-owned and operated community banks, real estate, and other legitimate businesses in the United States and overseas. Massage parlors are highly organized, not just in Dallas, but nationally. However, law enforcement has had difficulty tracing the networks and money back to the foreign countries connected in the scheme:

Nationally, yes, there are organized groups where women are brought over here, they go to Flushing, New York and they all get their massage license and then they go to a bunch of different cities. But the question is, and I don't know the answer to this, is "How organized is the system across all of the cities?" Very similar scheme you can see across all of the major cities around the country. Then the money goes back and we can pretty much get it to Hong Kong, but we're not going to get it to China. (Dallas Law Enforcement Official)

While law enforcement has had some successful investigations and takedowns of massage parlors operating as fronts for sex trafficking, officials described challenges to uncover the entire network and to seize all assets derived from the sex trafficking—due to changing tactics of the traffickers, the trafficker's business savvy, and law enforcement's requirement to move in once trafficking can be proven (which can inhibit their ability to uncover the rest of the network). One official described how these dynamics played out in the 2005 takedown of a Dallas massage parlor ring connected to San Francisco and Korea:

What we did in '05 ... I think that day we executed 11 or 12 warrants. So it was a DPD, FBI, and ICE and that was actually a pretty good size one. That was tied up to San Francisco and could have probably been bigger had there been a longer wait as far as the investigation goes, but when they say "Ok, it's proven, there is trafficking," we have to act on it. In that one, several people were put away for the structured money laundering, and we actually did pull some of the businesses and take a lot of their money, but of course it was not enough, because every time we caught on to what they were doing, they would stop what they were doing, whether it was a Western Union, whether it was the Post Office. Every time we caught on they stopped and then they started sending it in a different way. And all of this money was going right back to Korea. And that one was a female here in Dallas. (Dallas Law Enforcement Official)

The majority of the money made off the underground commercial sex market in Dallas massage parlors is found to be invested in the United States. However, massage parlor owners and others in the network have become very good at hiding their assets to avoid asset forfeiture:

**Respondent 1:** As far as [the massage parlor money] going overseas, if they've got relatives, I see that sometimes they will send money. But it's not an exorbitant amount of money. A lot of it is being utilized right here, and a lot of it is being invested right here in the US. And like I said, a lot of it is going into property and real estate, or investment accounts. I've noticed that's picked up quite a bit where they're actually making sure they have their investment put together for the future.

**Respondent 2:** They're smarter.

**Respondent 1:** They are definitely smarter. And the idea is the use of multiple institutions, whether or not they'll be around the corner or in another state, has become a major thing for them. Because that way, you don't really have an idea where all of their assets lie until you really dig down deep. And then you've got those small banks so to speak that they're tying some of their monies up in and you're never just really sure of what the assets are. Because since they are smaller community banks, you're less likely to



actually go to them to find you what the assets are until you're really, really ready. (Dallas Law Enforcement Officials)

Similar to street/Internet pimps, massage parlor owners have also been found to use Green Dot cards to transfer money. In addition to hiding assets, some massage parlor owners in Dallas have recently named their businesses “relaxation centers” in an attempt to avoid law enforcement detection as unlicensed massage parlors and fronts for sex trafficking or prostitution. They have also moved into strip malls with legitimate businesses, in an effort to look more legitimate. Despite these tactics, Dallas’s massage parlors were operating most blatantly as illegitimate businesses when compared to massage parlors in the other cities included in this study. In other cities, massage parlor owners would produce fake business licenses and conceal the nature of the activity in the massage parlor, whereas in Dallas, they blatantly advertise that they are unlicensed.

Massage parlors operating as fronts for sex work and/or sex trafficking are linked in various ways to other types of crime in Dallas. The most obvious links to other forms of crime include money laundering, tax evasion, and fraud. There have been no cases uncovered linking massage parlors with weapons trafficking. However, drug sales/trafficking has been uncovered in some massage parlors. The only link between gangs and massage parlors uncovered in Dallas is that some gang members may also be massage parlor clients. In terms of massage parlor clients, one law enforcement official did note some overlap with consumers of child pornography:

With a lot of child pornography, sometimes you have some of the same participants going to the massage parlors because they are sometimes so addicted to the child pornography that to have their needs met they have to go somewhere else and they have to hit either the street prostitute or the massage parlor because they don’t devote their time to going out and meeting actual people. And the thing is, if they can find someone in a massage parlor that looks at least like they are younger than they are actually supposed to be, then sometimes that fits the bill. (Dallas Law Enforcement Official)

Some massage parlor clients have also been found to be networked through online message boards where clients publicly rate or review the women working in the massage parlors, the services provided, and the pricing.

Although Asian massage parlor owners typically operate in closed ethnic networks, there was a case where one Asian massage parlor owner was renting rooms out to a non-Asian pimp to place the women that worked for him. In this case, the Asian female massage parlor owner operated four to five massage parlors in Dallas where the sex workers also lived. The owner started to franchise her business and sold the business to a pimp for \$250,000 plus a percentage of the profits earned. Law enforcement took down the operation and seized \$1,000,000 in business properties, \$180,000 from her home, and \$40,000 to \$50,000 in jewelry, and vehicles including a Hummer, cargo van, and a leased Mercedes. These assets totaled to \$1.2 to \$1.5 million.

Also unique to Dallas is that law enforcement has uncovered the involvement of Hispanic men and women as massage parlor owners and women involved voluntarily in sex work. Law enforcement has noticed a trend of these women coming from Honduras on B1 visitor visas, working in prostitution in massage parlors in Dallas for a short time, and then returning home. However, non-Asian operated massage parlors were much rarer and less highly organized than Asian-run massage parlors operating as fronts for prostitution and/or sex trafficking.

## **Topless Bars**

According to law enforcement, topless bars are another venue in which sex work is known to occur and sex trafficking has yet to be found. Sex work in topless bars is an example of the overlap between the lawful and underground commercial sex economies, as they are technically legal and licensed establishments. In Dallas, topless bars are typically run by Russian individuals. While police have received complaints about prostitution at these establishments, they have sometimes been unfounded. However, one officer acknowledged how a lack of diversity within the police department may hamper their ability to investigate:

We've gotten complaints on them [topless bars], there was one club here, a nice one, they had Russians there ... and every time that we'd go up there looking we couldn't see what they were talking about ... it could have been that we just couldn't get in, none of us were Russian. (Dallas Law Enforcement Official)

Law enforcement also described how Russian groups operating the topless bars were much more organized than the Asian groups operating massage parlors and harder to infiltrate.

## Escort Services

Dallas law enforcement also described "high-end" or "high-dollar" escort services comprising the UCSE. These escort services were described as the hardest to infiltrate given the secrecy, access control, and amount of money needed to pose as a potential client. Given these challenges, as well as the belief that sex trafficking is not occurring, local law enforcement does not investigate these services:

**Respondent:** I would think that the high dollar ones, I don't think that they are actually getting pimped. They might have a Madam who they give a percentage, but that's about it. And that's something that we don't, you can look on several different websites, not obviously the ones that we go to, but they're talking about four or five hundred dollars an hour or \$4,500 to spend the night, or something like that.

**Interviewer:** And are there a lot of those escort services out there?

**Respondent:** We're starting to get a lot. You've got to have, first of all you've got to have a profile, you've got to have recommendations from other girls. You've got to have passwords. They have a very intricate way of infiltrating those. It's at the point where you only get one shot and then one thing can burn so it's not worth our time.

**Interviewer:** And is that mostly domestic women who are involved in that?

**Respondent:** Yeah, the FBI has laws, it's pretty neat, but it's something that was out of our league big time.

**Interviewer:** Just because it was too difficult to get in?

**Respondent:** Oh the money, you had to be legitimately rich. And there was one where we had found, where she was checking and she was going to call your work. She wanted to know where you worked and she would look up the number herself and ask for you. So it's not, "Where do you work? Give me the number." It was, "Where do you work? Give me the name." She was going to call your work and ask for you. Some guys were paying ten grand just to hang out with her, he didn't even want anything to do with her, I mean sexual. Just a nice companion for the weekend. (Dallas Law Enforcement Officials)

In addition to these challenges and the belief that there is no sex trafficking associated with escort services, another reason local law enforcement does not investigate this venue is because it is not believed to be as connected to other types of Part I offenses. As one official explained, trafficking cases are often connected to other crime types and may even be classified as other crime types:

There is so much crime at the Part I offense that impact us as a city that are related to trafficking, whether it be kids or adults, but it's not reported that way because when you have a guy who is in the hotel room with the car getting burglarized, the burglar is going to come out in the Part I offense but it's not going to be attached to the prostitution. ... Say an officer goes out there, but everyone knows that he was engaging in prostitution when the robbery happened, the burglary happened, all of those things happened but it's going to go into the different categories or whether it be an adult or a child or with ... young kids, when we get 'em in, we may put the pimp in jail, the girl's been trained not to talk about the trafficking case meaning you can't make the trafficking case, but they forgot to train her on sexual assault. So you pop him on the sexual assault, it will go down as a Part I sexual assault but it will never be reported as a trafficking case. (Dallas Law Enforcement Official)

## Truckers

The underground commercial sex economy is also found within truck driver networks. Dallas law enforcement dedicated two law enforcement officials to investigate child sex trafficking at truck stops (similar to other cities, such as Oklahoma City). While they did not find any cases of child sex trafficking at truck stops, they did stumble upon another form of the UCSE that involved American citizen male truck drivers prostituting themselves or sex trafficking their spouses across the country:

**Respondent 1:** The truckers' thing is kind of its own undercover trucker undercover network. And what they're doing basically is, it's gone pretty much online. And so they interact online and just give out a location of, "I'm going to be driving down I-10, such and such day at such and such time." And so then that's how they make the connection. They'll connect with the person actually along whatever route the person's driving through. Sometimes it's the husband helping to figure out what the wife's schedule is going to be.

**Respondent 2:** It's more of a domestic thing then-

**Respondent 1:** It's kind of this whole network that's out there and all across the country they just kind of give out their plans, this is where I'll be located. And then they'll meet up. And sometimes you can see them referencing, "The last time was great." ... So it's kind of like, I'll be coming back that way again. You build those associates. So that's why we don't see it on our level. Because it's something that we couldn't even guess was going on out there.

**Interviewer:** These are domestic? These are American citizens that are doing this?

**Respondent 1:** Oh yeah. (Dallas Law Enforcement Officials)

## Washington, DC

Nine individuals were interviewed about the local underground commercial sex economy in Washington, DC. Representatives from the following agencies were interviewed: DC Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), US Postal Inspection Service (USPIS), the Office of the United States Attorney, and a DC-based anti-human trafficking nonprofit.

The underground commercial sex economy in DC is varied and includes online and street prostitution, erotic Asian massage parlors, and Latino brothels (see table 4.3). Because of the city's location between Maryland and Virginia, much of the underground commercial sex activity occurs without regard to jurisdiction. Furthermore, because of its location along major highways (I-95, I-66, I-270) and its proximity to Baltimore, DC is a significant part of East Coast sex trafficking circuits. Both online and street prostitution includes individuals who are pimp-controlled, drug-addicted, and transgender. Street/Internet-based pimps are networked with one another, but similar to what was reported in other cities, they operate in more of a social network, rather than an organized criminal network. Massage parlors and brothels do resemble more of an organized criminal network and will often include a hierarchical structure within the operation. These businesses will also wire money back to their home countries on a regular basis.

**Table 4.3 Stakeholder Perceptions of the UCSE in Washington, DC**

Venue	Offender profile	Employee profile	Evidence of prostitution	Evidence of trafficking	Pricing	Open/Closed customer base	Customer profile	Link to gangs, drugs, weapons, or organized crime
Street	US citizens	Women, adults and minors, transgender; pimp-controlled and non	X	X	\$20–150/sex act	Open	Men of all races/ethnicities	More of a social network than organized crime network. Some pimps may be former gang members, but no gang-operated businesses. Several may be past or current drug dealers.
Internet	US citizens	Women, adults and minors, transgender; pimp-controlled and non	X	X	In-call as low as \$60/15 min Out-call \$250 minimum	Open	Men of all races/ethnicities	More of a social network than organized crime network. Some pimps may be former gang members, but no gang-operated businesses. Several may be past or current drug dealers.
Erotic massage parlors	Asians	Asian women Adults only	X	X	\$60–80/house fee, with additional fees on top  \$120/“full service” which includes table shower, massage, and intercourse  House owner charges employees \$50–650/wk.	Starting to limit customer base due to law enforcement investigation	Males from all racial/ethnic groups; however some allow only Asian clientele	Connections to massage parlors in New York, specifically Flushing, Queens, and Staten Island. Drugs may pass through, but no organized drug or weapons activity.
Brothels	Latinos	Latin American women	X	X		Closed to only specific Latin American ethnicities	Latino males	Routed along same trails as drugs and guns. Gang connections, such as to MS-13, who may participate in trafficking or extort brothels.

## Street and Internet

Similar to other cities, law enforcement discussed how sex work and sex trafficking on the street and Internet involve the same individuals. Advertising via the Internet is said to increase during winter months and in periods following increased law enforcement investigations of street-based sex work and sex trafficking. Based on law enforcement interviews with women in sex work, law enforcement stated that women usually prefer the street to the Internet since they don't need to spend their money on hotel rooms. Adult street sex work occurs in multiple forms—prostitution by drug-addicted individuals, pimp-controlled adults, transgender individuals, and same-sex prostitution. Law enforcement officials reported their primary enforcement focus is on pimp-controlled sex work or sex trafficking; however, they noted that most of the complaints they receive are for drug-addicted individuals involved in sex work on the street.

Law enforcement reported that the recent economic revitalization of certain parts of DC have increased the number of people in the city, thereby increasing the level of adult and child sex trafficking. In addition to soliciting sexual services via the street and Internet, it was noted that DC nightclubs are also used. Two officers explained,

**Respondent 1:** It [adult pimp-controlled sex work] kind of increased. Most of the clients or young ladies try to fit in with the club crowd so you would not know what they were doing. They would try and camouflage their actions. Early on you would have them walking around in the middle of the street so you knew what they were doing, but as time went on they figured out that law enforcement was putting them under surveillance they changed their tactics. Now they try and fit in, like they are going to a club when they are actually out there soliciting. That is how it is on any given night. Some nights the clubs are closed so you totally know what they are doing but some nights they stand on the side of road pretending like they are trying to go to the club.

**Interviewer:** And with the juvenile [pimp-controlled sex work], has that kind of followed the same path as the adults?

**Respondent 2:** Right. With most instances the juveniles pretend to be adults. It is not until they are caught that they reveal that they are not adults. But some of them do not, some of them fool us. But some of them truly are under the age of eighteen. There is a correlation between the adults and the juveniles because they put them online as adults because most johns like younger women. They think that a lot of the younger women do not have any diseases so they prefer the young ladies more. (DC Law Enforcement Officials)

Law enforcement went on to describe how minors marketed as adults and who lie to police may also fool law enforcement during investigations:

**Respondent 1:** This girl, she was 16 years old when we caught up to her. She had actually been with him since she was 13. She was a runaway and from here [DC]. This whole time she had been here and he was prostituting her. Now, when we got her she actually looked like an adult. She had her hair done and makeup and everything. She said that she was working for some security firm and she needed extra money for her baby and we actually believed her.

**Respondent 2:** She was well versed.

**Respondent 1:** Yeah. So we locked her up, she got out and then we locked her up again a couple of days later. But we still did not know at that time either that she was only 16. So I was at home and the next thing I know I get a call telling me that I have to redo her paperwork as a juvenile. And I am like, "Hold up, is this the same girl? No, she wasn't no juvenile". And they said she was 16 and I said, "No, she is not 16." But when I finally came in and did the paperwork and I had to go to court building, we had to do a ... hearing in the juvenile section. When they brought her out I was like, "Wow, she does look like she is 16!" (DC Law Enforcement Officials)

Prices vary within the street and Internet-based commercial sex markets depending on the characteristics of the adults or minors trading sex, as well as the characteristics of the buyers. Sex acts from drug-addicted individuals tend to be the cheapest—\$20 or less for any type of sex act. Pricing for pimp-controlled and non-pimp-controlled women ranges from \$20 to \$150 and is relatively the same for transgender individuals. It was reported that women often determine pricing based on their self-perceived attractiveness as well as a customer's car type and willingness to pay.

Although the adults and minors involved in Internet-facilitated sex work are the same as those involved in street-based markets, the pricing structure is different when services are advertised via the Internet. Within the DC online underground commercial sex market, there is a set fee depending on whether the service is an in-call (buyer meets the seller) or an out-call (seller meets the buyer). In-calls are cheaper and can be as low as \$60 for 15 minutes. Out-calls are more expensive, with \$250 the minimum amount typically charged. Pimp-controlled minors are commonly marketed as adults and are sold for higher prices than adults:

Depending on how they [minors] look, most of the time the juveniles will mimic the adults because again, they are put out to be adults. They may advertise online as 19, 20 or 21. They try and tend to fetch higher prices, especially if they are attractive. (DC Law Enforcement Official)

Pimp-controlled adults and minors exploited on the Internet and street have daily quotas they must meet. As one official explained, "It depends on the pimp, but it is typically \$500 on weekdays and \$1,000 on weekends. That totals out to be \$234,000 a year for one girl if they meet the quota." Based on investigated cases, DC law enforcement reported that pimps typically traffic one to four individuals (known colloquially as their "stable").

Recruitment tactics used by street/Internet-based pimps vary from psychological manipulation to physical force and the use of drugs. One law enforcement official explained how pimps recruit through psychological manipulation:

When they start recruiting, especially with young girls, pretty much what they do is go and give the girls an ear ... and the girls end up telling them, "I am having this problem at home, my mama is doing this, and my dad is not doing that." And they will just figure out what is going on with this girl and they will fill that void. At first they might not even approach her with the prostitution or anything like that. They just want to take her and shower her with what she is missing: gifts, attention or whatever. Once he gets her away from her family and it has been some time, he will eventually approach her and be like, "Take care of my man for me." And he might ease her into it or he will tell her, "Baby, we cannot live here for free. There are bills that need to get paid and everything, you need to start contributing." Well, of course she does not know how to contribute so he tells her she can do it for a short period of time, we can get this money and then we can go get this big house or whatever and they will go for it. (DC Law Enforcement Official)

However, law enforcement noted a trend in cases involving minors who approached the pimp on their own:

I want to say that now a lot of these young girls are looking at this sort of thing like it is the "in" thing. I have seen pimps as young as 18 or 19 years old. And the girls, even the case we just had, these guys did not come to them and say, "Hey, we want you to come and do this." This girl and a couple of her girlfriends, the youngest was 13 and the oldest was 15, they went and found this guy and told him that this is what they wanted to do. And of course he said yes. So now it is very different. It is not like a lot of these girls are being forced into it, even the youngest ones. Even though they are juveniles and they cannot make these kinds of decisions they are knowledgeable enough to say whether or not they want to do that. The money is good; the only thing they can see is how much money they are making, but not how much money they are actually making because he is the one that is going to get all the money. He is just going to give them a little here and there and make them feel like he is taking care of them. (DC Law Enforcement Official)

Street/Internet-based pimps are networked with one another, but similar to what was reported in other cities, they operate in more of a social network, rather than an organized criminal network. While there may be some pimps who were former gang members, gang-operated street or Internet-facilitated sex trafficking has not been found in DC (as discussed below, they have been associated with DC's Latino brothels.) However, many of the street/Internet-based pimps that DC law enforcement has investigated may be past or current drug dealers. One official surmised that this was due to lesser penalties associated with sex trafficking, leading former drug dealers to transition to the sex market because they view it as less risky:

Not so much the gangs but maybe a gang member ... They know that drugs are going to get them sent to jail, but they will do prostitution because they really won't get locked up for pimping girls out. It is the same thing if you look at it. Drugs, sex, sex is a drug, so, "Hey, I am still providing something and getting money but my chances of going to jail have diminished." (DC Law Enforcement Official)

Despite street pimps not operating as a form of organized crime, law enforcement reported uncovering phone records that reveal pimps are in communication with one another. They also uncovered Internet records illustrating how pimps share information about law enforcement activity and whether certain cities are good markets for the UCSE. Various law enforcement officials described the DC area as a popular stop due to the demand and the amount of money that could be made relative to other areas:

**Respondent 1:** This [DC] is the place. This is where you want to be.

**Respondent 2:** They [other pimps] come from California, Nevada, Texas, and Miami ...

**Respondent 3:** A young lady, we had this juvenile years back, and this young lady was at a truck stop in Pennsylvania and could charge \$100 for oral sex but she could come to DC and [make] \$150. So, DC is one of the biggest places on the track because of the money. You have DC and Virginia where most of the johns [buyers] are ... the majority of them are from outside the District of Columbia. They come into DC to purchase sex. So that is where you have that money coming in. You have the federal workers, industry workers, construction workers, not necessarily labor but your regular construction ...

**Respondent 2:** Everybody. It does not matter.

**Respondent 4:** We have arrested all walks of life, from the homeless guy to the executive. (DC Law Enforcement Officials)

DC law enforcement described how most pimps follow a code which is comprised of rules governing pimp culture. When asked if it was common for pimps to sell or trade women and minors to other pimps, one official responded:

That is also a yes and no answer. It is not in the rules of the game. If the girl is out of pocket or she shows up, he has an option to put a charge on a girl. He can call the pimp and say, "I really do not want this girl, she seems a little too crazy, you can have her back for \$500." Sometimes the pimp will agree and pay the \$500 or they will say, "Tough, she is your problem now, but I want her earrings." There is always that code. (DC Law Enforcement Official)

Similarly, a DC prosecutor described how women and girls may be traded or sold between pimps. The prosecutor also described how the relationships between pimps and the women who work for them may be similar to domestic violence situations in that the women may continue in abusive relationships with pimps due to emotional ties with their exploiters:

There's a written rule that if a girl chooses up, well when the girl chooses up with a pimp, oftentimes she has to pay, but sometimes you'll hear that the pimp will pay the other pimp some sort of finder's fee. That's certainly part of the code that these guys follow out there. Again, to the extent that they're interconnected, they're all following these rules and all working together on the track, but they're really just kind of independent entrepreneurs who are really selling one to any handful of women. From my experience, you have some guys who are sort of really violent, really dangerous that they call them

“gorilla pimps,” but a lot of these guys, they lose a girl, a girl says, “You know screw this, I’m out. I’m out of the game or I go with another pimp”, they’re just like “alright” and they go recruit another girl. It really is a revolving door. Girls leave and come back and as long as he sort of has a girl who he’s got working for him, he’s usually alright and again, violence is definitely sort of part of this whole world, but a lot of this is the threat of violence or more likely just the girl will say, “Yeah, I love him. If I stop doing this, I’ll lose him.” Just crazy stuff like that, so a lot of it is just the domestic violence control situation. (DC Prosecutor)

Buyers of street and Internet-facilitated prostitution are described as predominantly male and from all socioeconomic backgrounds. Law enforcement believed that the majority of buyers are not preferential abusers, but incidentally abuse juveniles they believe are adults (since they are marketed as adults and may appear to be older due to their style of dress and makeup):

More or less the johns that are looking for service are not necessarily going out and saying, “I hope to God that there is a 16-year-old out there” or “I cannot wait to find that 14-year-old out there.” Nine times out of ten they are looking for sex, they are looking for an adult, they [are] looking to be discreet; they are not looking for juveniles. It is a particular subculture that actually prefers that. (DC Law Enforcement Official)

Despite perceptions of preference or intent, buyers will buy minors by virtue of the fact that they are marketed alongside adults. To some extent, buyers communicate and network with one another to share tips on law enforcement activity and “reviews” of individuals selling sexual services:

These johns are smart. They have a lot of forums online and they take care of each other as far as letting the others know what girls do what. Also, you can go on there and see where the police have been. Like when we went out on the street they had on there, “The police are out on the street, everybody be careful.” And that would make them tend to look on the Internet for prostitutes so it just depends on what is going on. They really take care of themselves. For instance, with massage parlors. They will let each other know which massage parlors you can get full service from and everything and then they will comment on it. (DC Law Enforcement Official)

## **Erotic Massage Parlors**

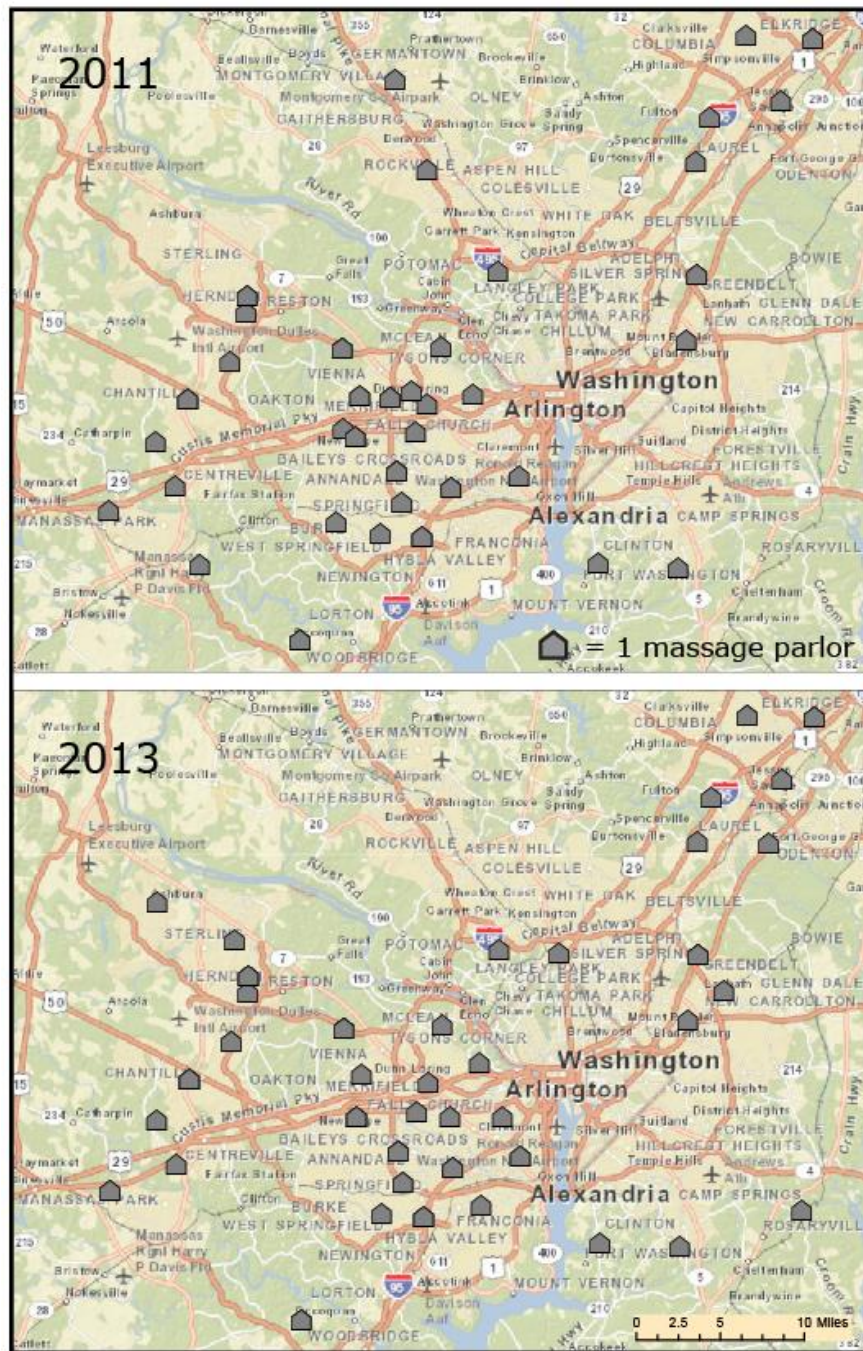
Massage parlors are the second of three primary areas of UCSE activity in Washington, DC and have been found to operate as fronts for prostitution and sex trafficking. As the illustrated in figure 4.4, there are no erotic massage parlors located in the District proper;<sup>47</sup> however, there are numerous massage parlors in Virginia and the number appears to be increasing in Western Virginia. Massage parlors in DC, similar to other cities in the study, are operated primarily by Asian individuals and staffed by Asian women. Similar to other cities in our study, connections have been found between Asian women in prostitution or being sex trafficked out of massage parlors and New York (specifically Flushing, Queens, and Staten Island). Massage parlors investigated in DC have not been found to recruit minors. Asian massage parlors (AMPs) typically welcome customers from all racial and ethnic groups, unlike Latino brothels which limit their customers to Latinos. However, as will be described, with increased law enforcement investigation, AMPs have begun limiting their customer base in an effort to protect against detection by undercover law enforcement. Officials have noted that some drugs may pass through AMPs, but they have not uncovered any connections with drug or weapons trafficking or gang activity.

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<sup>47</sup> Although there are no massage parlors that appear on these maps, this does not mean that none exist in DC proper. It might just be that none are listed on [eroticmp.com](http://eroticmp.com).



**Figure 4.4 Erotic Massage Parlors in the Washington, DC Metro Area**



AMPs are commonly run out of business locations and found scattered throughout downtown DC. Prices charged at massage parlors—operating as fronts for prostitution and sex trafficking—include a \$60 to \$80 set “house fee.” This is a set price for walking in the door and, depending on the sex act the buyer wants, additional fees are added. For a “full service,” the fee is (on average) an additional minimum of \$120 which includes a table shower, massage, and sexual intercourse. One law enforcement official described how women are able to keep some of their money—unlike in street pimp cases where the women and minors typically hand all of their money over—but often pay additional fees to the brothel owner:

On average, what they are doing in a Korean massage parlor is the owner, who has yet to be determined on any given Sunday, will get the \$60 house fee. They collect all of that and then on top of that the girl is supposed to keep her \$120 tip, but what the brothel owner does is charge the girls anywhere from \$50 a day to \$650 a week for the right to live there. On top of that they will start charging them fees like, “Oh by the way, you did not put your towels in the laundry basket so that is a \$50 fine.” I would say that the average Korean prostitute is making more depending on the house that she is working at, how busy it is, and how strict the house rules are. (DC Law Enforcement Official)

Law enforcement has been proactive in executing search warrants and arresting individuals operating inside of massage parlors, but one prosecutor described massage parlor cases as “next to impossible to prosecute.” The inability to press sex trafficking charges is due in large part to the difficulty obtaining information from the women inside the massage parlor about whether they are in a situation of force, fraud, or coercion (i.e., being sex trafficked) or voluntarily engaged in sex work. Additionally, officials noted that the women working inside the massage parlor rarely disclose information regarding other individuals connected to the massage parlor, making it difficult for authorities to trace the criminal network. As a result, DC authorities have turned to a public health/public nuisance approach to combat massage parlors by going after the landlords that rent the spaces out to the massage parlors. As two stakeholders explained,

**Respondent 1:** And here, there’s definitely a focus on arrests like there is in any police context. So they’re good because you can execute a search warrant and always arrest a couple of people, but you very rarely find a lot of money which is harder to make bigger cases of. The police have done a good job of going in, executing search warrants, arresting people to sort of stifle it. And this health and civil side have just been amazing—essentially, focusing on the landlords. Going after the landlords who have been time and time again opening ...

**Respondent 2:** Creating a safe haven for the [massage] parlors to open with certain landlords that are willing to be receptive. Once you squeeze those landlords, it squeezes the network because they can’t rent from certain landlords who just won’t allow it and once these landlords that might be a little bit more open to it feel the heat from law enforcement which changes their calculus about how open they are to it. Once they’re not open to it, then very few people are open to it and it doesn’t give the places air to breathe, it doesn’t give them places to go. (DC Prosecutor and Service Provider)

As evidence of the success of the approach, officials noted that there are just a handful of massage parlors left operating in DC and they appear to be connected to one another. Officials did note that there may have been some level of displacement to the suburbs of Northern Virginia<sup>48</sup> and a change in the operating structure of massage parlors. At the time of our interview, officials estimated there were approximately 80 massage parlors operating as fronts for prostitution and potential sex trafficking in the Northern Virginia suburbs of Arlington, Alexandria, Fairfax, Chantilly, Manassas, and Woodbridge.

In addition to some potential displacement, officials have also noted that with increased law enforcement pressure, some AMPs started limiting their customer base and/or morphed into out-call escort services. Officials explained that in the previous environment of low pressure from law enforcement, AMPs would allow any customer inside the establishment. Now, there has been a tightening of the customer base to limit detection by undercover law enforcement. As a result, the few AMPs left operating in the DC area screen customers and only allow those customers in who have references and that can prove that they are trustworthy. Officials believe that this pressure from law enforcement limits the profits of the AMPs. Another AMP tactic is to switch into out-call escort services. As AMPs are disrupted, officials have noted an increase in advertising for out-call Asian escorts on websites such as Backpage. Officials believe that some of these women are part of a larger criminal network that would have sex trafficked them through massage parlors. The changes noted in AMP operating tactics are considered by some DC officials as a

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<sup>48</sup> It was noted that officials in Maryland (specifically Montgomery County) have done a good job going after massage parlors so it makes sense that most of the activity has shifted out to Northern Virginia.

promising sign that law enforcement efforts are weakening the structure and operations of AMPs engaging in sex trafficking and prostitution.

Tracing and seizing assets derived from prostitution and/or sex trafficking at AMPs has also been difficult due to the difficulty in uncovering the criminal network and the strictly cash-based nature of many of the massage parlors. While it is unclear exactly how much money AMPs are earning within the DC area, one law enforcement official's description of money uncovered on a raid provides a window into the large amount of money being generated:

We did happen to come across an Asian massage parlor ... I guess we were just lucky that day because they had \$70,000 at that location. It was not like it was truly hidden, it was stashed inside a lotion bottle with a false bottom but it was out of plain site and our hound dog over here found it. (DC Law Enforcement Official)

While AMP profits are unclear, the demand for services and client base is much easier to uncover. According to prosecutors, investigators, and service providers, massage parlor clients communicate openly with each other through online forums where they provide tips and rate the sexual services of the women inside the massage parlors. A service provider described these public, online forums in detail:

Three main ones are eroticmp.com, spahunters.com, and rubmaps.com and of the three of them, I think EroticMP is the most up-to-date information, the best, and the highest level of confidence that [if] the parlor is being listed there, you have commercial sex occurring. (DC Service Provider)

## Brothels

Latino brothels operate out of residences throughout the DC area, largely in neighborhoods with higher concentrations of Latinos. Latino brothels have been the most difficult of the three main forms of UCSE for officials to investigate due to the largely diffuse, mobile, and ethnically- closed nature of the brothel operations:

All of the sort of things that have worked against Asian massage parlors, Latino brothels have figured out a much better way to do it. From the get go, they limited their consumer base and they're in residential areas as opposed to northwest business areas, so we have a very difficult time finding these places, investigating these kinds of cases, and prosecuting them. This a huge challenge because we have no idea what the economy of Latino brothels looks like, but we know it's big and that there are a lot of them and that they're constantly moving and that there are a lot of people moving within them. You'll have, let's say, in Columbia Heights or somewhere northwest/northeast DC where there's a large Hispanic population. You'll open up one of these places. The women sort of come from all over DC, Virginia, New York and will basically go to one of these places. Obviously many men coming in and out, but the men are always solicited far away from the residence: bus stops, places where vans pick up migrant workers or construction workers rather. I've heard of instances even where the men were hooded before going to where the residence was. Things I've heard—again really I've only had a few of these where I've talked to the women—they only allow Salvadorians in so we're not even talking about how many Puerto Ricans have we tried to send into one of these places and they've laughed at us. [To them] Puerto Rican means police. These guys have always understood that you've got to keep this discreet. They have look outs: young children with cell phones, older women on lawn chair texting over there. They're just really hard to infiltrate, but DC has a big problem with them. (DC Prosecutor)

Despite these difficulties, DC law enforcement has conducted some investigations of Latino brothels. Similar to what happened with AMPs, this caused the brothels to morph from residentially-based operations to more mobile escort service operations:

Sometimes Latino brothels turn mobile, like the Asian escort services that we talked about where their natural setting is the massage parlor, but their kind of "Plan B" setting is to go mobile. I think the same thing happens with Latino brothels where their natural

setting is to be the residential brothel, but when forced, they'll turn mobile and they'll turn into what they call "a delivery service" where the women will be driven to different guys' houses. (DC Service Provider)

Women inside some Latino brothels have been found to be sex trafficked. Investigators have uncovered cases where women are sold to recruiters in Latin American countries (particularly Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and Guatemala) and then smuggled to the United States where they are forced to work off their smuggling debts in brothels. Investigators also noted that the women are also moved along the same pathways as drugs and weapons:

**Respondent 1:** The only thing that we are seeing ... our training basically says that the immigrants are being routed along the same trails that the drugs and guns are.

**Respondent 2:** There are buses, van services ... And that is the same thing as them getting paid. Some of the girls are not coming here willingly. They are being sold off in their countries, shipped or driven here, and forced to work off the debt they earned for coming to the United States. (DC Law Enforcement Officials)

There are other women that investigators believe are voluntarily working in prostitution in Latino brothels. These women keep half of the money charged, but may also be charged fees for condoms or other items. When asked whether the women in the brothels were able to keep any of their money, two investigators responded:

**Respondent 1:** They get half and then they charge them for little things like if they need some stuff, they charge them for that.

**Respondent 2:** They are starting to do that. If they needed more condoms they would charge them. They would not charge them an exorbitant amount like a Korean brothel would to make more money off of them but they would definitely charge them. ... What did one girl<sup>49</sup> say? She was charged \$10 for 50 condoms. ...

**Respondent 2:** But the girls there, in the Latino brothels, this is something that they know they can do and make money. They tend to turn to it. A lot of them come in here voluntarily because they know what they have to do and everything, and then the guys are paying them. I think they charge \$30 for 15 minutes and they get half of the \$30. (DC Law Enforcement Officials)

Compared to the AMPs and street/Internet-based sex trafficking and prostitution in DC, officials noted that Latino brothels appear to have more connection to gangs, drugs, and weapons. The connection to drug and weapons trafficking is due to the involvement of gangs, such as MS-13. While gangs have been found to be directly involved in perpetrating sex trafficking in brothels, they are also known to extort brothel owners/operators in exchange for protection. One prosecutor described the connection between MS-13 and sex trafficking in DC:

I think in the last couple of years certainly, you definitely heard more of guys that are either connected to MS[-13] or loosely affiliated will be coming around to collect the money and even if they're not running the day-to-day operations of these places, they're definitely very heavily involved in collecting protection money and everything like that from these places so there's definitely a network now. The girls are moving from places in Maryland, Virginia, and DC constantly moving. I think one: Because for law enforcement purposes, two: You want to have new merchandise so that's a huge challenge and will be a huge challenge for you guys. Really focus on this because I think it's a really big issue in DC (DC Prosecutor)

Similarly, an investigator described how MS-13 extorts Latino brothels and how gangs recruit minors as sexual servants for gang members in Northern Virginia:

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<sup>49</sup> Although law enforcement is using "girls" in these quotes, the research team clarified that they were referring to adult women and not minors.

On the Latino brothel front we found that they are more extorting them and using them like, “Give us \$50 every Tuesday or every Saturday for protection.” But they are not really providing protection. The protection is MS-13 is not going to rob you. ... I have spoken with some of the northern Virginia task force officers, and they were saying that MS-13 is recruiting young girls into their own gang and using them as sexual servants for gang members, not necessarily prostitution. (DC Law Enforcement Official)

Latino brothel owners trade women more frequently than street and Internet-based pimps. One investigator explained:

The brothels do more of the trading as opposed to the prostitution. The brothel owners will come to forums amongst themselves and they will trade the girls out among the three, four or however many ... I guess they would still be considered pimps, amongst themselves. So they do more of the trading instead of the street level or Internet pimps. (DC Law Enforcement Official)

As stated above, women are traded and constantly moved from brothel to brothel throughout DC, Maryland, and Virginia in an attempt to evade law enforcement and to attract customers.

## **Denver, Colorado**

Fourteen individuals were interviewed about the local underground commercial sex economy in Denver, CO. Representatives from the following agencies were interviewed: Denver Police Department, Lakewood Police Department, the FBI, the Attorney General’s Office, the Office of the United States Attorney, and the US Postal Inspection Service (USPIS).

Interviews with both federal and local investigators and prosecutors revealed a diverse UCSE comprised of Asian massage parlors, street and online prostitution, Latino brothels, and upscale escort services (see table 4.4). Several respondents mentioned that gangs are beginning to play a more dominant role in the UCSE, particularly African American gangs. Otherwise, most cases involved loosely organized pimps, with the exception of a couple large cases involving escort services, including Asian-run services. Both prostitution and sex trafficking of adults and children occurs in Denver; however, these trafficking and prostitution networks are not very organized and structured. When asked to describe Denver’s underground commercial sex economy, one law enforcement official acknowledged that although the police department has investigated pimping, they are only recently beginning to understand the scope of sex trafficking. He believed there are a lot more cases of sex trafficking and prostitution than local and federal law enforcement partners in Denver have been able to investigate:

I would say that we are only scratching the surface of what is out there. We have seen a drastic increase pretty much every year since we have at least keyed into it. Denver has done pimping cases since forever; it is in the statute. But really understanding it and the human trafficking aspect of it, probably really came around about in 2006. We had a detective that was very knowledgeable on it and keyed in on it. (Denver Law Enforcement Official)

**Table 4.4 Stakeholder Perceptions of the UCSE in Denver, CO**

<b>Venue</b>	<b>Offender profile</b>	<b>Employee profile</b>	<b>Evidence of prostitution</b>	<b>Evidence of trafficking</b>	<b>Pricing</b>	<b>Open/Closed customer base</b>	<b>Customer profile</b>	<b>Link to gangs, drugs, weapons, or organized crime</b>
Street	Majority of women do not have pimp presence	Drug-addicted women	X	X	\$20–40	Open	Men of all races/ethnicities	Prices for services are tied to prices for crack cocaine and heroin
Internet/ Escort services	Domestic and foreign men; Male pimps with criminal histories in drugs, gang activity, domestic violence, and assaults; Independent operators	Adults and minors, mainly women but also some men; pimp-controlled and non	X	X	\$100–300/ hr.	Open	Men of all races/ethnicities	Offenders are linked to domestic and foreign national criminal enterprises, including gangs. Link between sex trafficking and gangs. Midwest circuit, including Oklahoma City, St. Louis, Kansas City, Minnesota
Erotic massage parlors and brothels	Korean or Chinese individuals for massage parlors, Latinos for brothels	Asian or Latina women, adults.	X	X	Door fee, + \$40/30 min. \$60/hr.	Open	Men of all races/ethnicities	Women come from cities such as Seattle, Houston, and Dallas, but typically move independently between cities

## Street

Street-based commercial sex activity occurs in Denver, although officials reported that the advent of the Internet decreased the number of individuals marketing themselves outside. The street-based commercial sex market includes both prostitution and sex trafficking. However, officials reported that the majority of the street-based market is comprised of drug-addicted women in prostitution, with no presence/control of a pimp. Given the link between street-based prostitution and drug addiction in Denver, prices charged for prostitution are tied to the prices for crack cocaine and heroin. As a result, current prices charged for sexual services (oral sex to intercourse) are around \$20 to \$40 from an individual soliciting on the street. Compared to Denver's other venues of the UCSE, the street-based market had the lowest prices. One experienced law enforcement official described the diversity of customers of street-based prostitution:

The clientele on the street is as diverse as you could ever imagine, from religious people to pro athletes to cops to judges. It is almost a crime of opportunity. Guys are driving down [street name] and they will see a prostitute and they figure for \$20 they can get [oral sex]. And so it will just pull random people in. Sometimes they are chronic offenders and other times they are really just the one-time people. You will pop them and they will say, "I have never done this before" and sure enough you pull up their record and they have never done it before. (Denver Law Enforcement Official)

## Internet/Escort Services

The Internet and smart phones have caused a shift in the market for underground commercial sex, specifically sex trafficking. Denver law enforcement officials noted that as they have seen a decrease in the street market for prostitution, they have seen an increase in the number of escort service advertisements on websites such as Backpage.com and through local weekly newspapers (online and in print). Child sex trafficking cases are primarily uncovered through investigations into escort services. Adult women have also been sex trafficked through escort services.

Denver stakeholders believed that the Internet is used by pimps to exploit children and adults for a variety of reasons. First and foremost, online advertising provides more of a cover from law enforcement than the street. Second, the Internet enables pimps to advertise to a broader range of potential customers. Third, it allows a level of marketing that can hide the nature of the enterprise, whether through marketing children as adults or presenting women as individuals voluntarily involved in prostitution. Prices charged for adults and children advertised through escort services are higher than drug-addicted women working in prostitution on the street. Prices tend to average between \$100 and \$300 per hour, but can be much higher. One official reported that women and children exploited through escort services in Denver have been required to service an average of five customers per day, but that it can be higher depending on the pimp. Customers of escort services were described as the more chronic offenders:

They are different because they kind of know what they are looking for. They generally have done it or rather used the escort services before or have prostitution arrests in the past. They know how to surf the web; they know what female attributes they are looking for, like nationalities. They are savvier to the system. (Denver Law Enforcement Official)

Traffickers behind escort services are both domestic and foreign national men and women and range from individuals to larger organized criminal enterprises, including gangs. As one law enforcement official noted, while reflecting on the characteristics of traffickers in cases uncovered in Denver:

**Respondent:** For pimps they come in every shape, size, and color. We've arrested pimps that are 50-year-old Chinese women, we've arrested pimps that are 20-year-old black men. I would say in terms of controlling a couple girls or a smaller pimping or prostitution ring, we do see a lot of black males, I'm not so much ... I don't think it has anything to do with race, I think it has more to do with idea of ... you could can get into whole socioeconomic discussion of it, I think that being in prison, being in the system, whether it's already dealing drugs or being involved in gangs, there's easier access and understanding to the street life and kids and understanding of what the game is and how to make money doing it ... They are always usually very charismatic ... but you know more



and more, these guys whether they do it through the force angle or whether they do it through the charisma angle, they all know how to manipulate young girls and women.

**Interviewer:** So those were the smaller kind of rings, what are you seeing in the bigger ones?

**Respondent:** I think in the bigger ones, that's where some of our bigger ones we had especially women, our big Mexican national ring we had was a woman, the big Chinese ring that we had was a woman, we just arrested a Chinese woman bringing them through different states and stuff. I think because they were former prostitutes so they know the business. We had a big case last year with a white woman running the whole ring. (Denver Law Enforcement Official)

Male pimps in Denver tend to have lengthy criminal histories. While men arrested for pimping, pandering, and sex trafficking haven't had direct ties to drug trafficking, they have typically been in prison or jail for drug dealing, gang activity, domestic violence, and assaults. One official described pimping as a crime that is chosen because it is a better business:

Well, we generally see it as a progression. They will go from joining a gang and getting into gang type trouble as a teenager like your auto thefts and things of that nature to violent crimes like aggravated assaults and then graduating into the pimp status. The pimp status ... It is actually a better business. You can control your personnel better. It is generally the younger males controlling the younger females and they control the money. So it is almost a progression to get to the pimping status. (Denver Law Enforcement Official)

Denver officials confirmed a link between gangs and sex trafficking in some cases they have investigated. Sex trafficking cases involving gangs in Denver operate as more of a criminal syndicate. Officials have uncovered cases involving gang leaders in California that receive the proceeds from sex trafficking committed by gang members in Denver and other cities. There has also been evidence of the rival gangs, the Crips and the Bloods, collaborating with each other to sex traffic adults and minors. Similar to the sentiments expressed above, one investigator surmised that gang members were turning to sex trafficking after hearing about this less risky opportunity in prison.

Outside of gang involvement in sex trafficking, pimps operate independently. Independent pimps network socially rather than criminally, as was also noted in other cities in our study. Pimps network with one another on social media sites and through the telephone, as confirmed through law enforcement evidence collection. Social media sites such as MocoSpace are reportedly used by traffickers to share information about the best cities and markets for sex trafficking. Denver is said to be on a Midwest circuit. Although officials did not see a direct overlap between sex trafficking and drug trafficking, one official noted that sex traffickers and drug traffickers travel through similar cities:

**Respondent:** For Denver, Denver likes Oklahoma City, St. Louis, Kansas City and a little bit into Minnesota. The way it seems to me is that you do not mess with California because they are bigger than us, you do not go to Texas because they have their own networks so you kind of have this little Midwest belt. It is along the same lines as our drug trafficking. The drug trafficking goes generally from Mexico to Denver and then off to the Midwest.

**Interviewer:** But you are not necessarily seeing that drug trafficking world colliding with the human trafficking world?

**Respondent:** We are not, no. (Denver Law Enforcement Official)

Pimps also use social media sites like MocoSpace, Myspace, and Facebook for recruitment. In addition to recruiting women and minors via social media, pimps in Denver recruit through online ads, off the street, out of strip clubs, at local malls, and at skate parks. One experienced Denver law enforcement official poignantly remarked upon the characteristics of women and girls recruited by pimps:

With the victims, I will say that it is across the board, every race imaginable. I would say that in Denver, the vast majority of our victims are going to be female as are the vast



majority of prostitutes. That does not mean that males are not out there. So if I talk about it later and say girls or women, that is because that is what we deal with. With the girls, the majority of them have some kind of background with being sexually abused or sexually assaulted in their childhood. A lot of them have been in the system whether it is because of foster issues, child neglect or child abuse. And again, these are not 100 percent across the board but that is what we see.

You see a lot of them that are frequent runaways. The runaway thing is huge actually. There are truancy issues, being associated with gangs. Those are a lot of the same backgrounds, you can look at it across any state, city, and see that the kids are going to have those common factors. Of course there are other issues too, most of these girls, young women you have contact with have pretty low self-esteem. A lot of people summarize it saying that they are missing the father figure ... it's not so much the father figure, but they are missing the love, attention, affection that they are not getting, it doesn't have to be from their father, it could be from the mother, whatever, they are not getting their needs met and so these pimps understand that they can meet those needs. (Denver Law Enforcement Official)

Recruitment tactics used by pimps often include promises of a better lifestyle. One law enforcement official described how pimps groom women and girls through promises of living in a big home and affording a fancy lifestyle. One investigator described how pimps post online ads of women as a grooming mechanism by presenting it as a photo shoot:

**Respondent:** That is one of the big recruiting tools. You get a young girl, generally a juvenile or right around 18, introduce her to the lifestyle and one of the first things they do are the big photo shoots for the postings. But the goal ...

**Interviewer:** So they actually do that in a big studio and everything?

**Respondent:** It is a big, formal thing. It is generally them in a hotel. They will take them out and spend a lot of money on clothes, lingerie, makeup and things like that and the girls are usually wowed by the money that they spend. And then they do these photo shoots and the girls feel good about themselves and then they say, "Here is the business." (Denver Law Enforcement Official)

On average, independent pimps in Denver traffic about five to six women and/or minors at any one time. While this number sometimes ranges, law enforcement hypothesized that pimps tend to average this number for control purposes. Similar to other cities, the women and girls exploited by Denver pimps are expected to meet a certain "quota" per day. In Denver, this is about three to four customers or about \$1,000 per day. Reflecting on the daily quota and the brutality of pimps, one law enforcement official remarked:

Most girls will tell us they have an \$1,000 day quota. Seven days a week, 365 days a year. If they're on their period, stick a sponge in ya, keep going. (Denver Law Enforcement Official)

Pimps may also groom certain women to assist in recruiting and facilitating the exploitation of other women and girls (known colloquially as "bottoms"):

The bottom is going to be a primary recruiter, she's going to keep the girls in line, but on the other hand she's going to take the worst beatings too ... because that shows the control the pimp has, because he can control his number one girl, the other girls are going to stay in check. But the bottom has the same role, the same amount of money [daily quota] if not more sometimes. (Denver Law Enforcement Official)

These individuals fit a victim-offender profile in that they are exploited by a pimp but also used by the pimp to assist in the exploitation of others—by aiding with recruitment, transportation, and harboring. This has presented a challenge for law enforcement and prosecutors who understand their victimization, but see their criminal conduct. One law enforcement officer described the victim offender overlap:

Sometimes you have to weigh it, like we have a case now where the bottom was an 18-year-old and she's a mean chick and quite honestly she was like three months older than the victim and you have to look at it and say "Man this girl really is a victim too." She's a victim too and so we need to figure out in talking with her and working with her and we will, and ultimately I think she's going to proffer. I had a case too, one of the ladies was 26 and she's the bottom and she's telling you stuff kind of that really is devastating, she's telling you that she was recruited at 14 and then you're like, "Well jeez, you've been doing this for 11 years of course you've figured out the hierarchy and you're in a better off place now you have to do less deals you get more stuff you get more benefit." (Denver Law Enforcement Official)

Pimps force victims to turn over all of the money made through trading sex. Sometimes pimps give an allowance to their victims and sometimes they do not. Police officials described the power and control that pimps exert over the women and girls and the difficulty this creates in getting them to open up about the crimes committed against them:

Well, will the girls talk about it [abuse by pimps/traffickers]? Probably not, because I think it falls back into that, I mean you, you think your absolute [worst] domestic violence case and situation you can ever think of, and you take these girls, times ten, because I mean they're getting beat by these guys, they're getting raped five to ten times a day every time they sell themselves, the pimps are raping them. They all think they love them, they all think they love this guy. (Denver Law Enforcement Official)

Law enforcement also discussed how some pimps will use violence against women and girls. These victims are then hidden from law enforcement and won't be advertised until they heal. Law enforcement discussed how some big escort services trafficking women and minors are moving toward a more "high-end" model that involves gift giving as a form of coercion, rather than physical violence:

We will not see a lot of assaults. But I do not necessarily attribute that to it not happening it is just that they may be out of pocket for a little while until they heal up and stuff. I think the bottoms do a lot to influence the girls, to keep them in line. Some of the best model businesses are going to Heidi Fleiss and all those top-end stuff and her philosophy was to treat them extremely well. She would pay for the girls to go to trips to Vegas when they were on their periods. They were out for a week and they were showered with affection and attention and I think that there is some modeling for that for some of the big escort services. But for the most part it is more of the disciplinary thing. (Denver Law Enforcement Official)

Pimps in Denver have also been found to sell or trade victims. In one case, a girl ran away from one pimp to another and the first pimp paid the other pimp \$400 to keep her. One official described how independent pimps work together, even though they operate separately, to buy and trade women and girls:

I think that's really important to get out that they're not organized, but that's how they are organized. It's that loose knit criminal affiliate, because they're all criminals, and it's so they're working together that way, they may not be sharing much but they are sharing girls they're selling girls back and forth to each other if somebody needs a white girl and another guy needs a black girl, they might trade. (Denver Law Enforcement Official)

Despite the existence and use of asset forfeiture laws by Denver officials, assets are reportedly difficult to seize in cases involving independent pimps. Law enforcement described how pimps are transitory and lease expensive mansions or spend money on hotel rooms for themselves and the women and girls who work for them. Vehicles are often rented rather than purchased. If pimps did own real estate or vehicles, it was common to put the property under their bottom's name to protect them against asset forfeiture and a

potential paper trail. Money was reportedly spent as fast as it was earned. Some of the money earned was spent on hair, makeup, clothes, and manicures and pedicures for the women and girls as a mechanism to keep control:

Well their only expense is nails, hair, makeup, little bit of food, and a motel room. Other than that they're spending it on gambling, booze, they're constantly recruiting—they spend a lot of time in the strip clubs, we've had several cases where the girls would say we don't even know where he's at, we think he's at the strip club all night long. If you have a lot of money to flash, these guys can spend three or four grand a night in a strip club. Clothes, shoes. ...

They're living in hotels, if they're constantly travelling, living in hotels, they've got no roots. Now they'll tell the girls that that's what they're working for, that they'll buy a nice place, they can all live together, but it's just its part of the manipulation and that coercion to keep them there. The girls are constantly looking at that dream because he's going to tell them, "We're doing this to make our life better. (Denver Law Enforcement Official)

Despite how fast money is spent, Denver officials have been able to seize some assets. In one large escort services case, officials seized approximately \$1.8 million. However, in comparison to other forms of the UCSE, law enforcement has had more success seizing assets from massage parlors.

## **Erotic Massage Parlors and Brothels**

Denver officials have also uncovered sex trafficking and prostitution in massage parlors and brothels. As illustrated in figure 4.5, there has been some movement of erotic massage parlors in the Denver metropolitan area; however, there has been a minimal increase in the number overall, with the exception of a stark decrease in the Westminster Arvada area. Similar to other cities, massage parlors tend to be operated by Korean or Chinese individuals and brothels run by Latinos. The individuals sex trafficked or voluntarily working in prostitution in these establishments also tend to be Asian and Latina, respectively. Denver officials have not uncovered minors exploited at massage parlors. Typically, women working at massage parlors state that they are willingly involved and have not given any indication to law enforcement that they are trafficked. The fee structure for massage parlors in Denver is:

The massage parlors on our end, especially most of them are either Korean or Chinese. You still have the owner who's making a lot of money, but you have the girls making a lot of money too. The basic setup that we've seen here for the most part is the house keeps the door fee, the massage fee, and 40 for a half [an hour], 60 for an hour is the common rate, and the girls keep all their tip, so called tip money, prostitution money. If they're running 20 customers through the door a day at 60 bucks a customer, it's still pretty good money for the house. (Denver Law Enforcement Official)

Although officials acknowledged that massage parlors were more organized in other cities, they did not find them to be very organized in Denver. They found that many of the women working in massage parlors come from other cities, such as Seattle, Houston, and Dallas. However, they found that women move between massage parlors on their own accord, typically switching locations every three to four weeks:

But from the years I've been doing this, the girls<sup>50</sup> move on their own. All the places want fresh girls every three to four weeks it keeps the customer base going, and the girls they'll work three to four weeks, they'll make a bunch of money, they'll take a week off and then they'll get on the phone and call their friend who is in Houston who's getting ready to move somewhere else ... so the girls all network with each other, the working girls, and they also network with what's called the Korean taxis, the guys who pick them up at the airports. The girls are responsible for all their travel fare, they pay for all that ... it's an organized network but we're not seeing this organized crime with somebody at the top,

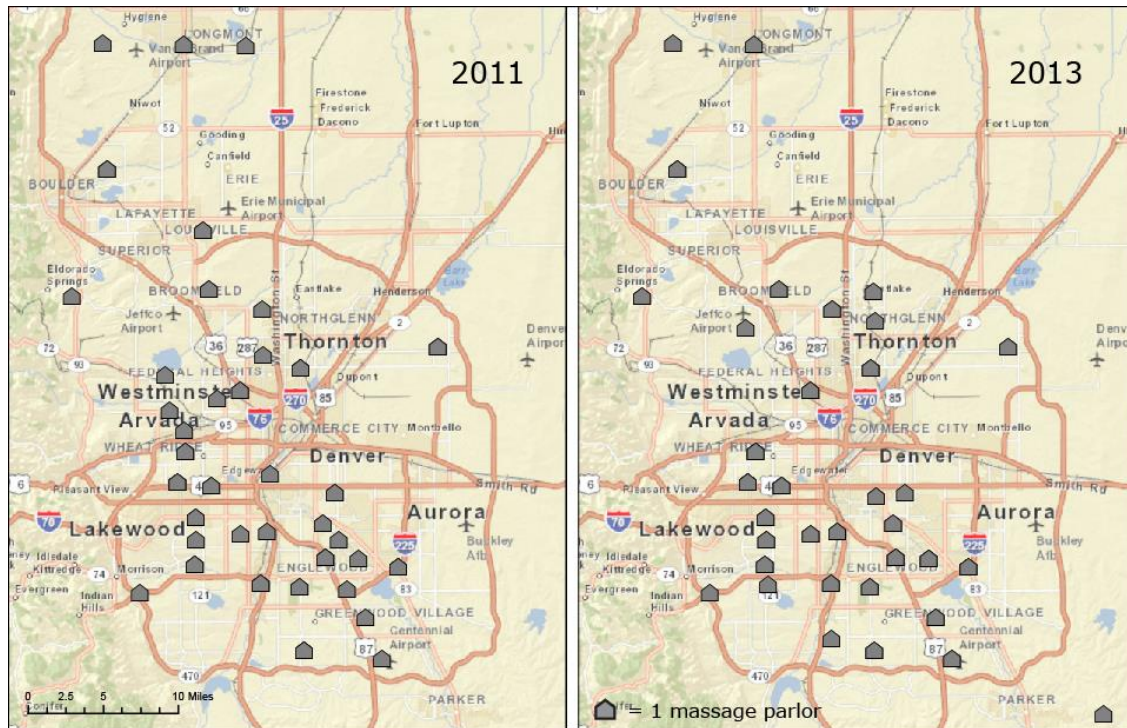
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<sup>50</sup> The research staff clarified that the term "girls" did not refer to minors, but to adults.

say you got five people at the top, and these five people at the top have say 5,000 massage parlors and this persons got five hits. It's not like that at all. (Denver Law Enforcement Official)

Investigators described how massage parlors make a great deal of money and know how to hide money well. According to law enforcement, during every raid, massage parlors typically have between \$3,000 to \$5,000 worth of cash on-site. The rest of the money is often found hidden in safety deposit boxes and other locations (e.g., a gym locker). One of the big massage parlor investigations conducted by Denver officials recovered approximately \$1.5 million in cash assets. As a sign of the amount of money generated, it is also common for individuals arrested through massage parlor stings to retain private lawyers.

**Figure 4.5 Erotic Massage Parlors in the Denver Metro**



Dozens of Latino brothels have been dismantled throughout Denver. Brothels advertise services through basic business cards with a phone number and fake name, which is passed out to Latino men. Relative to massage parlors, the brothels are highly mobile, sometimes changing locations every day.

## **Kansas City, Missouri**

Sixteen individuals were interviewed about the local underground commercial sex economy in Kansas City, Missouri. Representatives from the following agencies were interviewed: Kansas City Police Department (KCPD), the FBI, the Homeland Security Investigations (HSI, formerly ICE), the US Attorney's Office for Western Missouri, the US Postal Inspection Service (USPIS), and the Federal Public Defender's Office.

Unlike the other study sites, the underground commercial sex economy in Kansas City is not particularly diverse and consists mainly of street and Internet prostitution (see table 4.5). The majority of street prostitution consists of drug-addicted individuals; however, there are individuals who work both the street and Internet who are not drug-addicted. The main facilitators in the economy tend to be street and Internet pimps who recruit women and girls from similar disadvantaged backgrounds as their own. Because of the city's central location and the pair of major highways passing through (I-70 and I-35), authorities have long recognized that Kansas City is a major hub for drug trafficking. The KCPD hypothesized that for the same reason, the city is also an important location on sex trafficking circuits. In particular, authorities have seen cases connected to St. Louis, Indianapolis, and Minneapolis. Although massage parlors no longer seem to be present in Kansas City, they did exist in the city and were operated by Chinese nationals who wired proceeds to China. There seems to be little gang involvement in the UCSE market, which KCPD attributed to limited gang activity in the city.

**Table 4.5 Stakeholder Perceptions of the UCSE in Kansas City, MO**

Venue	Offender profile	Employee profile	Evidence of prostitution	Evidence of trafficking	Pricing	Open/Closed customer base	Customer profile	Link to gangs, drugs, weapons, or organized crime
Street and Internet	American-born pimps typically from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, with family members also involved in UCSE  Not highly organized	Women, pimp-controlled and non  Drug use differs between Internet and street, with crack cocaine and heroin use prevalent in street markets	X	X	Street: \$20 average charge for any service, in tandem with the cost of drugs  Internet: \$100–300/hr.	Open	Men of all races/ethnicities	Considered central city for underground economies—drugs and sex trafficking circuits. Connections to St. Louis, Indianapolis, and Minneapolis  Little gang activity
Erotic massage parlors	Chinese nationals, highly organized	Smuggled individuals from China	X		Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Links to organized crime in China

## Internet and Street

Similar to what was reported in the study sites, individuals involved in sex work on the street were also often advertised on the Internet. However, the main difference between those who worked only on the street versus those who worked both the street and Internet involved level of drug use. Kansas City is known as a transit city for a number of underground economies, especially drugs. There are a number of open air drug markets (mainly crack cocaine and heroin) in certain areas of the city, which is usually accompanied by street prostitution, particularly involving drug-addicted individuals. Although drug use is not exclusive to individuals working on the street, it is more prevalent among that population:

Most of the Internet based girls, I mean they'll use drugs too, but not to the extent that the street girls will use them, street girls are basically doing a trick to get a rock, they get high, when that high comes down, they'll do another trick to get another rock and it's basically just a vicious cycle. The other girls plan ahead a little bit more. (Kansas City Law Enforcement Official)

As for the going rate on the street for a sex act, those who are heavily addicted to drugs will charge an average of \$20 for anything. This would allow them to purchase a rock of crack cocaine, which has cost the same amount—\$20—for the last several decades. Additionally, women and girls that work on the street are more likely to be arrested by law enforcement for prostitution:

**Respondent:** We probably arrest, on average, 40 people a month [for prostitution].

**Interviewer:** And are most of them repeat?

**Respondent:** Most of the guys [pimps] are not repeat, most of the girls are. We can run the girls have 50, 60 priors for prostitution, we arrest them on the street. When we do hotel stings, it's usually less than that, you get a lot of priors but not as many as the street girls. (Kansas City Law Enforcement Official)

The Internet has brought the biggest changes to the Kansas City underground commercial sex economy. Advertisements used to be found solely in the local weekly newspaper; however, those ads have moved over to the Internet, as one law enforcement officer explained, "Obviously the biggest change is going to be printed advertisements versus computer. Secondly, chat rooms dovetail right off the computers and Backpage with the Internet ads. So that's been our biggest leap has just been the way they advertise and how they communicate with each other." Craigslist and Backpage are being used by out-of-town pimps and independent sex workers to post ads before traveling to Kansas City. This way they can have dates already arranged by the time they arrive in Kansas City.

As for those individuals who advertise, or are advertised by a pimp, on the Internet, prices are significantly higher than what is asked for on the street. Similar to the other cities in this study, Internet prices are by the hour, whereas street prices are typically by the sex act. Internet prices range from \$100 to \$300 per hour. They do not charge "escort agency prices" which can be upwards of \$1,000 per hour:

I want to say the prices are relatively the same. On the Backpage it's from, \$100 to \$300 for an hour but it's right around in there. But it's not really changed a whole lot lately. What we do also find is that since they're posting on the Internet, the Internet is a little more active with girls. Girls will get their own escort page that advertises them. There's chat rooms not just for the working girls but for the guys that visit the girls, the johns will go talk about the girls, that's a pretty good resource for us. I'm sure the guys that go there know that we frequent that also. But it's a big help for us—trying to locate where girls work or trying to figure out what activities they perform. A girl says I just do massages, we've got reviews that you do all this other stuff, it just kind of helps on the investigation. We see some of those things, add them to case files when we're submitting cases also. (Kansas City Law Enforcement Official)

Although law enforcement is aware of the prices that are charged on the streets and Internet, it is difficult for them to estimate the amount of money that is generated through the UCSE:

**Interviewer:** And, as far as money goes, and how money is generated particularly with some of these big escort agencies or pimps who work a number of girls, do you track the amount of money that they are making, and how so?

**Respondent:** We haven't. We haven't done that. That's not a bad idea to be able to do; I don't know how we would do it because everything is cash. (Kansas City Law Enforcement Official)

Another law enforcement official stated, "Our only purpose with money is to document the relationship between a girl and a pimp; we don't use money for anything else."

American-born pimps are the primary facilitators in the Kansas City underground commercial sex economy. According to stakeholders, pimps typically come from "economically disadvantaged background" and few have graduated high school. In many cases, they have other family members who are involved in the UCSE. They look for ways to improve their financial situation, whether it be selling drugs or selling women and girls. However, as one law enforcement officer explained, you can't determine if someone is a pimp or trafficker just by looking at them:

You can't just say, you can't look at someone and say, this person is going to be a trafficker. It's not this one prosecutor has this slideshow and it shows the prototypical pimp and shows that "This is not what we're looking for." It's ranged from just a middle aged man who drove trucks for FedEx to the pimp on the street that's running several girls. (Kansas City Law Enforcement Official)

Even for those individuals who are not being exploited by a pimp, the Internet serves as a recruitment tool for pimps. They will scour advertisements on sites like Craigslist and Backpage, looking for women and girls who might be working independently or looking to "choose up":

When we place advertisements on Craigslist where we pose as a prostitute and have guys come to us—we have had times where we get random text messages from individuals seeing our ad and trying to recruit us into their agency or whatever. Guys are kind of reaching out which means they're trying to make contact. (Kansas City Law Enforcement Official)

Pimps from Kansas City will on average have three girls in his "stable." The women and girls that they recruit tend to be "very disadvantaged and very traumatized" and can experience physical, verbal, and/or psychological abuse from their exploiter. However, in the case where an adult is working for a pimp, several stakeholders pointed out that it can be difficult to determine, or in many cases prove, exploitation. These women often have the physical freedom to leave their pimp and benefit from the money they make. They have access to drugs and alcohol, and are able to have their hair and nails done and go shopping regularly. As one public defender explains,

Trafficking kind of evokes this idea of someone that's a prisoner that's kept in the basement somewhere and can't speak English, has no contact. Most of the cases we would have that have involved human trafficking, they're not confined. I mean, they may be, they may be controlled or manipulated or physically threatened by the people that are influencing them or persuading them to do this type of thing. But it would not be accurate to say that they didn't have connections to society, to other people, to family and friends. (Kansas City Public Defender)

Even with a small operation of one to three employees, pimps can make a lot of money. Other than spending their money on operational costs, such as hotels/motels rooms, and making sure their "employees" are presentable, pimps spend most of their money on "jewelry, liquor, and crack." Although most pimps do not keep detailed records of their earnings and expenses, law enforcement has found that some women and girls maintain charts on their customers, which document the number and types of transactions.



Pimps have always been mobile, moving from city to city looking for ways to increase their profit margins. Because of Kansas City's central location and the pair of major highways passing through (I-70 and I-35), it is often a stop on the Midwest pimp circuit. According to law enforcement, the cities that make up this circuit include: Minneapolis, St. Louis, Las Vegas, Houston, Indianapolis, San Diego, and Des Moines. With the advent of the Internet, pimps are able to take the "temperature" of a city before traveling there—by posting online ads prior to arrival—in order to determine the level of demand.

Despite pimps' ability to recruit women and girls and find new ways to increase their profits, stakeholders did not find pimps in Kansas City to be highly organized. Their businesses lacked structure and tended to be small operations. As one prosecutor stated, "Any hoodlum can get some girls, sell some girls, sell some drugs; when you're looking at international trafficking, it necessitates more organization." She went on to say, "For the most part, international cases are organized crime (with ethnic connections or family connections), domestic cases are just organized thugs (with networks that came from drug and gun trafficking)."

## **Erotic Massage Parlors**

Unlike most of the other study sites, law enforcement reported that there was very little massage parlor activity in Kansas City. Figure 4.6 illustrates this point and even shows a decrease in the number of parlors from 2011 to 2013. As one law enforcement officer stated,

We don't have any [massage parlors], when I first started here, we had a couple of those here, but we got rid of them, they moved across state lines which we're not too upset about ... we don't have any massage parlors that are in Kansas City, that we're aware of right now. (Kansas City Law Enforcement Official)

Previously, highly organized erotic massage parlors—typically run by Chinese nationals—did exist within city limits. As a law enforcement officer explained, those who ended up working in an erotic massage parlor would begin their journey in China. They would employ the assistance of a "snakehead," who would smuggle Chinese nationals out of China to one of several countries, specifically Panama, Guatemala, and Mexico. The smuggled individuals would move from one country to another until they arrived in the United States. By the time they reached the United States, several months passed in which they would have accrued a debt of approximately \$50,000 per person. Since an individual's family often times would have only raised about \$5,000 to fund the trip, the individual would be in debt to the snakehead for \$45,000. At this point, the snakehead would sell the individual to a "business owner" for \$45,000. The individual might be directed into prostitution or a sweatshop and might also be sent to other parts of the country, including Kansas City. For those smuggled through a snakehead, the snakehead knows their family. If the smuggled individual testified against the snakehead, their whole family would be blacklisted and no snakehead would ever help their family come to the United States again.

Several years ago, a massage parlor case was prosecuted in Kansas City that took two years to investigate and one year to prosecute. Authorities seized \$80,000 in the case; however, stated that the "big money" disappeared, as the massage parlor owners sent the money back to China using Western Union. But as one law enforcement officer noted, "One could calculate the money generated through condom counts." When discussing the challenges to investigating massage parlors, the same law enforcement officer went on to say, "Often you'll bust a girl in a massage parlor for prostitution and the manager will say "she wasn't supposed to do that "and instead of a massage parlor case, you now have just a single girl in a prostitution case."

2011

2013

0 5 10 20 Miles

1 house icon = 1 massage parlor

## San Diego, California

Eighteen individuals were interviewed about the local underground commercial sex economy in San Diego, California. Representatives from the following agencies were interviewed: San Diego County Sheriff's Office, the FBI, the Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the San Diego County Attorney's Office, the US Postal Inspection Service (USPIS), the Internal Revenue Service, and the San Diego Police Department.

The underground commercial sex economy in San Diego includes street and online prostitution, residential brothels, massage parlors, and escort services (see table 4.6). Gangs dominate street and online markets, particularly African American gangs and hybrid gangs. There is clear evidence that these gangs are involved in sex trafficking rings that span several cities. Visible street prostitution ebbs and flows across the county and surrounding regions, depending on online demand and law enforcement presence. More sophisticated UCSE operations gather crude information on local demand via the Internet. Such operations do not limit themselves to the San Diego area or even California. The cities most commonly cited as connected to San Diego's UCSE were Phoenix, Seattle, and Las Vegas. Massage parlors and migrant camp brothels have proven most difficult to infiltrate because of the highly structured nature of these enterprises and the foreign language barrier; however, they are believed to be hierarchical and run like a large criminal enterprise, with individuals assuming different roles within the hierarchy.

Although stakeholders mentioned men and boys who trade sex in San Diego, they knew very little about that market and their overall involvement in the UCSE. Stakeholders are aware that the UCSE is thriving in San Diego, but it is difficult to determine its size:

I think we're kinda like the Titanic. We see the iceberg, but we really have no idea how big it is under the surface because we're just seeing the top of it and we're getting our feet wet with it, but it's just spawning off into so many things from the tips to just the prostitution.  
(San Diego Law Enforcement Official)

**Table 4.6 Stakeholder Perceptions of the UCSE in San Diego, CA**

Venue	Offender profile	Employee profile	Evidence of prostitution	Evidence of trafficking	Pricing	Open/ Closed customer base	Customer profile	Link to gangs, drugs, weapons, or organized crime
Street and internet	African American males age 16–22, estimated 50% involved in gangs	Vulnerable women and girls from disadvantaged backgrounds; pimp-controlled and non  Estimated 80% adult and 20% juveniles	X	X	Street: \$40/hand job \$60–80/oral sex \$80–120/“full service” Internet: Avg. \$120–140/half-hr. and \$200/hr.	Open	Men of all races/ethnicities  Military men are common	Extremely connected to local gangs, estimated 50% of pimps are gang-involved. Circuit includes Anaheim, Orange County, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and Phoenix Larger circuit includes Seattle, Alaska, San Antonio, Dallas, Houston, Chicago, Miami, and Atlanta
Escort services	Independent operators, mainly women	“Higher class” women	X		\$150–500 to show up, plus additional several hundred to several thousand for sex acts.  60–40 or 80–20 split between girl and escort agency	Open	Men of all races/ethnicities  Wealthier men are common	
Erotic massage parlors	Asians, primarily Chinese	Primarily Asian women, licensed massage therapists	X	No, but law enforcement suspect there is	\$60 house fee for nonsexual massage, \$50 of which goes to house.  Worker keeps \$10, tips, and what they earn through sexual acts.  \$60–120 per sex act	Open	Men of all races/ethnicities	Evidence that Asian massage parlors are run by large criminal organization throughout the United States and other countries, originating from China
Brothels, including migrant camp brothels	Latino men	Hispanic females	X	No, but law enforcement suspect there is	\$20–80 cash for variety of sex acts	Closed	Hispanic men, typically migrant workers	Criminal enterprises throughout Mexico and Central and South America

## Street and Internet

Similar to the other cities in this study, street and online sex work are the most prevalent and visible venues within the UCSE in San Diego.<sup>51</sup> These venues contain pimp-controlled and non-pimp-controlled individuals. Whereas street prostitution was the primary venue just five or six years ago, the Internet changed the entire UCSE landscape in San Diego. As one law enforcement officer stated, “I think that [the Internet] is the driver as to why this is becoming such a huge issue, because there’s probably only five places where you have street walkers in San Diego, maybe five or six that we actually have street prostitution and they’re very limited in areas.” The sex work conducted between the street and online remains fluid. Law enforcement noted that Internet ads might be high one moment and then, all of the sudden, there are bursts of activity on the “blade.”<sup>52</sup>

Pimps are believed to feel safer posting ads online, as opposed to having their women and girls working the street. In-calls were considered the safest method since the john has to come to the sex workers. Out-calls used to be more popular; however, law enforcement commonly conducted out-call stings, where the sex worker would come to them. Due to this, pimps eventually learned not to send women on out-calls. However, as law enforcement continues to implement new tactics, pimps continue to adapt:

And they’ve adapted which is really kind of the most interesting part of it is that when we first started doing this, we could [conduct] out-calls where girls would come to us and we would set up car dates where we would meet them and do car dates and it was just a dime a dozen and we couldn’t do ‘em fast enough because we would line up so many dates and then after about a year of doing that, we got to where we couldn’t get a girl to come out for a date. They adapted to the tactics that we were doing, they knew what to look for. They had already been doing a lot of counter surveillance with us anyway, but now they completely changed their M.O., as far as they would only go to very nice hotels. We would get a hotel room, we couldn’t get anybody to come or before we could almost line ‘em up and so it was very interesting to see how they adapted to our tactics and what we were doing and we had to change things. (San Diego Law Enforcement Official)

Law enforcement has come to rely on certain websites, such as Craigslist and Backpage, to help identify women and girls who may be trafficked. Scouring these websites requires little manpower and resources to find individuals who might be underage or pimp-controlled. Several stakeholders felt that shutting down the “Adult Encounters” section of Craigslist made their jobs more difficult:

Getting rid of Craigslist.com was actually a disservice to law enforcement because they were cooperating. They are a legitimate business but they just have this illegitimate side. So they were cooperating with us in many ways and when they went away it is kind of like the hydra, when we took one away five more popped up. (Federal Law Enforcement Official)

I know that there’s a lot of talk in trying to shut down Backpage and that kind of stuff. I’m actually against that ‘cause if you shut down Backpage, you shut down those things that we use, it’ll only go further underground. If it went completely underground, we would never find it and Backpage, at least we can continue to target it. ... and if you do that, if you shut it down, it’ll only go further underground. (San Diego Law Enforcement Official)

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<sup>51</sup> Due to the size and complexity of the street and online markets, this section will include sub-headings. Most of the sub-sections will focus on pimps and their business structures.

<sup>52</sup> A public location where sex workers congregate and solicit clients.

Similar to other study sites, prices are different than prices. The typical street pricing structure—which is consistent from San Diego city to Northern San Diego County—is \$40 for a hand job, \$60 to \$80 for oral sex, and \$80 to \$120 for sex. For dates arranged online, \$120 to \$140 is charged per half-hour and \$200 is charged per hour. Most individuals will only accept cash and an average of eight to ten clients are seen in a day. Despite the relative consistency of prices over the last couple of years, the downturn in the economy has forced some sex workers to drop their prices and offer \$80 or \$100 “specials”:

[They would typically make] \$500–1,000 a day ... Well, the recession or rather the economy has affected that. Even when I first started working ...in January of 2010 the going rate, for instance, [oral sex] was \$6080 and sex was \$100 or so. This is for a street walker, not for an in-call or an out-call. Now, in 2011, just one year later guys were asking me for full sex for \$40 and [oral sex] for \$20. They are much more willing to negotiate down. And it is a free market economy, if they are not getting the money they are obviously going to get out of the car and go to the next guy. (San Diego Law Enforcement Official)

Despite the thousands of dollars that are made in a week, there are operational costs associated with the business. These costs include hotels/motels, food, rental cars, gas, clothes, and hair and nails expenses. In one case, a pimp paid a hotel \$24,000. Pimps often “pamper” the women and girls that work for them by buying them designer purses and weekly manicures and pedicures. This would help boost their self-esteem, but was a tactic used by pimps to prepare the women and girls for their next date as well as manipulate them to continue to work for them.

Women and girls who worked for pimps were sometimes required to meet a quota between \$500 to \$1,000 every night. Pimp-controlled women and girls are forced to hand all earnings over to their pimp. Some might get a daily allowance of \$80 to \$100 to cover their hotel room and food for the day. It was up to the women and girls to budget accordingly. For those who do not get an allowance, they are at the mercy of the pimp, even when it comes to being fed:

We had one girl that we arrested that all she begged for was to get a cheeseburger and so we actually ended up driving over to McDonald’s and getting her a cheeseburger, but yet she’s carrying around a couple hundred dollars in her pocket ... it’s not her money. (San Diego Law Enforcement Official)

Of the eight study sites, San Diego has uncovered the most amount of gang involvement in the underground commercial sex economy. Unlike other study sites, there is less generational, long-term pimping and larger number of African American males ages 16 to 22 who “fall into” the lifestyle or get involved through friends. Law enforcement found that the majority of these young men are gang-involved, specifically with the Bloods and Crips, and use their networks in school and in the community to recruit girls, often their classmates:

On the street, that is where you are going to find 95 percent of your underage girls. This is because it is the younger pimps that are going out and getting them anyway so you will find a lot of pimps that are either still in high school, of high school age or just out of high school. They are involved in the gangs and they are the ones going and recruiting the girls. They are recruiting the girls straight out of school. They either know them or they go to a place where the girls hang out, they go to the malls, beaches, anywhere you think the young girls are going to congregate. (Federal Law Enforcement Official)

Stakeholders do not believe that these pimps are pedophiles just because they are pimping juveniles. Rather they are opportunists and view their underage female classmates as their way to make money with minimal risk. Since these young males are often gang involved, this is one of the reasons why gang involvement in the UCSE has proliferated over the years.

Law enforcement has encountered more Bloods pimping girls than Crips. According to one San Diego law enforcement agency, only 25 percent of the persons that they arrested for pimping were documented gang members. However, they believed the statistic should be closer to 80 percent, since many young men wear gang colors, are involved in violent acts, and make statements that they are gang members. Because they

are not documented by the police as being part of a gang, they cannot be referred to as a documented gang member.

If a pimp is gang-affiliated, this will not stop him from partnering with someone from a rival gang to maximize profits. In these situations, gang turf wars are put aside to capitalize on demand:

I am going to give you a little pimping 101. So you have your lower end stuff and we call them “sneaker pimps” or “gorilla pimps.” Different pimps are out there and they are on the lower end, they are hustling. A lot of them will be gang members or gang associates. Whereas pimping and prostitution used to be looked at, in my opinion, as a crime of opportunity ... it has always been in the black community just because that is one of the crimes that is kind of handed off from generation to generation that they would be involved with. And now, instead of being a crime of opportunity it is being looked at by organized and documented street gangs as a guaranteed money maker. I think the street gangs always have to some degree dabbled in it, but now they are really looking at it as a financial base to bankroll other criminal activity. Another thing about “the blade” is that it is considered ... it is for making money. It is not about bringing in your gang beefs and getting into a gang fight and flashing your colors. That is the unwritten rule, that you do not bring that stuff with you. When you do, obviously law enforcement will respond and then nobody is making any money. I equate it to the free trade zone or the DMZ or whatever, when you get there it is about making money. You see very few instances where you see gang on gang crime going on, but it has happened. I have talked to people after it has happened and they have literally been like, “That stupid so and so, what is he doing? We are here to make money, this isn’t about this” ... We have seen gang members who would normally be at each other’s throats or arch enemies. I am not saying that they are holding hands but they are not ... if they were slinging dope on a corner it is not the same dynamics that you have going on. (Federal Law Enforcement Official)

The gang situation described above is known as “hybrid gangs,” which are gangs configured solely for the purpose of pimping and often include members from enemy gangs. There are a few different kinds of hybrid gangs that vary in their member make-up:

Some are straight gang members: PHD, Pimpin’ Hoes Daily. That gang started in a high school here, solely for pimping. It evolved as more hierarchical, and the pimping got extraordinarily violent. It developed into a criminal street gang. More worrisome is the hybrid gang that brings in different and sometimes conflicting sects, from: MOB: Money Over Bitches; LFD: Love ‘em, Fuck ‘em, Dump ‘em ... They’re devoted to pimping. They were shooting at each other, and now they’re working together to traffic. (San Diego Prosecutor)

Law enforcement officials also explained how responsibilities were divvied up within a gang, where often one person would run the entire operation, which includes drug and weapon sales and sex work:

The gangs often run their underground commercial sex business like a pyramid scheme. You have a person at the top and he hires two people underneath him who hire two underneath them and so forth. This way the person at the top is removed from the day-to-day operations. Then, the individuals who are doing the actual pimping will kick money back to the main leader of the gang. Often times, the proceeds from pimping are used to fund other criminal enterprises, such as guns and narcotics.

The older guys within the gang will have a lot more prostitutes that work for them. They’re on a larger scale. They try to cleanse themselves of the actual day to day operations so they’ll have people underneath them running the girls or doing the driving of the girls to the different johns. The rest were getting of the 18, 19, 20 year-old gang members, each one of them had one girl to operate so they would drive them themselves and probably like with most groups or clubs or gangs, everybody has their own specialty and some guys just don’t have enough guts to go out there and do robberies or do drive-by shootings or do things that are the violent part of the street gangs and they have to

produce money for their operation of the gang, so they choose to get on the pimping. (San Diego Law Enforcement Official)

The members from the enemy gang sects don't necessarily share money (the individual pimp keeps the proceeds from whoever works for him), but they do look out for one another, provide back-up, use each other's girls for enforcement, and share travel expenses when traveling. They also trade girls to switch up the "merchandise." It is unlikely that one would see other crimes, such as robbery, being run the same way. As one local law enforcement officer explained,

When you talk about the pimps being from different gangs and coming together to try and work a girl or put girls out on the street, they are not doing so much for their gang issues but they are doing it because it is a monetary business. They are doing it for the money whereas you do not see different gang members getting together to do a robbery. That is a gang issue; they look at it totally different. But when they are working the girls it is kind of a common thing. They say, "Hey, this is a business man. You watch my girl when I am not here and I will watch yours when you are not here on the street." And that is how they look at it. So you do not see too much of the crossover on the other crimes with the pimps, at least I have not seen that. They come together mostly to put girls out on the street and run it as a business. Any other crimes that are associated with the gangs we do not really see that. (San Diego Law Enforcement Official)

The majority of the gangs involved in the underground commercial sex economy are African American gangs, such as the Bloods and Crips. Rarely has law enforcement in San Diego found Hispanic gangs involved in the UCSE. A main reason is that culturally, it is taboo to sexually assault or "make money off of your women and girls." Additionally, they are heavily involved in drug and weapons trafficking:

The majority of our drug trafficking and weapons trafficking deal with Hispanic street gangs and cartel and then they distribute it out to everybody else. With the prostitution and the human trafficking, it's predominantly black gangs. Hispanics, it's kind of I know it's going to occur, but generally it's sex trafficking, rapes, things like that are taboo within the Hispanic street gangs as the rules put for them by the prison gangs because the prison gangs dictate to the street gangs the rules. (San Diego Law Enforcement Official)

The women and girls that pimps in San Diego generally target are similar to those in the other study sites: vulnerable women and girls from disadvantaged backgrounds. Law enforcement estimated that 80 percent of the women involved in the UCSE are adults and 20 percent are juveniles. One local law enforcement officer stated, "Most of our profile girls are in a foster home, have low self-esteem and in many cases are in special education. But we do have the other end of the spectrum; we do get those cases periodically." The girls on the other end of the spectrum are often defiant of their home life and looking for to make their own choices. They are not necessarily getting involved with a pimp to make money, but rather looking for love and protection.

As stated earlier, pimps in San Diego—particularly young ones—target schools, malls and anywhere else teenage girls socialize, including continuation schools:<sup>53</sup>

We have a lot of continuation schools. Unfortunately, that is the breeding grounds for these girls. They're the ones that are from your environments where they're going to get recruited from and a lot of the guys that are in these schools are placed there by probation 'cause they've been arrested for several things and they're trying to get caught up so they can graduate later or get enough credits to graduate and they're getting numbers so they're recruiting those girls right out of continuation school. (San Diego Law Enforcement Official)

On average, San Diego pimps have two to three girls working for them. Law enforcement has found that they often prefer white girls, since they are able to make more money. When recruiting girls, they do not

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<sup>53</sup> Continuation schools are alternatives to more formal, comprehensive schools. They typically serve at-risk youth, and in some cases, classes are held in the evening to accommodate work schedules.



always look for the most vulnerable. They sometimes look for a challenge. As one federal law enforcement officer explained, “Just like we have that term: using the toolbox. You use that to go at this target or whatever but they have a toolbox and they look at every girl differently and they go, “What am I going to use on her?” They will be the boyfriend, the father figure, the lover or whatever to get what they want.”

Pimps, particularly those involved in a gang, may brand a girl to visually show ownership over her. One local law enforcement officer described the process:

A lot of times you know the area because the girls are branded. They’ll have the guy’s name and it won’t be like on their arm, it’ll be lower back, it’ll be groin area, on their side so that way when they’re having sex or when they get naked, the customer knows exactly who she belongs to in case another gang member is involved. They know exactly who the guy is and it could be the guy’s flame or it could be the guy’s street mark. (San Diego Law Enforcement Official)

Due to the common misconception that pimps feed drugs to their employees to make them compliant and dependent, stakeholders in San Diego were surprised to learn this was not the case. A pimp may party with his girls as part of the grooming process, but once the girls start working for him, he makes sure his “merchandise” is clean and sober. The only drugs stakeholders have to be commonly given to sex workers are ecstasy and marijuana. As one local prosecutor stated,

Typically, most pimps don’t want girls on drugs or alcohol. Everyone thinks they’re drug addicts. A pimp has to trust a girl. If he thinks she’s gonna use it for smack, it’s a liability. He has to trust that the money will come back to him. (San Diego Law Enforcement Official)

Since most of the women working the streets are now pimp-controlled and not allowed to abuse drugs, law enforcement has seen a decrease in the number of drug-addicted sex workers.

Physical abuse is used by pimps to keep a girl “in pocket.” However, they are careful about where they inflict abuse so that the bruises, scratches, and cuts can easily be covered:

Probably half the girls we get have bruises. Usually not on the face, because that’s where everybody sees, but they’ll be marks on their arms and legs and you can tell where they’ve been hit or they’ve been grabbed so it’s gonna be either by the john or by the pimp, more so probably by the pimp. (San Diego Law Enforcement Official)

Pimps also have bottoms physically discipline other women and girls so that they cannot be directly linked to the abuse and are seen as the “good cop,” thereby keeping girls from leaving by using more psychological manipulation.

As law enforcement noted in other cities and was echoed in San Diego as well, men purchasing sex are not preferential offenders (i.e. pedophiles). Additionally, pimps are not advertising girls as underage, nor are they marketing them on the street to pedophiles. San Diego does have a unique customer base: military men. With a large concentration of men with money to spend, military bases provide high demand for the underground commercial sex market:

There’s some military housing or whatever military bases down in south San Diego where they’ll order up the prostitute, they’ll go to military housing, they’ll negotiate with the sailor and tell him that if you give me your apartment for the week, I’ll give you unlimited sex then I’ll give you some money kickback so then the girls start operating out of there selling to all their Navy guys so then it’s on the bases now. (San Diego Law Enforcement Official)

The circuit most often used by pimps in San Diego includes: Anaheim, Orange County, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and, most recently, Phoenix. A larger circuit includes: Seattle, Alaska, San Antonio, Dallas, Houston, Chicago, Miami, and Atlanta. However, law enforcement has seen an increase in the number of arrests of women and girls from the San Diego area. There are many reasons why pimps work a circuit, ranging from an increased law enforcement presence to a big event occurring in another city (e.g. boxing matches in Las Vegas). As one local law enforcement officer explained,

They [pimps] do not like to stay put for too long because then they get known by the police. They also do not want the girls to establish relationships, friendships and all that so they have to keep on the move. (San Diego Law Enforcement Official)

Pimps will also test the demand in other cities by posting ads prior to their arrival. One local law enforcement official noted,

I've had it where they'll test run some place. They'll post somewhere, say Arizona, they'll post a picture of their girl and they'll see how many hits they get off of that, and depending on how many hits they get, they will decide whether they are going to make the trip out there or not, whether it's going to be worth their while. (San Diego Law Enforcement Official)

Motels and hotels play a key role in the UCSE, and establishing good relationships with motel and hotel operators in a pimp's hometown, as well as within the cities that he often travels to, is considered a good business strategy. Some motel and hotel operators in San Diego have been found to be complicit in underground commercial sex activities occurring on their premises. Pimps target certain types of motels, particularly ones with outside room entrances, so that front desk staff cannot easily monitor their guests. Some hotel operators are not always able or willing to oversee the front desk staff, who might be receiving money from the pimp to keep quiet:

A lot of the hotel operators, we will tell them that it is your discretion and a lot of them will tell them that they are out of there, they will kick them out. But there are a certain number of hotels that will not and they know it, so they will use those hotels because of that. That is kind of the deal with those hotels ...And the people that are sitting behind the counter are not the people that own the hotels so there is some insulation there. Their job is just to rent rooms and they do not get anything from alienating customers so it is a difficult situation there. (San Diego Law Enforcement Official)

Whereas lower end hotels and motels does not always cooperate with law enforcement, higher-end hotels are more willing and eager to assist with investigations:

The higher-end places I think are more interested in keeping a clean atmosphere. Whereas the lower end places, if you were to remove all prostitution from their place they would go broke. That is their main customer. You have that different thing. Most the time the nicer hotels we go and talk to are very interested in what we have to say. They do not want any drama going on. They do not want the family from Nebraska to see Sea World have their room next to some craziness going on. So they are happy to cooperate with us. (San Diego Law Enforcement Official)

Although San Diego pimps do not tend to be as organized as Asian massage parlors and Latino brothels (see following sections for more details), they do maintain a certain level of business savvy and acumen. They try to keep a certain amount of distance from the day-to-day activities, do not keep a paper trail (although many girls are found to keep daily earnings ledgers), and do not place any assets in their name. Pimps who violate these rules, or do not know these rules, are the ones typically get caught by law enforcement:

They are so disconnected from the girl and she is just so loyal to him and trained not to speak about it or talk to us ... they will not even mention that they have a pimp and we will not even know that one exists, they will just give them the money. Those are the guys that are almost impossible to get because you are not going to have witnesses against them or have them physically involved in the actual acts. Those are the guys that know what they are doing. They know not to use phones in their name, they know not to use

hotels in their name ... they have everything complete disassociated from them except for when the girl hands them the money. So like I was saying, a lot of the guys that we get are the ones that slip up because the hotel was in their name, the cell phone is in their name, there is messaging between the pimp and the girl. A lot of the guys will train their girl to dump all the messages or erase them as they get them, the guy will not have any messages on his phone or the phone will be locked ... It is tough for us to get into phones that are locked like that. So you are getting the guys that are kind of the lower end and are just getting into and do not really know what they are doing. (San Diego Law Enforcement Official)

Although stakeholders stated that most pimps blow their money on cars, jewelry, and partying, some pimps will also invest in more legitimate businesses. As one federal law enforcement officer noted, “They do try and invest in some other things, in quasi-legit things. Some do the organized crime thing where you make your money from your base criminal activity and then you flip and that is how they are laundering their money ... record labels are big.” In order to operate at a level with investments, wire transfers, and deposits, pimps must have a thought-out plan.

One of the biggest changes to San Diego’s UCSE is the use of refillable cash cards (the most common one being Green Dot cards) to make purchases, including online advertisements, hotels/motels, and gas. They are considered to be cash on hand and are not traceable—there is no deposit that can be traced. As one federal law enforcement official explained, “You can subpoena Green Dot and see what was purchased and [for] how much money, but the money could be gone by the time you hang up the phone. But, at least you have historical information.”

## **Escort Services**

Stakeholders did not mention much about escort services in the San Diego area except that they do exist and often bring in a lot of money. The women that work for escort services are considered a “higher class” than those who work on the street or post ads online. They charge from \$150 to \$500 to show up, and then charge an additional several hundred to several thousand to perform a variety of sex acts. There is usually a 60-40, or in some cases an 80-20, split between the girl and the agency. Escorts can make up to \$10,000 in one week for five to six dates and upwards of six figures in a year. They often receive gifts from their clients which include cars, jewelry, apartments, and houses.

Unlike most other venues within the UCSE, with the exception of massage parlors, escort services accept credit cards and provide a receipt for services rendered. Some escort services are known to run scams and charge the client for anything and everything, from kissing to groping to showering. As one law enforcement officer explained, “They’re running scams, escort scams ... a lot of them come in the room with a credit card swiper, they have it right there with them. Of course, most of your new iPhones can do it, so they have the app where they can just do it right over their phone.”

Escort services owners are very careful and thoughtful in their business structure, investments, and business practices in order to evade law enforcement. They invest in shell companies or real estate; as one stakeholder stated, “You will see true, well-thought-out money laundering.” In order to evade law enforcement detection, they run counter-surveillance. As one law enforcement officer explained, “They look up a name on the Internet, they actually have a website called ‘rate a cop.’”

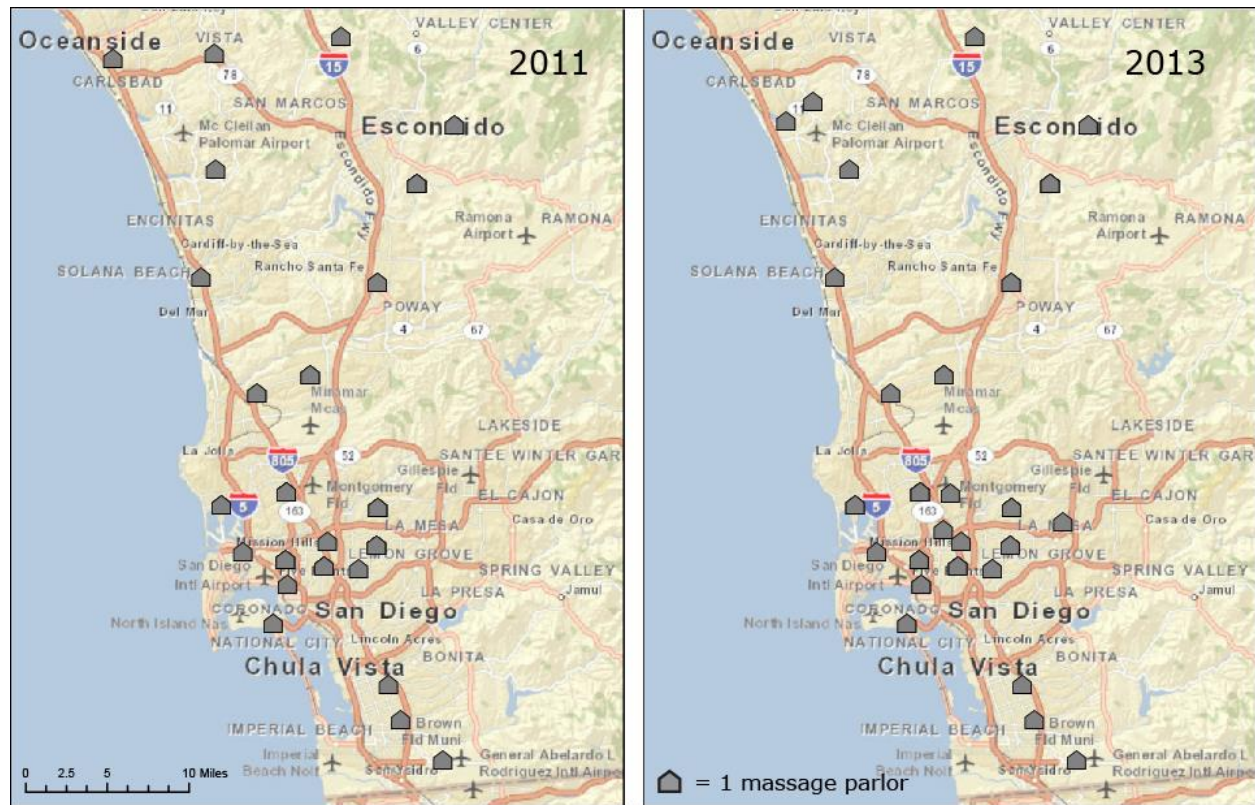
## **Erotic Massage Parlors**

Massage parlors were cited as one of the primary venues for UCSE activity in San Diego. Similar to the other cities in this study, massage parlors were primarily run by Asians and highly organized. As figure 4.7 illustrates, very little changed in San Diego from 2011 to 2013, with the exception of a slight increase in the number of massage parlors in the Mission Hill area. Those working inside massage parlors are commonly Asian women. Most women who work in San Diego massage parlors are licensed massage therapists with licenses from an accredited school in the Los Angeles area. There is also the option of purchasing black market licenses which allow individuals, or massage parlor owners, to circumvent the time-consuming licensure process. As one law enforcement officer explained, “If you don’t want to go to the six to eight months of school, whatever it takes, to get your [license], because it’s 500 hours now,

where it was four [hundred], you can pay me \$1,500 and I'll hand you your massage license right over the counter."

Asian massage parlors are typically located in commercial zones in San Diego and charge a \$60 house fee for a one-hour, "non-sexual" massage. Women working in the parlor keep \$10 of the \$60 and any additional tips. The massage parlor manager, commonly referred to as the "mama-san," teaches the women how to earn larger tips, which often involves trading sexual acts. Women usually work 12 to 14 hours a day. If workers only earn \$10 per hour for a non-sexual massage, their maximum daily earnings would be between \$120 and \$140. One law enforcement official stated the charge per sex act "anywhere from \$60 to \$120 dollars. And that would be, excuse me, for a hand job. So if you did 'full service' it would probably run you a couple hundred, 300 dollars" (San Diego Law Enforcement).

**Figure 4.7 Erotic Massage Parlors in the San Diego Metro Area**



Law enforcement has evidence that the Asian massage parlors are run by a large criminal organization that spans the United States and other countries, with the money trail leading back to China. The organization involves a multitude of players ranging from the individual creating false documents (e.g. visas, licenses, etc.) to the acupuncturist or masseuse leasing out his or her name to the massage parlor:

I interviewed one guy and he said it to me this way, he described it as a pyramid. On the top, for this particular one, on the top is this guy. I think they said he owned like six or seven massage parlors himself. And then they referred to it as "I'm in contract with this guy." So he's in contract with the pyramid for two or three stores, and this guy over here is in contract with the pyramid holder for one or two stores and on down the line. So the original pyramid guy may own six or seven stores of his own, but with contract with all these other people, maybe 15 stores that he is getting a cut out of. And then you have your acupuncturist, who will go and sell their name for \$400 bucks a month or so, for them to use to use their acupuncturist name on their license in the business, because those are ways of getting around massage rules and regulations for actual massage parlors, for certain things and rules they have to follow. But being an acupuncturist they are

eliminated from having to follow a lot of those rules, so a little money here, a little money there. (San Diego Law Enforcement Official)

There are many different ways in which women find themselves working in an Asian massage parlor. Some are smuggled in through Mexico or Canada, while others might enter on a legitimate visa (e.g. J-1 or H2-B). They often incur a debt that they need to pay back to either a snakehead (Chinese migrant smugglers) or sponsor. Many Asian women (“95 to 98 percent”) that one particular law enforcement department encountered through their massage parlor investigations traveled from China to Las Vegas and married an American man within three months of their arrival. Soon after, they traveled to Los Angeles, registered at a massage school, and started working in a massage parlor. According to a law enforcement officer, “Ninety percent of the identification they show us is a photocopy of their ID. They don’t have their passports, they could have passports but they don’t have them, but they’ll have a photocopy of wherever it came from. We will ask, ‘Where’s your real ID?’ ‘Well, my husband’s got it.’ It’s always, ‘My husband has it’ or ‘It’s at home.’”

There is some dissension within the various stakeholder agencies interviewed for this study as to whether the women who work in the massage parlors are trafficked or voluntarily trading sex. The following are the views expressed by two law enforcement agencies:

**Interviewer:** And as far as the Asian massage parlors?

**Respondent 1:** Just that 99.9 percent of them are straight prostitution.

**Respondent 2:** The question becomes, the true human trafficking sort of case ... those are not as common or as out in the open as just straight up prostitution. A lot of the prostitution cases and a lot of what we consider human trafficking are because it is an underage girl. But in a lot of those cases the girls sort of find themselves in it because they sort of willingly go into it. That is not true in all cases but it’s the culture or rather the urban culture. (Federal Law Enforcement Official)

We didn’t as a task force, we didn’t do a lot of massage parlor work and the reasoning is that it’s kinda weird when you think about it is that it comes down to funding. We had x amount of dollars to go around and with the massage parlors, they’re almost all Asian victims, many of which come from very remote areas in the Asian world and we couldn’t even find translators that spoke the dialect from the village they were from. So without being able to communicate, how can I really interview you and identify you as a victim? And so the details didn’t produce us anything other than just a prostitution arrest. That’s really not what the goal of our task force was, it’s not a prostitution arrest, we’re after a) rescuing a victim and b) getting the pimp ... they were kind of worthless ops for us to do because we couldn’t meet the objectives so we didn’t do a lot. (San Diego Law Enforcement Officials)

Whereas the law enforcement officials above did not uncover trafficking in the massage parlors they also did not make massage parlor investigations a priority. Other stakeholders in San Diego believed that sex trafficking and labor trafficking occurred within the parlors. They shared that women worked 10 to 12 hours a day, received a small portion of the wages that they earned (mainly in the form of tips), and lived in or above the parlor:

When we first hit the massage parlors, we went into it as a sex trafficking investigation. The longer we did it though, after interviewing all these girls we realized that it’s more of a labor trafficking game ... They used to all live in the facility. They would always live in the massage parlor, you walked in and there was food. Some of them still do it, but it’s very rare now. But all their clothing, everything was in the place. We were using that as an excuse to get in there under our muni code sections that they couldn’t live on the property. They changed all that - they started getting apartments that were nearby the business, within walking distance. (San Diego Law Enforcement Official)

## Brothels and Migrant Camps Brothels

San Diego's close proximity to Mexico and large number of migrant camps, particularly in the northern part of the county, make it a prime market for underground commercial sex activities. These activities are known to take place within migrant worker encampments and brothels and typically involve Hispanic male clients and Hispanic female sex workers. As one San Diego law enforcement official explained, "Where up there you've got migrant camps, you've got a lot more fields and everything else where they're doing prostitution out of the fields and setting up brothels to keep the workers happy." The UCSE in these venues are all cash-based, and johns pay from \$20 to \$80 for a variety of sex acts.

Similar to the Asian massage parlors, law enforcement has difficulty determining whether the women that work in the migrant camp brothels are trafficked or trade sex in these venues voluntarily. According to one federal law enforcement officer, "The Mexican nationals actually temporarily enter the United States legally with border crossing cards, visa, etc. They will come across and they will service men here and then they will go back. It is a business and it is work. So it terms of your true human trafficking case when they are under lock and key and so forth, that is where we do not see as much as we should be seeing." Several stakeholders stated that the women who work in the camps and brothels tend to be younger—and in many cases are minors—and see more clients in a day than the Asian women working in the Asian massage parlors. Thus, there are more elements of sex trafficking visible in the migrant camps and brothels; however, law enforcement is often unable to find anyone within the Hispanic community willing to talk about what takes place in migrant camp brothels.

Women are brought to migrant camp brothels during the summer months and then moved to indoor brothels, located in different parts of the city, once the weather turns cold and rainy. Because migrant camps are often in remote areas, traffickers hire drivers to drive women to a field near the camps, where set up tents and sometimes sell food and beer:

They would bring in anywhere from five to eight girls, something like that and then there would be 20 to 70 men that would come hiking in. There was usually a given time. The geographic area was perfect for them, the way the road was set-up, how they set up so it was really difficult to investigate that one especially because we had to hike in five miles behind the other side of the mountain just to get a location to look down on the property because if you went in they know who is supposed to be there, who is not supposed to be there ... the pimps do not; they stay very distant from what they are doing, and they have drivers that drive their girls everywhere. (San Diego Law Enforcement Official)

The women and girls would see anywhere from 30 to 50 johns during a two and a half- to three-hour period. A local law enforcement officer described what he saw when investigating a case in one camp:

It's like having sex in a PE-room, and up the road from there it was girls' underwear, condoms, beer bottles, so you can just picture how this looks, with everybody lined up—no shame. But I think the money is there. Obviously it's there or it wouldn't be around as long as it has been. The money that they ask for per service is less but they deal more of it. (San Diego Law Enforcement Official)

Because the brothels are located in apartments within commercial zones, such as strip malls, they do not bring in as much business in a week as the migrant camp brothels. Brothels tend to be marketed through word of mouth, as one law enforcement official explained, "I was watching a place over in [city name] one year and we knew the brothel location and what they were doing is right around the corner was a Hispanic strip mall and what they were doing is they had a guy they put down there and he would bring a guy back with him, they would do their deed, he'd bring him back, they'd bring another one." The officer went on to say,

You'd go in there, and I don't know what they'd charge, but they have a three bedroom apartment, four bedroom apartment, and guys are lining up, and they're selling beer, and a condom and they go in there and get out. You walk into a living room and it's like a night club with a bar in the kitchen where the refrigerator is, then your back three bedrooms are separated off into fours or however big the mattress is and that's how big

the room is, so it a three bedroom house you might have an additional nine, ten, twelve rooms. (San Diego Law Enforcement Official)

Brothels are managed in a very organized and structured manner. Women and girls know very little about how the operation is run and drivers and money runners only know what their jobs entail. As one law enforcement officer noted, “With the international stuff there is so many limbs to the tree, versus the domestic where mainly you are dealing with one pimp usually, and a bottom and your girls.” Money is usually sent through wire transfers [often times through Western Union] back to Mexico and other Central and South American countries. Although these criminal enterprises are organized, stakeholders commented that they do not meet the level of criminal organization in Asian massage parlors:

Well, the Hispanic side it still about the money. There is some organization there, but it’s not anything like the Asian organization. That is truly organized crime. That ranges clear back to China. It’s not by chance that they pay somebody just to come over here, it starts there. They pay whoever they pay and that person is linked up with over here, and whoever they get in contact with, that whole chain is linked up together. (San Diego Law Enforcement Official)

## **Seattle, Washington**

Thirteen individuals were interviewed about the local underground commercial sex economy in Seattle, Washington. Representatives from the following agencies were interviewed: Seattle Police Department, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), King County Sheriff’s Department, U.S Postal Inspector Service (USPIS), Internal Revenue Service (IRS), and the King County District Attorney’s office.

The underground commercial sex economy in Seattle is diverse and includes street and online prostitution, massage parlors, brothels, and escort services (see table 4.7). The most prevalent UCSE venues are massage parlors and residential brothels, as opposed to street and online prostitution. Individuals involved in street and online prostitution are typically drug-addicted or pimp-controlled. However, law enforcement has seen an increase in the number of women who claim they are trading sex independently and voluntarily. Gang involvement in the Seattle area has increased over time and hybrid gangs are beginning to form, similar to San Diego. The proliferation of Asian massage parlors and Asian “home brothels” is unique to Seattle and involves individuals from China, Vietnam, and Korea. Home brothels tend to be highly organized and generate a great deal of money in the UCSE, much of which goes back to the operators’ home country.

**Table 4.7 Stakeholder Perceptions of the UCSE in Seattle, WA**

Venue	Offender profile	Employee profile	Evidence of prostitution	Evidence of trafficking	Pricing	Open/ Closed customer base	Customer profile	Link to gangs, drugs, weapons, or organized crime
Street and Internet	In the past, pimps were involved through family and community ties and worked independently  Recently, heavily gang-involved and collaborative males	Street individuals are typically drug-addicted with pimps. Increase in women who work voluntarily online.	X	X	Street: \$30–40/hand job, \$50–60/oral sex, \$75–100/“full service”  Internet: \$125–\$150/30 min., \$175–200/hr.	Open	Men of all races/ethnicities	Circuit in Washington between Everett, Seattle, and Tacoma. Interstate to Portland, San Francisco, and Las Vegas. Avoid Los Angeles
Erotic massage parlors and spas	Asians, particularly from China, Vietnam, and Korea  Typically female operators	Asians, same nationality as operators, in 40s and 50s	X		House fee \$40–60 Tips: \$40–60/ oral sex, \$100/ “full service” Negotiable.	Open	Men of all races/ethnicities	Women rotate between several massage parlors owned by the operator. Women start out in Los Angeles or bay area and then referred to Seattle, and can move out of Seattle. Illegal women are smuggled through Mexico or Canada
Home/ residential brothels	Vietnamese nationals	Vietnamese women, some illegal, some with refugee or asylum status	X		No house fee.  \$200/hr., house takes \$60–80  \$140/30 min., \$160/45 min.	Open	Men of all races/ethnicities  Wealthy men common	Women have strong ties to Vietnamese populations in Orange County, Santa Ana, and Anaheim



## Street and Internet

Seattle, like many cities, has seen increases in Internet-based prostitution over the last decade. Stakeholders attribute this increase to the ease of using sites like Backpage and Craigslist, in addition to Seattle-specific sites such as Red Light Review and Top Hat Review. Internet prostitution and trafficking involves new entrants to the market and individuals moving from street-based to Internet-based prostitution. In turn, there has been an overall increase in the amount of prostitution. Although street prostitution still exists, most individuals trading sex on the street are either drug-addicted<sup>54</sup> or only work the street if the demand online is low (these individuals usually work for a pimp). One reason for the decrease in street prostitution is a concerted effort by law enforcement to crack down on visible street prostitution. As a result, many of the sex workers moved to posting ads online:

**Interviewer:** Have you found that the illicit commercial sex economy has gotten bigger in the last five to seven years?

**Respondent:** Oh, I think so. And it's all because of the Internet. It's not so out there, where you can see it and it's kind of like our society has an out of sight, out of mind mentality—as long as I don't see it, I'm good with it. We always get people saying, "You've got to do something about these prostitutes, it's hurting my business." But we've never had someone call and say something about prostitution online, because they don't see it, it doesn't affect them, so they don't care. But yeah, I think that because of the Internet, it's just really exploded. And because it is just hitting now, I mean my wife would never go to Backpage or anything like that, so to her, she would have never known that this went on had she not been married to me, unless you are the hobbyist or the exploiter or the young girl involved in it. And then when people hear about Backpage or Craigslist, people are shocked. I'm like, "Really you're shocked?!" I mean, you can buy anything on the Internet! (Seattle Law Enforcement Official)

Although street prostitution in Seattle mainly consists of drug-addicted individuals and women and girls who work for pimps, there has been an increase in the number of women who appear to be voluntarily and independently posting online ads. Women who would never consider trading sex on the street are posting online ads, since they feel that is more anonymous, safer, and profitable:

I would say there's a lot more girls without pimps, because again the Internet allows that. The Internet just allows them to do it by themselves. If they have got a debit card or if they can buy a prepaid card, hey can put up an ad. And then the smartphones. The smartphones allow them to access the Internet. They allow them to not only take pictures of themselves, store the pictures, and then post the pictures and do the ads right from their telephone. They don't even need to have a computer anymore. So all the technology has allowed this to go on. And, so what you have is you have high tech prostitutes. (Seattle Law Enforcement Official)

Law enforcement is aware that pimps remain in close proximity to the women and girls they control. Pimps are often in a car down the block from the track, waiting in the hotel parking lot, or at a club, bar, or casino:

Between Seattle and Tacoma it's almost every part of Highway 99, Aurora, it changes names but it is the same highway for miles and miles. It actually goes north of Seattle up to Everett. Everett, Seattle, Tacoma, [and] SeaTac are high prostitution areas, so we identify that. It's obvious, we see the girls walking out there, even to an untrained eyes. ... once you point out the indicators and the flags your observer becomes pretty well-learned in differentiating between a working gal and a non-working gal. We are also on the lookout for the pimps. And once you've identified the girl or the guy, you usually see the second half of that operation close by—that's not quite half the time, you'll have the working gal and then maybe the pimp within the block walking and you'll see him

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<sup>54</sup> One law enforcement officer estimates that 95 percent of street prostitution consists of individuals addicted to drugs.

watching her, sometimes shouting out instructions on the phone to each other, and you can see that he is making a phone call, her phone rings, she disconnects, he disconnects. Other times you'll see just the girl working, where the pimp isn't on site, but he is on the telephone with her from a bar, a restaurant, a casino, or the hotel room. (Seattle Law Enforcement Official)

Stakeholders acknowledge that men and boys are involved in the sex trade; however, they know very little about how that part of the market is structured. As one local law enforcement official explained, "We were never able to break into the 16 percent of the population of boys that were being commercially sexually exploited. Eighty-four percent of the victims are girls, so we blew it, we missed out on 16 percent of the population. That is a very secret society, it is so hard to get into that, and it is sad because we know that they are out there being victimized too."

Similar to other study sites, prices charged on the street (per sex act), are different than the prices charged online (per time period). The typical pricing structure on the street is \$30 to \$40 for manual stimulation, \$50 to \$60 for oral sex, and from \$75 to \$100 for "full service." For dates arranged online, an average of \$125 to \$150 is charged per half-hour and \$175 to \$200 is charged per hour. The women who arrange dates online will often "upsell" and charge johns extra for the "girlfriend experience," which often involves kissing and groping.

Street prices have stayed relatively stable over the last several decades since the prices of drugs, particularly crack cocaine, have remained consistent. An individual can still buy a rock of crack cocaine for \$20 to \$30. Dates arranged on the street usually consist of car dates and average 15 minutes. Price negotiation is more common on the street as opposed to the Internet:

You can negotiate on the street, you've got that face-to-face and you can say, how much it is for straight sex, how much for half and half, how much for just oral sex? They give you a price and you say, "Oh man, I've only got \$60 on me" and depending on the girl, how desperate they are, they may take \$10 for oral sex. On the other hand when you order a girl off of the Internet, a girl will say my time is my time, \$150 for a half-hour, \$200 for an hour, whatever and that's non-negotiable and then when they show up you can negotiate extras. (Seattle Law Enforcement Official)

Despite the downturn in the economy in most parts of the country (and in most cities included in this study), Seattle is home to some of the largest and most profitable businesses. As one federal law enforcement officer stated, "But they used to say, as Boeing goes, Seattle goes. Boeing's making record orders. Microsoft's doing pretty damn well. Costco's doing very well. Amazon's doing well. So as a whole, there's a lot of, pretty much all the major Seattle-based companies, those are doing [well]. They will have people who are making good money that are getting paid."

When asked if drugs, guns, and human trafficking were connected, one law enforcement official stated, "They are somewhat interconnected, but the entrepreneurs are realizing that they can still make a lot of money selling drugs and guns but they can make as much money with less risk in prostitution."

Up until the last five to ten years, the pimps in the Seattle area primarily became involved in the UCSE through family members and other members of their community. They followed the rules of pimping and worked independently. This was considered by many, including stakeholders, as "old school pimping." It was not until recently that gang involvement in the UCSE started to proliferate and changed the landscape of pimping in Seattle:

More often than not, in the last few years, there's more gangsters turned pimp, than original pimps. Very rarely do we see old school pimps anymore, or what the girls would call gentleman pimps. And there are set rules to the old school gentleman pimps, they don't mess with any gang associations, whereas the gangsters they don't have those rules, they don't have that discipline, and there's no respect among them as far as stealing one pimp's girl, losing yours, and they are a little more heavy handed, you know they hustle, they're into supplementing, they, they supplement their activities with other illicit activities whether they use the girls on not heft, drugs, boosting property, guns. (Seattle Law Enforcement Official)

Most of the gang members involved in the UCSE are young (often the same age as the girls they recruit to work for them), lack a formal education, and come from disadvantaged backgrounds. One local prosecutor discussed a common scenario among these young men:

I think that many of them come from horrendous situations themselves and I often wonder whether we are dealing with a gang situation. There is an aspect of humanity to most people that we deal with, even the worst of the worst as far as criminals go. Especially when I was working in gangs and you would see where these little kids grew up and you'd wonder, "Well, how can we expect anything of these children when dad's been in prison their whole life, mom isn't supportive, all older family members are in gangs, they have poverty, they have no respect or desire for an education, and they have no expectation of living a normal life because everyone around them is being shot and they have lost so many friends at a very young age?" How do we expect that person to grow up and be a productive member of society? (Seattle Prosecutor)

Despite the hardships that these young men may have faced growing up, they often look for opportunities that present a low risk but a high return. This used to explain their involvement in narcotic sales and drug trafficking; however, mandatory sentencing laws for drug sales and possession made selling drugs too risky. As one local law enforcement official noted, "There's an old saying that physical evidence can't lie for ya, but the girls can." Additionally, as stakeholders in all eight sites have stated, unlike drugs, humans are a renewable resource:

A lot of these gang members are getting into the commercial exploitation of children because it is very low risk very high return. If I catch a gang member with guns or money on him, you can't explain that away. Or even if it's in the car, you can't say well this is in the car, or jeez that's not mine, but even if I can't tie into the drugs or the dope to them, I am seizing that, and it's mine and they are out money. But people, women, children, they are a reusable commodity. And most of these girls, they've got them so brainwashed, they say, "Hey, this is just a friend of mine. I'm taking her down to her cousin's house" and the girl confirms it. And if she says, "Yeah, he is pimping me out," 97 percent they go back to that person. It's kind of like that battered women thing, and even if they don't go back, he'll find another girl, so it's just a cycle. (Seattle Law Enforcement Official)

Similar to the hybrid gangs in San Diego, many local crews in Seattle will set aside turf wars and work together to maximize their profits. One gang unit officer referred to this phenomenon as "ambigangsterous." Gang members will send the women and girls that work for them to other cities and allow other pimps to work them:

But with regard to gangs, yeah, we see a lot of gangs, whether it's an upper tier or a lower tier they are working together not only within the gang and assisting each other for the benefit of the gang and each other, but we also see them working with other gangs during peacetime. A lot of these guys, during peacetime, they'll mingle and they'll associate. As one gang unit sergeant put it, they're "ambigangsterous" when they have to be to benefit each other and the gangs. If it is dry in Seattle I might communicate with somebody in Portland who is also a pimp and be invited down there to work my gal. I'll turn my gal out on the street with your gal in Portland and in return, I might show you the same courtesy when you're in my town or when I am in Portland I might share my earnings with you. It's like a commission. (Seattle Law Enforcement Official)

Pimps in Seattle typically have two to three girls working for them and often enforce a daily quota. This daily quota ranges from \$500 to \$800 and will often be increased to \$1,000 or \$1,500 as a form of punishment if a worker is caught not following the rules. Law enforcement noted that if sex workers do not make daily quota, they will most likely be physically abused and in some cases, tortured.

A local circuit runs within Washington between Everett, Seattle, and Tacoma. Interstate travel tends to be to Portland (only three hours by car), California (primarily San Francisco), and Las Vegas. Seattle pimps often avoid traveling to Los Angeles, since as one local law enforcement officer explained, “The pimps there don’t play and are very territorial.” He went on to note,

The population within prostituting in Los Angeles is so much bigger than Seattle, Portland, and Vegas combined, and they don’t need any more competition, so it is eradicated promptly. You have the occasional naïve pimp, who tries stepping into L.A., and he is shot down pretty quickly, he comes home with his tail between his legs. It doesn’t work out too well. (Seattle Law Enforcement Official)

## Escorts

There are only limited investigations of higher-end escort services conducted in Seattle; however, these services are known to generate huge profits and contribute greatly to the UCSE. In the past, an escort would charge from \$105 to \$150 per hour; but now the average rate is \$250 per hour plus tips. There is typically a 60-40 or 50-50 split between the girl and the escort agency.

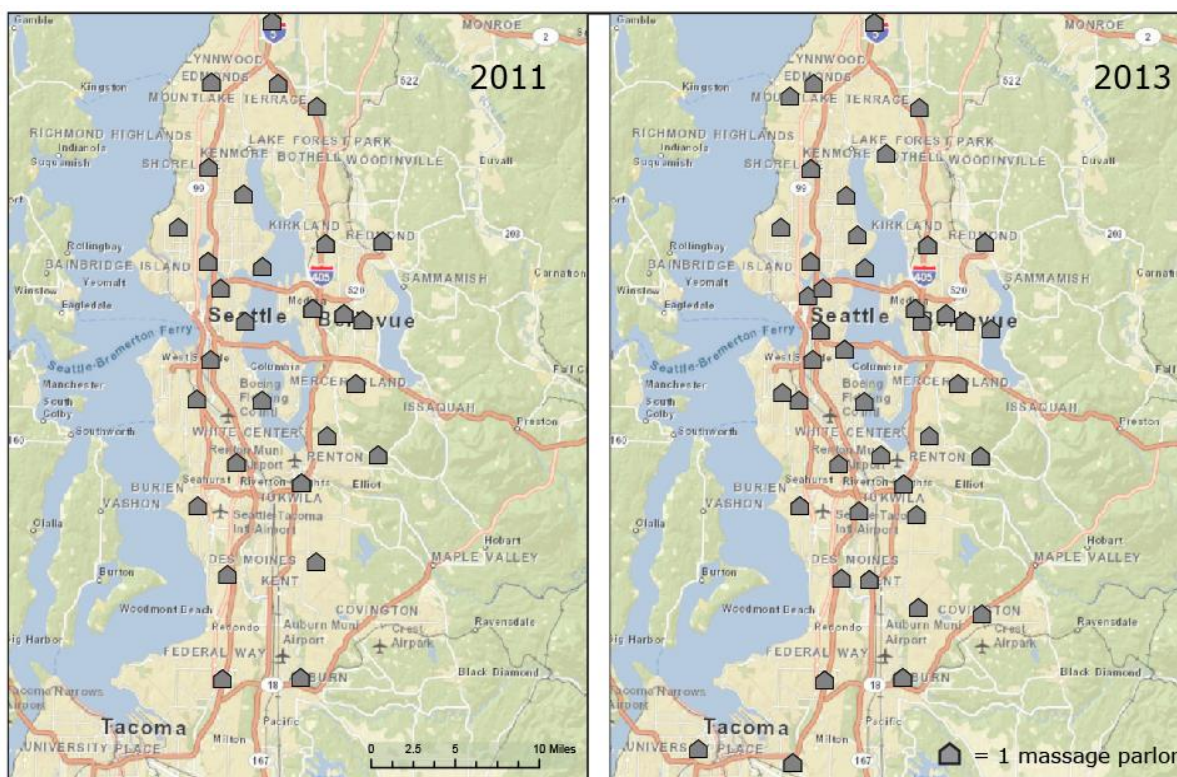
John message boards are fast becoming a popular online venue for escorts—in addition to massage parlors and brothels—to post advertisements. Boards usually require a subscription fee and provide a bit more anonymity for the escort. They also allow johns to rate women based on skills and appearance, which can help increase business. A unique practice in Seattle, facilitated through these local john message boards, is the establishment of networking and social events. At these events, johns and sex workers socialize with one another at an undisclosed venue and in some cases, celebrate holidays with one another. One federal police officer in Seattle described the message boards and “networking events”:

In this community, there is a message board, probably of all the communities you’ll go to you probably won’t find a message board like what we have here. It’s a local, locally-operated prostitution message board .... a review board. And this board, it’s basically providers of prostitutes on their advertising. And there’s the johns on there, they review the women and communicate with them and to an extent, like if someone posts, the provider goes on and says, “I opened a new house, brothel here, someone go test the waters,” take one for the team as they call it, and post on there, “This worked out well, it was clean, I got everything, I was happy,” so on and so forth. And then that leads other people. They see a few people review it so then people get comfortable with it. And the people who ran it actually would host—and I don’t know if they’re still doing it—but they’d host holiday parties. They had a Halloween party and a Christmas party, where the people on the message board would actually get together—it’d be invite only for people that are active on the message board—they’d receive an invitation. And they would go to a local restaurant where they would actually be able to interact and meet each other. They may only go by whatever their name is on the message board, they wouldn’t actually use their real name. But they would be able to interact. And there’d actually be a bit of a relationship where there wouldn’t be just a random person referring you, it’d be like, “Oh I met that guy at the party, he’d seen this girl, we liked the same girl and I’m just as horrible.” So a lot of the massage parlors and the house based brothels, as well as independent girls, are advertising on there. I don’t think you’d see juveniles on there. This group wouldn’t want to see juveniles on there. They wouldn’t be happy with somebody they thought would be a trafficking victim. They’d kind of be at least a step up from that ... And it was very simple, no advertising or anything like that except it was very run on donations. Every year they’d solicit donations. So it was just a very generic message board. There was nothing in the way when people look at it. Very simple, very easy to use. So that kind of spanned all the different realms. (Federal Law Enforcement Official)

## Erotic Massage Parlors and Spas

There has been a large increase in the number of Erotic Asian massage parlors and spas opening up in and around Seattle over the last ten years. There has even been an increase in the number of massage parlors in the Seattle metro area in the last two years, as illustrated in figure 4.8. Massage parlors and spas are run differently, depending on the operators' ethnicity and/or nationality: Vietnamese, Korean, or Chinese. Women who work in these massage parlors and spas are often the same nationality as the person running the operation and tend to be in their 40s and 50s. Massage parlors are typically marketed as foot massage parlors, since the law in Washington State does not require a massage license if the focus is on reflexology.<sup>55</sup> According to law enforcement, it is rare for these massage parlors to offer "full service," but will instead offer "happy endings." Law enforcement shared that Vietnamese-run fronts for prostitution advertised as massage parlors or tanning salons and will even have a tanning bed in the front window. They typically do not accept female customers; if a woman were to walk into the massage parlor or spa, she will be turned away. Unlike Chinese massage parlors, Vietnamese run parlors offer "full service" to their customers. Korean massage parlors are run similarly to Vietnamese ones in that "full service" is offered; however, they typically refrain from using the word massage since it requires a license. Instead, they use terms like "spa," "tanning," and "relaxation resort." The number of Korean "spas" has decreased since the United States has waived the visa requirements for Koreans trying to enter the country.

**Figure 4.8 Erotic Massage Parlors in the Seattle Metro Area**



The pricing structure for massage parlors and spas are very similar, with a fee going to the house and the tips going to the women. The house fee is typically \$40 to \$60 for an hour and johns will negotiate the tip with the woman providing the sex act(s), which she is allowed to keep. Tips range from \$40 to \$60 for oral sex and average \$100 for "full service;" however, all tips are negotiable. Women are required to pay

<sup>55</sup> Washington's Senate Bill 6103, effective on July 1, 2013, requires reflexologists to obtain certification and allows the state health department to conduct unannounced inspections.

for cleaning supplies and food and thus help to support the operation. Stakeholder estimated there are generally anywhere between two and four women working in a massage parlor or spa and employees often work from ten in the morning to midnight, seven days a week. They average between five to ten clients in a day.

One major difference between street/online sex work and massage parlors sex work is the gender make-up of the facilitator. Pimps tend to be male, whereas massage parlor and spa operators are overwhelmingly female:

Most of all the owners and managers are all women. In this area, we found a lot of the human traffickers that have been arrested have been women. ... I think again, if you're looking at you traditional white girl, black girl on the street or moving into a hotel room, I think yeah, your pimps are gonna be men. Even though a lot of them have the bottom girl as well. But within our realm, a lot of these massage parlors are being ran, the managers are almost always women. Again, with my experience ... It's a little bit different maybe in the Chinese side. A lot of the owners are maybe women, and they're the ones that are kind of cracking down. And then when we look at, we had a woman indicted and arrested in almost all of our trafficking cases in the past few years. Pretty much all involved a woman, if not the woman being the ringleader. (Federal Law Enforcement Official)

Massage parlors and spa operators will often own several similar businesses in the same area and in cities outside of Washington. They rotate women around to various storefronts in order to keep clients interested and decrease the likelihood of law enforcement detection. These operators often know one another. Law enforcement has tracked the migration movements of these women by where they get arrested. According to one federal officer, "Seventy-five to eighty percent of the Vietnamese-based ones have at least one prostitution arrest ... they will pay the fine and just don't go back to that city, if they even pay." However, law enforcement does not consider this to be organized crime:

It's a community that knows each other and we found that in the interstate cases. And those had to be Vietnamese, for the most part, the suspects were Vietnamese, and they knew who to call—it was a network of people. You could call it organized crime, but you really don't have anybody sitting at the head of the table, so to speak, in those cases. You have your mama-san who gets it going, she's got the horsepower to open a storefront. And what we've heard over the last three to four years is that Seattle's the place where you'll make more money than you will anywhere else. That's what they tell me, because they keep coming out of California all the time. "Why do you come up here?" "We make more money up here than we do in California." Well, I think they have a saturation problem in California, to be honest with you. (Seattle Law Enforcement Official)

Despite the mass migration from California to Seattle to work in massage parlors and spas, a lot of women, particularly Chinese nationals, start out at an agency in Los Angeles or the Bay Area and are then referred out to businesses across the country. If they want to move to another massage parlor or spa, they will often contact the agency in California, who will then connect them to another place in another city. Law enforcement has been unable to identify where these agencies are located and their owners.

Some women who work in massage parlors and spas are here legally and some are not. For those who are not here on legal visas, the price for fraudulent documents can run upwards of \$10,000. Some women are smuggled through Mexico and brought up to Seattle through California; however, the majority are smuggled through Canada, which borders Washington state. They will also pay to have fake massage licenses created that state that they are licensed in China, as one local law enforcement official explained:

It would be something like, "We, the state, will accept certifications from China that you attended massage school in China. So you just bring your certificate to us, and we'll give you a massage license in Washington state." That kind of document fraud maybe? Which, by the way, now the state is backing up on at 180 miles an hour, screaming, "We need to fix this!" Oh really? Because the documents that say, "I attended school in China," are kind of on the fraudulent side because either they swam across the Pacific or they could have run into Canada, on foot, got on a plane, flown over, run back across foot, and we want to maybe track their travel through Customs. Or it's kind of hard when you're

getting a ticket in Lynnwood for not driving very well while you're supposed to be attending massage school in China at the same time. Or you're down in southern California being sentenced for prostitution when you were supposed to be in China getting your massage license. (Seattle Law Enforcement Official)

Smaller massage parlor takedowns indicate that that there is more money sent overseas that could be generated through massage parlor activities alone. Law enforcement stakeholders think other illegal activities may be laundered through these massage parlors, including in-call services.

**Respondent:** I watch these places and all of a sudden I see them ship off ten grand one week, and then ship off ten grand another week. And I've got a camera on these places. They're not doing \$10,000 a week in business. They are not. Makes you wonder where the money's coming from, doesn't it? We have information that not all, but the foot massage places have related in-call services. They're related in the fact that the people who are running the foot massage places are also managing the in-call locations, in-call being an apartment, off-site location. Some of those in-call locations are for, what we've been told, are for Chinese only people, community.

**Interviewer:** And you don't know, the wires that are going to China, you don't know who they're going to?

**Respondent:** We have no idea because once it goes to China, we're pretty much done. But there's too much money at the spas we're looking at so far going to China to have it coming from the spas. Just can't. I've been doing this too long. (Seattle Law Enforcement Official)

The money sent to China is often sent by Western Union. Law enforcement raids have found Western Union receipts that show a couple thousand dollars a week sent overseas, more money than what these parlors should be generating on legitimate massages.

## Home/Residential Brothels

Similar to Asian massage parlors and spas, home/residential brothels have proliferated over the last five to ten years. Residential brothels are typically run and staffed by Vietnamese nationals. Some women have received refugee status or asylum, while others are in the United States illegally. Law enforcement has found that many women initially worked in the underground commercial market to pay off a debt, but chose to remain working after their debt had been paid back. They have strong ties to the Vietnamese population in Orange County, Santa Ana, and Anaheim, California, and law enforcement suspects that they also work in brothels in those locations. Similar to massage parlors, women move from brothel to brothel through word of mouth and references. They usually stay at one brothel for ten days and then go home for a week or two. They see up to 18 clients a day.

Residential brothels differ from massage parlors in day-to-day operations and clientele. In residential brothels, there is no house fee that is paid when they walk in the door; however, the house does receive a percentage of what the women are paid:

With those resident-based ones, they're pretty regimented. With those, people pay all the money up front for the amount of time that they want. What they'll usually do is there's envelope. So they'll meet the girl, the girl will take them upstairs and they get a shower, and then there's like an envelope in there. They put the money in for the amount of time, and then at some point the women picks up the envelope and makes sure the money is there. So that was like \$200 dollars an hour, for an hour, and I think the house would take \$60 to \$80 of that. And it would work its way down. Half an hour was \$140, 45 minutes was \$160, or something like that. (Federal Law Enforcement Official)

The clients that frequent residential brothels/homes tend to be "middle-class" and prefer to go to a house in a residential area rather than a massage parlor that has a flashing sign saying "Open 10-8 every day." Residential brothels often cannot be seen from the street and tend to be secluded. Thus, it provides a level of privacy for men who do not want to be seen walking out of a massage parlor in a commercial district.

## **Atlanta, Georgia**

Eighteen individuals were interviewed about the local underground commercial sex economy in Atlanta, Georgia. Representatives from the following agencies were interviewed: Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), Georgia Bureau of Investigation, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Atlanta Police Department, Sandy Springs Police Department, Cobb County Police Department, Smyrna County Police Department, the US Attorney's office, US Postal Inspector Service (USPIS), and the DeKalb County District Attorney's office.

The underground commercial sex economy in the Atlanta area is mainly comprised of three sex trafficking venues: street and online prostitution, Latino brothels, and massage parlors (see table 4.8). They tend to be geographically concentrated in the Atlanta metropolitan area along ethnic and national lines. Given the size and location of Atlanta, there is a significant amount of pimp-controlled prostitution on the street and online through websites such as Craigslist and Backpage. There are several different circuits—local, Southeast, and country-wide—that the pimps travel within and will often travel to cities for large events. While most massage parlors are Korean run, law enforcement indicated that some parlors were operated by other nationalities, including Thai and Indonesian. They are highly organized and structured and networked with other massage parlors throughout the country. The Atlanta area also has a high degree of Latino brothel activity, with brothels generally operating out of rented apartments or cantina dance clubs and advertised through word of mouth. Similar to massage parlors, a lot of brothels network with one another and are highly organized and structured.



**Table 4.8 Stakeholder Perceptions of the UCSE in Atlanta, GA**

Venue	Offender profile	Employee profile	Evidence of prostitution	Evidence of trafficking	Pricing	Open/ Closed customer base	Customer profile	Link to gangs, drugs, weapons, or organized crime
Street and Internet	African American pimps in their 30s and 40s working independently	Largely women, but also some men and boys; pimp-controlled and non	X	X	Street: \$50–\$100/oral sex \$75–150/“full service”  Internet: \$60–\$100/15 min., \$250–300/hr.	Open	Men of all races/ ethnicities	Southeast circuit including Tennessee, Alabama, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia.  Bigger track includes parts of the northeast and southwest: New York to North Carolina, to South Carolina, to Georgia, to Miami, and then across to Dallas and Vegas
Massage parlors	Korean nationals, but also southeast Asian nationalities, such as Thai and Indonesian	Older women from other countries	X		\$60 house fee. Tips in return for sex acts, \$130–500	Open	Men of all races/ ethnicities	
Latino brothels	Latinos, many from Tenancingo and Tlaxcala, Mexico	Mexican women who were smuggled  Typically between 16–35 years old  Many from Tenancingo and Tlaxcala, Mexico	X	X	\$30/15 min.  Younger, more attractive women may charge \$45–50/15 min.	Closed – Hispanic men only, sometimes only from a specific town in Mexico	Hispanic men	Smuggled women typically move from brothel to brothel in other cities

## Street and Internet

Despite an increase in the number of individuals posting online advertisements, the demand for the street underground commercial sex market in Atlanta is still very high and extremely profitable. Many major interstates come through Atlanta (e.g. I-75, I-85, and I-285), and it is considered one of the biggest cities in the Southeast. Law enforcement noted that street-level prostitution is generally run by African American pimps and occurs along specific tracks within more densely urban areas, particularly the Fulton Industrial area. As one law enforcement officer noted, “You’ve got your major rappers from Atlanta come down to Fulton Industrial and shoot videos in the neighborhoods, on the streets, with the girls, and with the pimps and then pay \$1,000 for the girls to come in and have sex with them.”

Individuals who work the streets are often looking to supplement their street work with either online advertisements or chat lines. More pimps are starting to advertise their “employees” online, and in an effort to recruit new employees, escort agencies and pimps are placing job postings online and reaching out to women who are working independently:

Craigslist used to have it under adult jobs, now it’s gigs. You’ll have out there say, “looking for girls to party with between the ages of 18 and 23,” “looking to join a team for escorting.” You’ll have your escort agencies doing that. You’ll have your individual pimps doing that. And you’ll even have your bottoms that are advertising up that on their girl for girl section, and once a girl calls up, then they recruit them into it. Or the pimp’ll just go through Backpage themselves and call girls who are listed as independent. I don’t think they even look if they’re independent or not, I just think they look if they’re cute and then they start hollering at them on the phone like, “Hey, you need to choose up. Whatever. You know call me on the phone.” (Atlanta Law Enforcement Official)

Similar to other study sites, prices charged on the street, which are per sex act, are different than the prices charged online, which are per time period. The typical pricing structure on the street is \$50 to \$100 for oral sex and \$75 to \$150 for “full service.” However, drug-addicted sex workers charge as little as \$10 for oral sex and \$50 for “full service.” Online, sex workers charge from \$60 to \$100 for 15 minutes and from \$250 to \$300 per hour for dates. One law enforcement officer noted, “The younger the girl, the higher the price—so you could have a girl at 18 that’s going to charge \$450 an hour or \$350 an hour and that’s kind of funny, as you see them get older into their 30s, unless they have a specialty, you’re going to see them at maybe \$150 an hour or something like that.”

Due to the downturn in the economy, law enforcement has noticed more and more discounts and specials being offered to the johns:

**Respondent 1:** I think there are a lot more discounts.

**Interviewer:** So you’re seeing a lot more discounts here as well? We heard about discounts in Dallas.

**Respondent 1:** Discounts for gas. Two for one specials, early bird specials, military specials, and for veterans.

**Respondent 2:** Yeah. Veteran’s day.

**Respondent 1:** Just wait for it though, they’ll start doing it for law enforcement.

**Respondent 2:** They say they do that already. I’m just saying. (Atlanta Law Enforcement Officials)

Although most transactions occur in hotels and motels, law enforcement stated there is a high use of “date houses,” which are either vacant houses or rented rooms in private homes used for prostitution. One local law enforcement officer explained the concept of a date house: “Private citizens who are looking to rent out the front room of their house. They’ll have a mattress in their front room and you have to pay \$5 to get through the door and usually they’ll make the trick pay that.”

Unlike the trend in other study sites, law enforcement has seen little gang involvement in the UCSE in the Atlanta metro area. Pimping in Atlanta resembles the “old school” pimping in which there are rules that

need to be followed and pimps operate independently. However, over the last decade, men have shied away from referring to themselves as pimps. This is because of a case involving Andrew “Batman” Moore and Charles “Sir Charles” Pipkins from the early 2000s, which was the first case where pimps were prosecuted under the RICO statute. They were based in Atlanta and considered to be mentors by those looking to enter into pimping. According to law enforcement, a lot of pimps have read through the legal briefs of Batman and Sir Charles and passed the briefs around their social networks:

We haven’t really come across too many true pimps because after that case, after the Batman case, everything really changed from there in Atlanta. They got scared. They’re not throwing out that word pimp. It’s “I’m an entrepreneur, a businessman. [I am running a] modeling agency.” It’s some type of bullshit. (Atlanta Law Enforcement Official)

One local law enforcement officer got into an argument with one pimp when he asked him to define the term: “His definition was a professional, intelligent, motivated person. And in court, he’s saying that’s my definition of a pimp so if you want to call me a pimp, I’m a pimp because I’m a professional, intelligent, motivated person.”

Atlanta pimps are predominantly African American males in their 30s and 40s and are former “dope boys” who decided that pimping was less of a hassle. On average, they have three women working for them at any given time. There is a high turnover rate and some pimps have up to 40 different women work for them in one calendar year. One local law enforcement officer explained the process:

You hear girls get booted out just for discipline. If they don’t keep an eye on their money, they’ll be booted. Traded. You get girls that just go renegade so they’ll just bust out and choose somebody else. That’s most of our girls, they’ll just choose. (Atlanta Law Enforcement Official)

Pimps often use promises of love or pose as modeling agents in order to entice girls into prostitution and then occasionally use abusive tactics to maintain control. This often includes enforcing a daily quota, which can range from \$100 a night to \$500 a night, seven days a week. As one local prosecutor explained:

They’re actually experts in what we say is the psychology of damaged girls. I think a lot of times they’ll see a runaway, a girl who has a lot of problems at home, is being abused, physically or sexually, or another assortment of problems that makes them choose the street rather than home, and then there’s also the promise of “I’ll take care of you, I’ll love you.” Just kind of the common lure of somebody to finally treat them well, and a lot of times we’ll see, “Oh, I just need you to do this one thing for me,” so it’s kind of—it’s not forced in the sense of “If you don’t do this I’ll kill you,” but I think after this first time it’s “If you don’t do this, you’re gonna get your ass beat.” (Atlanta Prosecutor)

Bottom girls are often tasked with recruiting and disciplining the new “employees.” Pimps will often instruct them to recruit from anywhere and everywhere, including train stations, bus stops, bus stations, clubs, homes, schools, detention facilities, group homes, and homeless shelters. They will also use Facebook and Myspace to recruit new women and girls. Once a bottom is trusted, the pimp will allow her to travel without him, known as “going on automatic.” As one law enforcement officer explained, “The bottom will go up as a babysitter role until the girl is trusted enough where she can go on automatic. If she’s trusted enough and she goes on automatic, she then can go wherever and the pimp knows that she’s not going to be any kind of issue.”

Similar to what law enforcement found in the other study sites, pimps rarely condone the consumption of alcohol and drugs, with the exception of ecstasy which helps lower the women and girls’ inhibitions. This is to keep their “product street marketable.” The control tends to be more by physical intimidation than narcotics and alcohol.

Although pimps in Atlanta primarily work on their own and have their own individual “stable,” they often communicate and look out for one another. They exchange ideas and in some cases, girls. One law enforcement officer described it as, “it takes a village. Like they’ll be watching like ‘Hey man, your girl was out of line. I had to get her checked.’ That type of thing.” They often communicate through social media, particularly Facebook. One law enforcement department in the Atlanta metro area ran a program to show

all the connections between one pimp, whose profile they could access, and the women and girls that worked for him. The police found that the pimps will often post pictures of their money, dope, and girls together. Although making these connections through Facebook is a boon for any investigation, it is also very time consuming and requires a lot of manpower.

In addition to local prostitution, many pimps travel a Southeast circuit on the I-75 corridor, I-95 corridor, and I-20, which include cities in Tennessee, Alabama, Florida, North and South Carolina, and Virginia. However, there is a bigger track that includes parts of the Northeast and Southwest: New York, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Miami, Dallas, Texas, and Las Vegas. Law enforcement described a circuit that is primarily local, but extends up to Florida and sometimes Virginia:

**Respondent:** If you're local, you'll hit Atlanta, Macon, Augusta, Savannah, Columbus, and then back up to Atlanta. They won't really mess with Gainesville or anything else, but those southern cities if they're a little bit more regional, they'll go down to Tampa, Orlando, Miami, but a lot of people aren't loitering in Miami, they'll do the other cities because there's less police presence and then they'll go up to Virginia.

**Interviewer:** Virginia? Where in Virginia?

**Respondent:** It's different. They go up there because it's better money. You got everybody that works in the government, you've lawyers, politicians and everything else who are willing to shell out a bit more money for a girl who isn't from that area who's going to keep their mouth shut. (Atlanta Law Enforcement Official)

Pimps will also travel the circuits to reduce the likelihood that police will identify any juveniles working for them:

The thing about the juvenile prostitution, when you talk about the track versus they're hiding them out in rooms. They're not going to walk these girls where people can see them and see that they're underage because somebody's going to call the police and tip them you would think; so they're going to go to Chattanooga for a couple days. My opinion, what I've observed is they're only staying a couple days because they don't want anybody to come get onto them. So a couple days in Chattanooga, then we go a couple days in Birmingham, a couple days in Augusta, a couple days in Macon. They're not going to stay in one place for any length of time because that increases the chance of somebody seeing the girls coming in and out and seen with this guy. (Atlanta Law Enforcement Official)

Although pimps in Atlanta are not considered to be particularly organized or capable of running huge criminal enterprises, some stakeholders found that they are business savvy:

You're finding with some of the pimps, it's not just one guy and six girls or a handful of guys and 15 girls, they are communicating with people who are educated, have some business sense ... Some of the stuff I looked at I was like who the hell are these people because they obviously know how to manage and run a business and they're making tons of money. Of course they're buying cars and property, stuff like that. (Atlanta Law Enforcement Official)

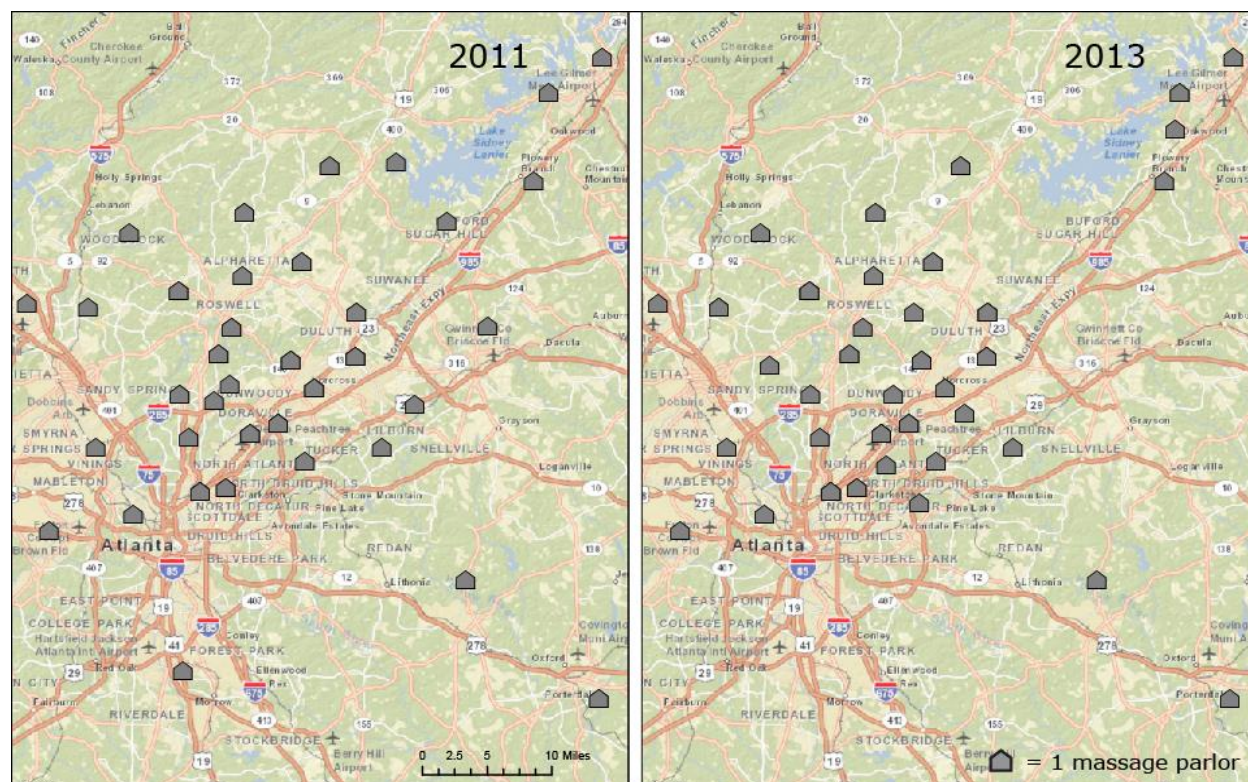
Although very few cases are investigated that involve men and boys who trade sex, a handful of stakeholders acknowledged that there is demand for men and boys, but they were ill-equipped to deal with cases of this nature:

You can go to Craigslist. It's like 15:1 right now. Men are advertising on there for same sex type stuff, but there are no facilities available and "Should we get a boy involved in this?," "Where are we going to place him?," or stuff like that. Not that there's that many for girls either. But like I said, the focus right now is on girls because that's where all the funding, that's where all the focus is at. I'm not saying that's right or wrong, I'm just saying, "Look we can't forget about there's two sexes out here, let's deal with all of it." But it's a start. (Atlanta Law Enforcement Official)

## Erotic Massage Parlors

Another primary venue in the Atlanta UCSE is erotic massage parlors. As illustrated in figure 4.9, there have been minimal changes to massage parlors locations and only a slight increase in the overall number of parlors. Most parlors are run by Korean nationals; however, there are some run by other Southeast Asian nationalities, such as Indonesian and Thai. The main concentration of Asian massage parlors (AMPs) is in the Chamblee and Doraville area, northeast of Atlanta proper. They also tend to operate near strip clubs or at truck stops, with locations often advertised on highway billboards. As one federal law enforcement officer noted, “And then of course the truck stops. We’ve identified areas along the I-75 corridor from 285 South toward Macon, and it’s wide open. If you travel down I-75, you just look at the billboards and ... this spa, that spa.” Some cities in the Atlanta area have stopped investigating the massage parlors due to ongoing litigation issues involving permits.

**Figure 4.9 Erotic Massage Parlors in the Atlanta Metro Area**



Similar to massage parlors set up in other cities, there is usually a house fee of \$60 that the client is charged upon arrival. The women will then negotiate a tip with the client depending on what desired sexual service. Tips range from \$120 to \$500. Women are allowed to keep their tips; however, most of that money is used to pay off their smuggling debt. Law enforcement has also seen cases where “the women will give them all their money for safe keeping to the madam, but then those monies are never used to pay off their debt” (Federal Law Enforcement Officer).

Women at the massage parlors are brought to the United States with a variety of tactics. Some were sex workers in their home country and some are enticed with promises of better life and work in the United States (and then forced into sex work to pay off debts). Many women are smuggled through Canada and initially brought to New York, where they are then filtered down the East Coast or sent to the West Coast. According to law enforcement, women who work in massage parlors are older and they have not found a juvenile working in one.

Women are often rotated through different massage parlors in the country, especially if there is a large event occurring in another city. This is a clear indication that parlors are connected, whether it is through the same ownership or different owners networking with one another:

We've seen where the women are transferred from one spa to the next spa from state to state. A lot depends on the amount of money that particular woman earns. We've seen cases where a woman is quite popular with the clientele, then they will transfer her to a different spa depending on what events are going on in that city. Dallas, they are home to the Dallas Cowboys, the big stadium there, and if they have some event there they'll transfer their money earners to those clubs. Whereas Atlanta has the SEC championship going on, they'll have more girls come here. (Federal Law Enforcement Official)

## Brothels

The Atlanta area also has a high degree of Latino brothel activity, with brothels generally operating out of rented apartments or cantina dance clubs and advertised through word of mouth. Girls are recruited from Mexico with promises of romance and support to encourage them to come to the United States. The girls, illegally smuggled into the country, are then forced to work in the brothels, often having to service many individuals (up to 50) in the course of a day. There are two scenarios that will often play out in Latino brothels, both of which are described below by a federal law enforcement official:

We found, as it relates to the Latino brothels, most of the brothels are operated out of apartment complexes in our Hispanic community. The women are typically smuggled into the United States after being recruited in their home country by the traffickers, and you guys probably know the methods they use to lure the women in, romance, marriage, you know. And the women are brought here and then they are in some ways forced to engage in this activity. And we found that they utilize—well, you have a set brothel that may operate out of one apartment and the women are brought there on a weekly basis. The women are switched out on a weekly basis. The brothels are usually open from 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. There may be one or two women working per brothel, along with a house ma'am they call it, and then they service clients. Most of the clients will be there on Friday and Saturday nights, usually after pay day. And then on Sundays, the women are transferred to another location and new women are cycled through. Maybe 80 percent of the clients are going to be Hispanic males.

There's another Latino trafficking scheme in which the women are transported to locations to service their clients. And typically this is done by the women contacting a driver, not a taxi driver, but a driver commonly known as a "labrero." And they will keep names and telephone numbers of different labreros in different cities who they know and trust and when they are in that particular city, they will call that labrero up who knows where the clients are and they will, the labrero will pick up the woman and take her around to different clients that evening. And then the money is split between, she'll pay the driver for that night's take and then the rest of the money is typically given to her pimp, to her boyfriend, whatever you want to call it. A lot of women who are trusted to contact a driver to be transported are usually forced. They are told by their pimp or their boyfriend or whoever is in control of them that you have a quota for that night to make. You have to make a certain amount or service a certain amount of guys that night before you can come back home and if you don't there are other consequences. (Federal Law Enforcement Official)

There is a third scenario, which is not as common, where girls would trade sex in the back rooms of cantina bars, where they would also sell dollar dances to Hispanic clientele. These cantina rooms are also run by traffickers and women are usually allowed to keep some proceeds.

The pricing structure is similar to Latino brothels in the other study sites: \$30 for 15 minutes. However, according to law enforcement, the more attractive, younger women may charge from \$45 to \$50 per 15 minutes. Some brothels enforce a \$500 daily quota, which would translate to around 15 or 20 clients per day, although some stakeholders heard that some women saw up to 40 clients a day. One to two women,

typically between the ages of 16 and 35, usually work in a brothel at any one time. In some cases, 50 percent of the proceeds went to the drivers and 50 percent went to the house; in other instances, the women kept a certain percent of the money once they paid off their debts.

A lot of traffickers and women they recruit are from Tenancingo and Tlaxcala, Mexico, an area known for trafficking. Traffickers often spend months grooming the woman or girl, and in some cases, will marry her as part of that grooming process. They build mansions and purchase expensive cars in Mexico with the proceeds generated through their trafficking enterprise in the United States as a way of displaying their wealth and stature in society:

Most of the money is being sent back overseas because part of their recruiting method is showing that they're prominent. So they'll send the money back and purchase a bunch of land, nice houses and stuff, so that as they're wooing this or romancing this young lady to come to the United States, he also has to romance her family as well. And in doing so, we can show the family, the father, hey I'm going to take very good care of your daughter, look at this mansion I have, we have parties, that's part of the whole recruitment method, so that money is being sent over to enhance their lifestyles overseas, continue with their recruiting methods. A lot of the money is being sent, we believe is being sent by couriers. (Federal Law Enforcement Official)

As stated above, women often move from brothel to brothel throughout different cities. Some brothel owners work together to trade girls in order to provide new faces to their clientele. Brothels are typically advertised through word of mouth, business cards (usually advertising a construction or paint business), or in some cases, by hanging something like a wreath or a specific flower over the door of the brothel. They only serve Hispanic clientele and in some cases will only serve Latinos from a particular town in Mexico. Although law enforcement has a tacit understanding of how these cells work together to transfer women and funds, they do not know if there is a head trafficker controlling all of these businesses from Mexico. Law enforcement does know that the Hispanic traffickers are very controlling and often abusive, similar to many American-born pimps:

If you look at the studies of domestic trafficking, women on the tracks, the American pimps, the Latino pimps or whatever they call themselves, there's a lot of similarities. The way they recruit, the way they control. The only thing that's different is that these guys are from the United States and the others are foreign. (Federal Law Enforcement Official)

## Conclusion

Interviews with local, state, and federal investigators, prosecutors, and other stakeholders across the eight study sites revealed similarities and differences in the structure of the underground commercial sex economy across sites. It is important to note that when interpreting findings, stakeholder perceptions of the UCSE are predominantly based on cases investigated and prosecuted within each jurisdiction and therefore represent one view of the prevalence of the issue. As discussed in chapter 2, cities were selected for this study, in part, due to the advanced nature of their investigations and prosecutions relative to other cities in the United States.

One of the most common statements repeated across sites was that investigators and prosecutors felt they were “just scratching the surface” of the crimes that make up the underground commercial sex economy—sex trafficking and prostitution. Stakeholders described feeling under-resourced to proactively investigate and prosecute cases and stymied by public and criminal justice stakeholder misperceptions of the prevalence and severity of these crimes. With those challenges, stakeholders were still able to bring an impressive diversity of case types forward and have begun to peel back the layers to reveal the nature of the UCSE.

Certain trends emerged across cities. Cases of child and adult sex trafficking and prostitution were uncovered in all cities. Erotic Asian massage parlors and Latino brothels were found in the majority of cities and all cities reported difficulty in determining the extent to which adult sex workers were voluntarily employed in prostitution or victims of sex trafficking. While some cases of child sex trafficking were uncovered in these venues, these cases were rare. Common across all cities, however, was the sex trafficking of minors, often runaway youth, by street and Internet pimps.



Street and Internet pimps were described by law enforcement and prosecutors as predominantly male, although females are involved, sometimes in a victim-offender role and sometimes as offenders. Pimps were not commonly found to work closely together in an organized crime network, but were found to be highly networked in a social capacity, sharing information about cities' markets, warning one another about law enforcement activity, and trading or buying victims between each other. Stakeholders reported that pimps commonly had prior arrests or incarcerations for drug dealing and may have turned to pimping because they perceived it as less risky. In a half of the study sites (Denver, San Diego, Seattle, and Washington, DC), gang involvement in sex trafficking was uncovered. In some cases, rival gangs were found to be cooperating with one another to engage in sex trafficking. The remaining sites did not discover a link between gangs and sex trafficking. Some sites also reported gangs may extort Latino brothels in cities in exchange for protection, but otherwise, are not involved in actively facilitating prostitution or sex trafficking. A connection between sex trafficking, prostitution, and weapons trafficking was not reported to exist in these sites, although some stakeholders did report that in a few cases, pimps were found to carry weapons.

Prices charged for underground commercial sex across cities were fairly consistent and often depended on the racial and ethnic background of the victim. Age and drug addiction also plays a role in the price structure. White women and girls were reportedly more expensive and drug-addicted men and women least expensive and typically least likely to be trafficked. The prices charged by drug-addicted men and women in prostitution are often tied to the current street value of various drugs, including heroin and crack cocaine. These men and women typically market themselves on the street for about \$20 in each city in the study.

Pimp-controlled women and children were sometimes exploited on the street and with the advent of the Internet, they were often marketed via websites such as Craigslist, Backpage, and Eros. This enabled pimps to advertise pimp-controlled women and children as independent escorts and hide them from law enforcement detection. Law enforcement reported that the clients prefer white sex workers and, as a result, pimps target white women and girls. Stakeholders across sites reported that pimps often impose a daily quota of \$500 to \$1,000 (depending on the pimp) on their "employees" and typically control between one to four women and girls at any one time. Prices for these women and girls depended on the sex act and ranged from \$60 for oral sex to \$150 to \$200 for intercourse.

Erotic Asian massage parlors and Latino brothels were found to be operating in the majority of cities in our study. The extent to which sex trafficking or prostitution occurred through these venues varied. Nevertheless, the pricing structure and operation of these venues was fairly consistent. Erotic Asian massage parlors charge a house fee and a fee per sexual service. House fees go to the massage parlor owner and any fees or tips for sexual services reportedly go to the women providing them. In some cases, these women may be working to pay off smuggling debts and in other cases, stakeholders reported that women were voluntarily involved in prostitution. Latino brothels operated in a variety of venues across cities. In some cities, they were housed in constantly changing residential locations and in other cities they were housed in bars or cantinas. Cases were uncovered involving both prostitution and sex trafficking in Latino brothels across most study sites.

Other UCSE venues were reported across cities, but the extent to which law enforcement could investigate these venues was limited by resources and political will. Law enforcement in all sites acknowledged the existence of "high-end" escort services that charge thousands of dollars per hour and limit their client base to those that pass background checks. As a result, law enforcement was often unable to dismantle these services, although a few successful cases have come forward across sites. The level of organized crime behind various parts of the UCSE is still relatively unknown by law enforcement. A lack of law enforcement investigator diversity and language capability was reported as inhibiting the ability to uncover certain forms of the UCSE operated by foreign nationals in the United States (e.g., erotic Asian massage parlors, Latino brothels, Russian-operated topless bars and strip clubs, and Eastern European escort services). These areas of the UCSE often have closed ethnic networks and limit their client base ethnically, which provides a challenge for law enforcement to infiltrate relative to street and Internet pimps, who often do not limit their client base and thus represent easier targets for law enforcement (often posing as clients).



# Chapter 5

## Identity, Entry, and Risks of Pimping

### Introduction and Review of the Literature

Researchers who examine the commercial sex economy have largely focused on the experiences and perspectives of the individuals directly involved in commercial sex transactions. This research has encompassed understanding the experiences of sex workers and trafficked individuals engaged in the underground commercial sex industry. In addition, studies have emphasized the experiences of stakeholders involved in extricating individuals from trafficking situations, prosecuting their perpetrators, and providing social services to support successful integration into legal employment.

For a number of reasons, there is little first-hand research that looks directly at the experiences of the facilitators of the underground commercial sex economy, such as pimps and traffickers, and the details of how they structure their underground markets (Weitzer 2009). Pimps and traffickers form a notoriously difficult population to reach because of the criminal nature of their work. Heckathorn (1997) defines a “hidden population” as a population where public knowledge of its existence is dangerous and threatening to its survival, largely due to the illegal nature of its membership activities. As a result, researchers have found it easier to gain access to stakeholders, formerly trafficked individuals receiving social services, and sex workers. Even though access to formerly trafficked individuals is still very difficult, given the safety and ethical constraints of researching vulnerable populations, limited research has been possible by partnering with service organizations that serve this population (Brennan 2005). Researchers of prostitution have also found access through service providers, law enforcement, and fieldwork.

Additionally, many researchers have discovered significant changes in the presence and roles of facilitators in the commercial sex economy. In many cases, researchers who focused on the experiences of sex workers have discovered that they work independently without the aid of a pimp or facilitator (Murphy and Venkatesh 2006; Norton-Hawk 2004; Thukral and Dittmore 2003; Weitzer 2009). Sex workers often engage in contract-based relations with locations that facilitate commercial sex, such as massage parlors or spas, or work independently. The traditional conception of a third-party pimp, often male, who controls the activities and finances of a sex worker does not ring true in all situations of commercial sex (Weitzer 2009). As a result, some studies that focus on the experience of sex workers eliminate any discussion of third-party facilitators in favor of an emphasis on the new methods for commercial sex transactions, such as independent sex work through the Internet or contract-based participation in a business-based brothel.

As a result of methodological challenges and the inconsistent presence of pimping in underground commercial sex, there are few studies that directly examine data observed, retrieved, and confirmed by the pimps and traffickers themselves in commercial sex. The lack of research that explores how facilitators of the UCSE operate means valuable information regarding the way underground commercial sex markets are created and managed is missing. The few studies that do directly interview or observe pimps and traffickers usually contain small sample sizes, ranging from 4 in Levitt and Venkatesh’s (2007) two-year ethnography of prostitution in Chicago to 25 in Raphael and Myers-Powell’s (2010) interviews with ex-pimps. Much of the information that exists on the extent and structure of the underground commercial sex economy comes secondhand from trafficked individuals, sex workers, law enforcement officials, and other stakeholders. The information gleaned from secondary sources has played a significant role in shaping the existing knowledge on how pimps and traffickers facilitate the transaction of commercial sex.

The following three chapters present data collected through interviews with 73 individuals that have been charged, convicted, and incarcerated for crimes related to compelling prostitution or earning proceeds by engaging in a business relationship with individuals who were paid by customers to have sex. Chapter 5 explores respondents’ entry into the commercial sex market and views on the market’s associated risks. Chapter 5 concludes with a summary of respondent observations regarding perceived changes in law enforcement attention, the facilitation of sex work, and its impact. Chapter 6 explores the structures and

networks respondents operated to facilitate prostitution, and chapter 7 considers the logistical and operational methods and tools employed by respondents. The following section introduces definitions of pimping and sex trafficking, then reports perspectives regarding the word “pimp,” and outlines the definitions employed in this report.

#### **Main Findings from this Chapter Include:**

**Identity:** The majority of respondents reported that the media inaccurately portrays all pimps as violent. While fifteen percent of respondents to this study reported using violence to control their employees, respondents felt that popular interpretations of pimp-managed sex work exaggerate the use of force perpetrated by pimps against employees.

**External influences on entry into pimping:** Extant literature has offered some insight on how pimps first engage in the facilitation of sex work. Studies have suggested that individuals that grew up in neighborhoods where prostitution was prevalent or have family members engaged in sex work sometimes enter the field. Other research has found that individuals working in other illegal underground economies, such as drug dealing, sometimes move into the facilitation of underground sex markets. Our findings corroborate earlier studies and shed light on new ways that individuals start pimping. Pimps cited multiple influences on their own choices, and thus different factors are not mutually exclusive.

**Internal motivations for entry into pimping:** Pimps cited self-perception of business-related strengths as a factor in the decision to become a pimp. Beyond the impact of external influences, pimps believed that their capacity to convince or manipulate other people to engage in activities, their focus on making money, and their leadership skills were reasons to become involved in pimping.

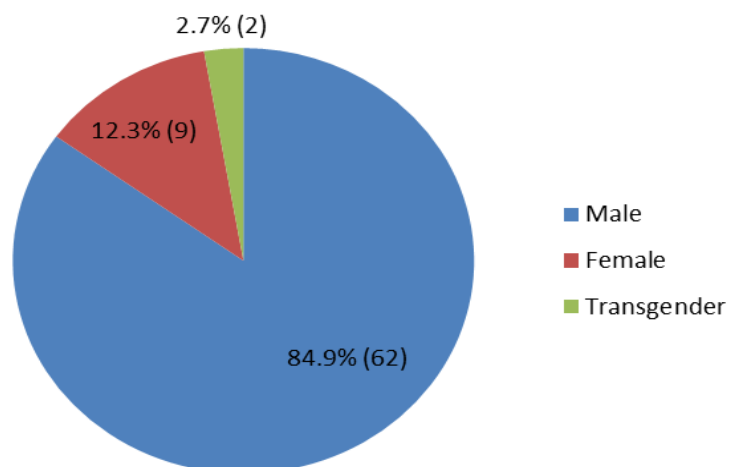
**Perceptions of business-related risks:** As prior research on pimping and sex trafficking has focused on the perspectives of law enforcement and victims, little information is documented about how perpetrators perceive and interpret the risks associated with the facilitation of sex work. Respondents cited multiple risks they recognized due to their involvement in pimping. Arrest was the primary consequence feared by pimps, followed by personal safety, and employee safety.

**Risk mitigation:** Pimps employed multiple tactics to mitigate business-related risks. To control against law enforcement detection, pimps avoided hiring minors and worked proactively to identify law enforcement stings prior to making transactions. To ensure personal safety, some pimps reported carrying weapons. To protect employee safety, pimps armed employees, enforced safety-related rules, and remained close to employees when they met customers.

## Respondent Demographics

Respondents self-reported their age, gender, and highest level of education. Interviewee responses were used to build a demographic profile of this study's respondent pool rather than administrative data. Interviewee responses are presented in figure 5.1 through 5.3.

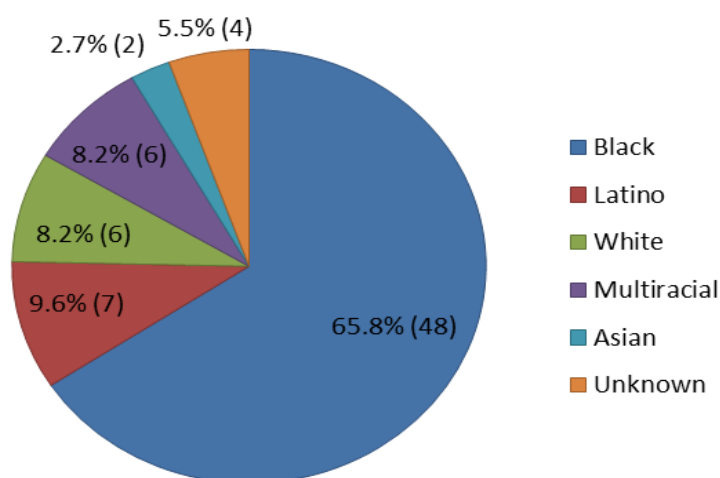
**Figure 5.1 Respondent Gender**



The majority of respondents were male. Of the 73 respondents to this study, 62 respondents (85 percent) identified as male, 9 respondents (12 percent) identified as female; and 2 respondents (3 percent) identified as transgender.

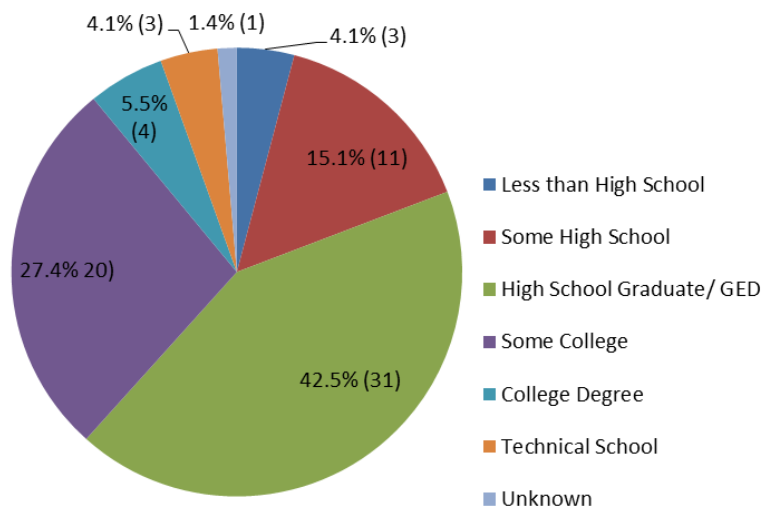
The majority of respondents identified as African American. Sixty-six percent of respondents identified as African American; 10 percent identified as Latino; 8 percent identified as white; 8 percent identified as multiracial; and 3 percent identified as Asian. Six percent of respondents did not report their race.

**Figure 5.2 Respondent Race**



Respondents reported varying levels of education. More than 75 percent of respondents had graduated high school, attained a GED, completed some college courses, or attained a higher degree. Nineteen percent of respondents did not graduate high school or attain a GED. Some respondents did attain a GED while incarcerated, or were pursuing a GED at the time of the interview.

**Figure 5.3 Highest Level of Education Completed**



## Definitions

A pimp is an individual who “controls the actions and lives off the proceeds of one or more women who work the streets” (Williamson and Cluse-Tolar 2002, 1074). Debate exists over who is and is not considered to be a pimp, particularly because legal definitions between municipalities and countries can differ from popular and public understanding (May, Harocopos, and Hough 2000). Additionally, the lines between pimping and trafficking are ideologically and legally blurry and often difficult to define. Generally, pimping becomes trafficking when “the threat or use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or vulnerability, or giving payments or benefits to a person in control of the victim” is present (United Nations 2000, 2). Under the United States penal code, sex trafficking is a “severe form of trafficking” under which “a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion” or the individual involved in the commercial sex act is under 18 years old (Title 22 § 7102). Sex trafficking can also occur when “recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person” occurs for the purpose of commercial sex. Prosecutors in our study and previous studies have noted a preference for litigating under sexual assault and pimping and pandering laws with clear case precedent (Farrell et al. 2010), highlighting the degree of prosecutorial discretion available in determining whether or not to charge a defendant for trafficking (B. Cooper 2002).

The word “pimp” is commonly used in practitioner, legal, and research discussions to refer to individuals who earn money through the facilitation or provision of sex work transactions. Some scholars argue that an element of control needs to be present between the pimp facilitating the commercial sex transactions and the individuals who ultimately perform them (O’Connell Davidson 1998). However, the term pimp can carry cultural implications beyond a dictionary definition. The underground commercial sex industry has been a popular topic in historical and contemporary culture, with its settings and actors recurring in many television shows, films, and music. Perhaps the most popular and widespread portrayal of the pimp in contemporary media and popular culture has been within music, particularly in hip hop and rap (Jackson and Camara 2010; Quinn 2000). Some contemporary rappers project a public image that supports their identity as a pimp, whether literally, such as in the case of Snoop Dogg (Rolling Stone 2010), or more figuratively as a performance of their masculine power, ability to make lucrative financial gains, and influence over women in light of their early status as young, lower to working class, African American males (Jackson and Camara 2010; Quinn 2000). One respondent to this study reported on the

presence of pimping in music and its impact on cultural perspectives regarding the individuals who facilitate sex markets: “You’ve got underground rappers, like Suga Free, who rap about nothing but pimping. [People] see that lifestyle; they think it’s huge like nothing else” (B3).

However, the presence of pimping in popular culture has extended beyond literal representations or identifications with commercial sex. Coy and Garner (2012) called the underground commercial sex industry’s presence in mainstream popular culture “pimp chic” to indicate the glamorization of prostitution and specifically the role of the pimp. The term has now transcended depictions of literal facilitation over sex and is used as a verb to mean the process by which an item is made more valuable or desirable—a metaphor extended from the role of the pimp in facilitating commercial sex transaction between sex workers and clients (Coy and Garner 2012).

Despite cultural modifications of the term, this report employs the word “pimp” as a definitional term that encompasses the actions for which study respondents were charged, convicted, and incarcerated: the facilitation of prostitution for profit. The majority of respondents (92 percent) in this study managed street-based or internet-based sex work, and only eight percent respondents managed or ran a brothel, massage parlor, or other indoor sex work venue. The experiences of individuals who ran escort services are explored in text boxes throughout chapters five, six, and seven. Before using the term pimp, the following section gives light to some of the descriptions and critiques of the term “pimp” offered by respondents.

## Respondent Perspectives

*In my mind, pimp is a derogatory word. When you hear pimp, a lot of things come to mind as far as TV and what’s portrayed. I was in that mind frame once, and that mind frame consists of “break a bitch.” (D8)*

While this research adopts a single, broad definition of the word pimp, respondents reported varying interpretations. Some embraced the term as an appropriate description of their work and self-identified as pimps; other respondents denounced the term as derogatory or arcane. Interpretations varied, but one belief remained relatively constant among study respondents: “Pimp” means far more to the public than simply the words that compose its basic legal definition.

To develop this study’s interview sample, we identified offenders incarcerated within the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) system or state prisons that were convicted and/or charged with crimes related to sex trafficking, pimping, or pandering (for more information on research methodology, see chapter 2). Seventy-three individuals charged with sex trafficking and/or pimping and pandering charges agreed to be interviewed and 21 individuals declined to be interviewed.<sup>56</sup> During each interview, respondents were also asked to self-report the charges for which they were sentenced and serving time.

The majority of respondents (n = 61, 84 percent) identified trafficking, pimping, or pandering as the primary charge relating to their incarceration. With few exceptions, respondents acknowledged or admitted to some of the pimping-related activities that led to incarceration. However, some interviewees still rejected identification as a pimp. One individual convicted of sex trafficking explained, “I never considered myself to be a pimp. I just considered myself to be a part of the urban lifestyle” (E3). Respondents who rejected identification as a pimp often emphasized the imagery of wealth and excess that can be conveyed by the term. A 27-year-old offender stated, “I’m not a pimp. I don’t believe in the word pimp. Pimp is like the tooth fairy, from the old ’70s movies with big hats and big ol’ chains. That’s not me” (C8). Another 25-year-old respondent similarly did not identify as a pimp:

*I’m not a pimp. ... A pimp has the hat, the cane. Those are pimps. They have guidelines, just like gangs. What’s happening now, it’s nothing like what it is supposed to be like. It is just money for habits ... I don’t know if you heard of renegades. I think most are renegades now. Even if girls have pimps, they’re boyfriend and girlfriend. A pimp keeps all the money and dishes it out. That hardly happens anymore. (E10)*

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<sup>56</sup> The individuals who declined to be interviewed gave a number of reasons for declining, including timing concerns (e.g., the interview was scheduled during their lunch break or allotted gym time), a code of silence, and not being in the mood to talk.

Other interviewees did not reject the term, but expressed concerns regarding media representations of the relationship between pimp and sex worker:

[The media representation of a pimp] is kind of cartoony. If you think so little of yourself that you are willing to take a woman and break her down—break her and make her totally dependent on you for every want and need and at the same time her neediness is feeding your ego—that’s a joke. (D10)

Respondents also noted that pimps could be defined by their full reliance on prostitution earnings to support themselves. The same offender quoted above distinguished himself from a pimp based on the variety of criminal activities in which he engaged: “A pimp’s primary existence is [pimping]—that’s how you live. That wasn’t really my thing. I sold drugs or stole or robbed, whatever came up at the moment. Whatever it took to get money, that’s what I was about” (D10). One individual convicted of attempted pimping reported, “I’m just a businessman. A pimp is a person who relies on the female and that’s all he does. If it wasn’t for a female he couldn’t survive. I go to school, I work, and I do whatever I have to do to survive” (E16).

Respondents also suggested that the relative sophistication of their business operation distinguished them from pimps. A female offender, who reported her conviction offense as conspiracy to commit sex trafficking of a minor, stated:

I am a madam—I am not a pimp. Pimps are bitches. [Pimps] are not doing the advertising or doing anything. You are using intimidation to get the girls to sell themselves and bring back the money. I provided the advertising, customers, safety, and security, and I didn’t take most of their money. They were making double to triple of what I was making per session ... After a month of meeting me, one girl had a new apartment and a new car. (F1)

While respondents contested the term pimp for multiple reasons, the majority of respondents problematized the word for its implication of violence. Respondents believed the emphasis on violence in popular perceptions of pimps is unrepresentative of the average individual who facilitates sex work (for further discussion of the role of violence in pimping, see chapter 6). A 38-year-old respondent explained, “The media representation of pimps is an inaccurate representation. They label us as animals, bullies, and predators ... A pimp stumbles upon girls” (D3). Respondents felt that the media’s focus on violent cases of pimping produces an inaccurate portrayal of the field. A 56-year-old respondent reported his observations regarding media coverage of pimping cases:

I just read something in the newspaper; this Mexican dude robbed these dudes and sold this girl for \$500. Pimps don’t do stuff like that. They would probably be pissed to hear you say something like that. Pimping has a lot to do with standards. Some people are so anxious to be involved, they will just go below standards. (D8)

Another offender critiqued the media representation, while suggesting that violent pimping does occur in some situations:

I think the way the [media] portrays pimps is inaccurate. It is difficult to say because you only speak for yourself. But when you got friends who are pimps as well, you never see [them] do nothing like that. I watched an MSNBC show, and some of the things girls say on there is so disturbing to me, it makes my blood bubble. No girl is forced to prostitute. I am telling you guys the truth. [They were] interviewing prostitutes that are arrested that don’t have pimps. I have some girls who wanted to call MSNBC, and say, “I would like to speak on behalf of the life of prostitution.” Some of it is not real, a painting. This is a picture we want to paint to society.

Mexico is a different story. Those girls are being forced. Took from their country, don’t know the language. I know a girl who was locked in someone’s house for a whole year, couldn’t leave, just had johns coming in and going. How did they get there? [Was the] dude going out and finding them? None of the [johns] had a big enough heart to see you were trapped and don’t do nothing? (E3)

Respondents distinguished between domestic pimping and international sex trafficking. They expressed concern that the lines have blurred between “sex traffickers” and “pimps:”

I think there is a difference from the international shit, holding bitches hostage, that’s not considered pimping to us. You got a different element. Most of the pimps in jail, they’re separate. Guys who are sex traffickers, bringing [girls] from overseas, using that as leverage. A pimp is someone who pimps by himself. Not with ten dudes. I’m not saying that isn’t lucrative, but a pimp is not doing that. (B3)

Some respondents believed that while pimps had historically used violence to control employees,<sup>57</sup> contemporary pimps have moved away from the use of force. One respondent explained:

The old school cats would talk about how the girls would hide money, not give it all up, and in the old days they would beat the girls if they didn’t get it all. Now, I know the girls come to me and will stash some around the corner before they come in, but I’m just as happy if they give me any of it, as long as they bring me something, because they’re the ones doing all the work. (A3)

One woman who worked as a bottom believed force was never involved, and the media representation of pimps ignores the role of individual choice:

**Interviewer:** Do you think the representation of pimps in the media is accurate?

**Respondent:** Everyone makes it seem like a girl is forced to do it. A girl is never forced. It’s always a choice. If you want to get away, you always can. (G8)

The majority of respondents disputed the use of force and violence in pimping. Among interviewees who admitted occasional violence against employees (15 percent of respondents), few respondents admitted to the use of physical force in the everyday management of employees. Chapter 6 explores the multiple methods of control and manipulation employed by respondents, violence included, as tools of pimping.

As respondents indicated throughout data collection, the word pimp carries implicit meaning beyond “an individual who facilitates and profits from prostitution.” These associations cannot be assumed of nor projected on this study’s respondents. With this important note in mind, we do employ the term pimp throughout this report. At present, no other broadly understood and comprehensive term exists to identify individuals who engage in the facilitation of sex work. However, the term pimp is defined herein as someone who facilitates prostitution and profits in some way from that facilitation. In many cases, this includes the use of force, fraud, and/or coercion, particularly when juveniles are involved.

## Entry Into Pimping

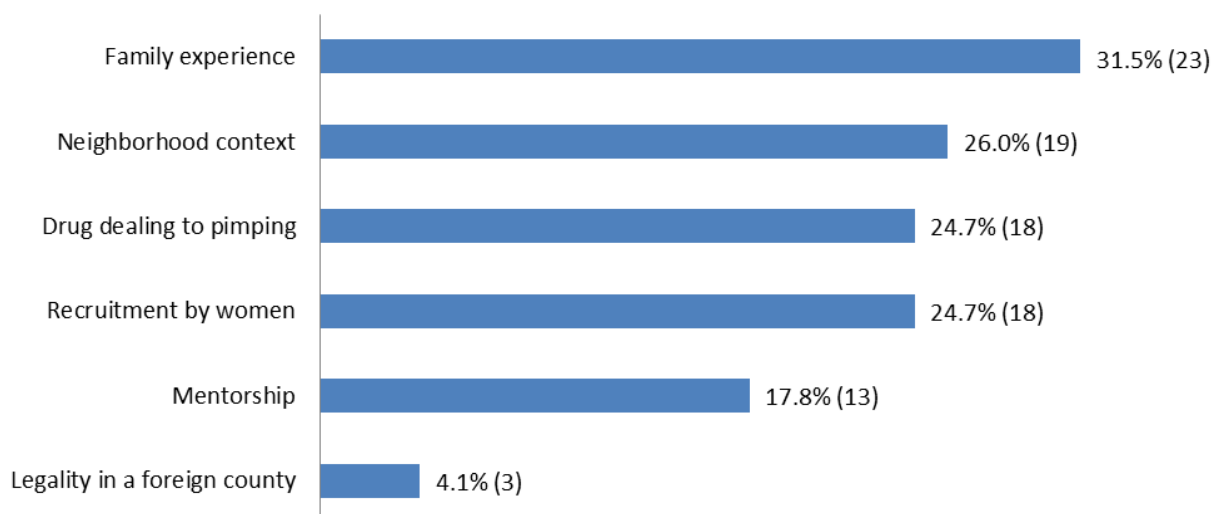
Not much is known about how pimps and traffickers first come to work in facilitating commercial sex. A few analyses show that some pimps and traffickers had family members, such as parents, siblings, and other relatives, who engaged in commercial sex either as facilitators or sex workers, and grew up in communities and neighborhoods where prostitution was a normalized part of everyday life (May et al. 2000; Raphael and Myers-Powell 2009, 2010; United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking [UNGIFT] 2008). Some studies have shown that individuals engaged in other illegal economies, such as drug dealing, may also work as pimps (May et al. 2000).

This section explores how study respondents became engaged in pimping. While experiences were unique, common points of entry can be identified. Figure 5.4 presents the common entry ways into pimping identified by respondents. Respondents cited multiple reasons for entry into pimping, and thus the response categories below are not mutually exclusive.

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<sup>57</sup> Throughout this chapter, the men and women who were compelled to sell commercial sex acts for respondents are referred to as “employees” based on the format of the study’s interview protocol, which approached pimping and its related structure and networks as a business.

**Figure 5.4 Common Entry Points to Pimping**



As prior studies have indicated, this study's findings suggest that family involvement and community exposure are the most common entry points. Respondents frequently had family members who engaged in or facilitated sex work, or lived in neighborhoods where prostitution and pimping were common. Offenders also reported that drug dealing served as a segue into pimping, and encouragement from women was also frequently cited. In addition, study findings highlight additional routes to involvement that were shared across multiple respondents: mentorship by another pimp, and exposure to the facilitation of sex work in a country where prostitution was legal (reported by foreign-born respondents). Finally, respondents also indicated they became pimps as a result of their own personality rather than external factors or influences.

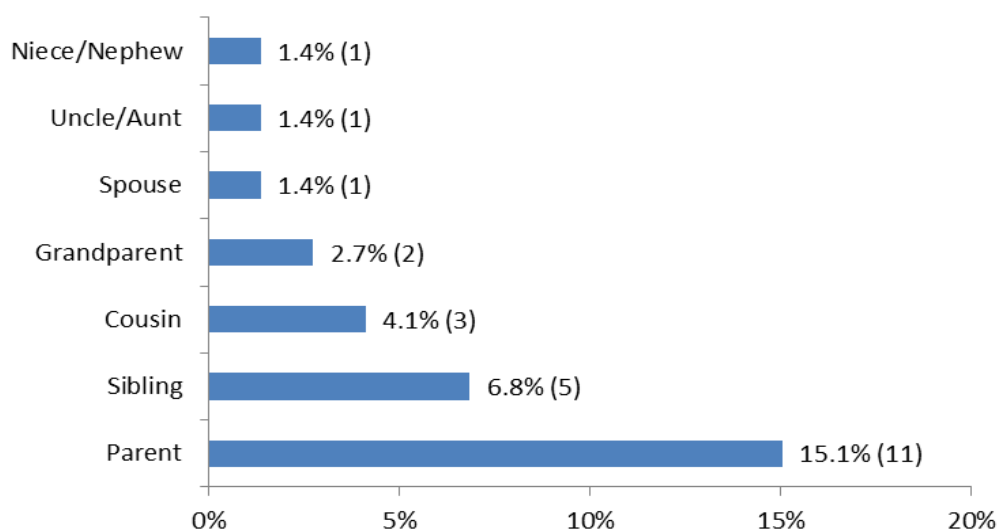
## **Family Experience**

*My mother was a hustler. At an early age, she would pick me up and say, "This is my pimp here." (G7)*

Childhood awareness of sex work and the learned experience of close family members impacted individual decisions to engage in pimping. Twenty-three respondents (32 percent) reported that a family member was involved in pimping or prostitution. Many interviewees became aware of sex work at a young age, and explained that they did not actively seek work as a pimp, but felt they had been raised around pimping and prostitution. Drawing from the interviews with the nineteen respondents reporting familial involvement, figure 5.5 illustrates the relationship of each family member to the offender.



**Figure 5.5 Family Member Involvement**



As referenced above, interviewees who were introduced to sex work through the experiences of family members sometimes felt their engagement in the underground commercial sex economy occurred through passive exposure, rather than active choice: “I was born into it. My mom is a ho” (D3). Other individuals shared similar childhood experiences: “The community I grew up in was full of prostitutes. My mom was a prostitute. I had a sister who was an erotic dancer and another was a prostitute out of three sisters” (E3). A respondent explained how childhood experience informed his understanding of how to engage with women and the way he treated his employees:

When I grew up, my daddy had women around. I took people I knew. I didn’t do it exactly how they did it, I rearranged it. The people I grew up around were starving the women, beating them, mistreating them. I got my grandma and I got three daughters and three sons. I know what it’s like. If it was my daughter, I wouldn’t knock her for doing it. I would say, “Don’t piss your man off, he could beat you, mistreat you.” I try not to do to them [my employees] what I wouldn’t do to my child. (G12)

For some offenders, prostitution was normalized during childhood as a basic means to earn an income, rather than a criminal act or moral transgression. In turn, exposure to prostitution during childhood informed the way some pimps interpreted sex work and its associated economy. A 45-year-old African American male explained the impact of conversations with his aunt at a young age:

At age five and six and seven, I seen it because my auntie was a ho. I’ve seen men come and go all the time, didn’t know. One night, I saw and asked. She said, “The clothes on your back, the apartment, this is how I pay the rent.” I had nothing but love for my auntie, that’s what made me fall in love with a working woman. Then my sister and my momma did it. It’s been in the family. My uncle and father were pimps. (D5)

Family involvement in the underground sex market impacted offender perceptions of sex work. As the quote above illustrates, some respondents observed important women in their lives openly engage in sex work; prostitution was not a hidden trade, but rather a job that provided families with economic support that seemed otherwise unavailable. Neighborhood contexts throughout childhood also influenced offender impressions of sex work and eventual entry into the sex economy.

## Neighborhood Context

*You're a part of your environment. You can't live in Alaska without getting resistance to the cold. (C1)*

Extant literature has found that individuals are ultimately motivated to go into the commercial sex economy for financial reasons, particularly if they view commercial sex as financially lucrative (May et al. 2000; Williamson and Cluse-Tolar 2002) or if they feel they need to enter pimping for economic survival (Raphael and Myers-Powell 2010). Neighborhoods sometimes introduced pimps to the sex economy as a possible means to support themselves financially. In this context, entry into the UCSE is relatively easy, as there are few barriers to entry (Wheaton, Schauer, and Galli 2010). Nineteen respondents (26 percent) noted the prevalence of prostitution and pimping in their childhood communities, speaking to its influence on their own choice to participate in the underground commercial sex market.

Respondent interviews corroborated the ease with which individuals enter the underground commercial sex economy through their neighborhood environments and community ties: "It's just something you hear about and you just take it upon yourself to try and talk to somebody. It's basically like a common thing in the community. It's like some people go play sports or something. It's something certain groups you hang around talk about so it gets put in your mind" (E16). Other respondents expressed similar views. One individual who started pimping at 14 years old, explained how his home environment made it difficult to avoid peripheral involvement in the underground sex market:

This guy has a house and the woman needed a place to turn tricks. And they would pay \$5 for any individual trick who came in to rent the room. One day Pops left and left me in charge of the house. One of the females there ... even back then other pimps viewed me as [a pimp], but I wasn't a pimp. She was 23. She told me she wanted to choose up and gave me some money. It was close to \$300. At the time I was 14, so I was excited ... I was a kid. (D10)

Neighborhood context and community influence assimilated some pimps into the sex market at a young age. An interviewee who dealt drugs prior to his involvement in pimping shared, "Being honest, [I started at] 15 years old—by 16, I probably received my first taste of money from the proceeds. It was more or less the environment I was hanging in; bumping your head and figuring out there is another way" (D8). Another interviewee, who started pimping when he was 13 years old, explained that childhood experience informed his work as well: "What I knew from being around as a project kid, I seen this shit coming up" (B3). A 28-year-old male who started pimping as a 15 year old also shared, "I grew up on the stroll. Prostitute's stroll. Growing up in that environment had me experiment" (G3). As expressed by interviewees, sex work was prevalent in some respondents' childhood communities, and neighborhood environment could encourage or normalize participation in the underground sex market.

Pimping also promised economic survival or mobility to some interviewees who were raised in low-income communities. A 24-year-old African American male explained that he grew up in a neighborhood where "everyone is looking to support themselves. We didn't have two parent homes. Mom can't get any support, and kids get kicked out at an earlier age" (E5). He emphasized the need to consider economic opportunity in conjunction with any analysis of illegal markets:

I figure when you look at underground businesses, you should pinpoint the cause and effect that gets into underground business. Not just the business itself, but the trials and tribulations so that the hand is forced into it. To grow up in underprivileged neighborhoods, especially in black communities, you already have stereotypes around you. You don't have too much of an option. If you don't succeed in school, you have the streets or jail. (E5)

Neighborhood context and socioeconomic status could restrict respondent perspectives of alternative routes. One respondent reflected: "We were piss poor. I remember when I was little I was on welfare, I lived in the projects. Dope fiends, pimps, and prostitutes. Gang bangers, helicopter over your roof. That's no way to live. Seeing glitz and glamor, I always wanted that. Coming up like that, having square jobs was never appealing" (E11).

Multiple factors related to neighborhood context could influence interviewees' choice to engage in pimping. Limited opportunities for legal work—coupled with the prevalence of extralegal economies—were important contextual considerations raised in offender interviews.

## Mentorship

Pimps can also be encouraged to enter the underground sex market through mentorship by other pimps. Thirteen respondents (18 percent) entered the commercial sex market after being influenced or mentored by a pimp. For some respondents, this mentoring relationship started when they expressed curiosity about a friend or family member's wealth or work. As one pimp described, the financial gains associated with pimping are often highly visible and can be compelling to observers:

I had a friend and I went over his house one day. The phone rang, in walked seven girls, one by one. They were all different shapes, sizes, and races. They all dropped money on the table and went into a room. We were in a nice two-bedroom condo. Girls had sleeping bags in a room. Upscale community, it was nice. When I saw that, my mind started spinning. [My friend] showed me the track. (D18)

While pimps sometimes sought out mentors because of their interest in the lifestyle, mentors often encouraged new pimps to engage in their work without provocation. Mentors might comment on a mentee's innate ability or personal suitability for the work. One 35-year-old interviewee explained that his mentor actively encouraged him to pimp:

Someone I already knew was doing it. All the girls seeing him at the club became his clients. We started gigolo-ing with him ... He gave me the game. Just talking. I was selling drugs all my life. When I got in with him he told me how to do it. He said I was already a player and had it in my blood. (G12)

Gang connections also sometimes linked new pimps with mentors who were already involved in the business. A respondent reported "I deal with a lot of Crips. I would take them and teach them what I know. They would try and do what I do, and more females would come" (C8). Once engaged in sex work, pimps still sought guidance from individuals they respected within their field. One respondent explained that "Different pimps have different guys they look up to. We are our own community so we always take care of one another" (E2).

## Recruitment by Women

*She asked, "Will you be my pimp?" I said, "I ain't no pimp, but I'll look out for you though." (D4)*

Respondents also reported that women asked them to act as pimps. Eighteen respondents (25 percent) reported that they first pimped in response to a request or encouragement from a female friend or intimate partner. Law enforcement officials interviewed for this study also reported that women sometimes recruit men to pimp (see chapter 4). As a result, some respondents saw their entry into the sex economy as passive and compliant: "It kind of fell in my lap, hanging around a certain area. A prostitute came and gave me some money one day, and asked if she could come with me. I told her yeah. I was doing it ever since" (E2).

Pimps believed they were approached by women who felt a pimp could offer them some measure of protection or company. One 20-year-old interviewee described the day he was first approached by a young woman who had observed his interactions with members of an opposing gang:

One day I was leaving football practice, and my school was right there on the blade. This girl I go to school with approaches me and says, "You know. I'm from your neck of the woods, I see how you handle these dudes. I've been doing this since before junior high and I think you got something in you." She was 13 or 14 [years old]. (E11)

In some cases, interviewees felt misled or tricked by the woman who first recruited them:

I'm staying in places ... Trying to do everything right. I meet this young lady, she's a prostitute. I'm a nice guy. She said I need someone to watch my back. I said ok. Watching

her back. She is giving me money. She was over 18 but she had younger girls that she was running ... I was watching her back, she gets caught. The police want a pimp. (E8)

Another respondent who started pimping at age 16 reported that he felt in part manipulated by a woman and forced by circumstance to work as a pimp:

If you're not a pimp but you get caught up in the lifestyle, you're just trying to make ends meet. Sometimes a girl will say either you accept me for what I am and mess with me, or don't. You're 19, 20, or 22, trying to make ends meet. Are you going to accept it? Who wants to live in poverty? Nobody. Who doesn't want the finer things in life? Nobody. You are going to accept the things. The decision is to go along with the program. Not because I am going to be labeled, it's life. (E3)

Other interviewees did not necessarily feel they were compelled or manipulated to engage in pimping, but described their entry into pimping as a result of a relationship with a woman. When discussing his entry into the sex economy, one 28-year-old respondent explained:

[I was] 15 years old. It was the last day of school, and it was a girl that I knew. I knew she slept around a lot. Her stepfather was molesting her or something. So she ran away, ended up sleeping with me, then she slept with five of my friends. Somebody made a proposition and from then on [I worked as a pimp] ... that was the first one. (C8)

The same individual went on to explain, "My first female that I worked with, I didn't know I was looking for her. She came to me, and then life fell in my lap" (C8). Another respondent explained that the first woman he pimped initially reached out to him to assist her with a call, but he quickly suggested that he act as her pimp:

I was talking to one of her home girls and I tried to hook her up with one of my home boys. He was supposed to give her a ride because she had business lined up. She called my phone and asked if I would take her to the date, [and she would] give me half the money. I met up with her, took her to the date. I said "You can give me all the money, you don't have to worry about anything else, and you can come live with me." She wasn't working for anyone in particular, [but she] had a couple people she would go see. I said, "Come live with me and don't worry about nothing else." (B3)

While pimps expressed that women first recruited them into pimping, they also quickly recognized the financial opportunity the field presented to them:

She said, "Want me to help you make some money? Take me somewhere where I can hustle." I knew what she was talking about. I took her to the track that Friday, and my partner showed me a place where she could get some money. I dropped her off around 9:00 p.m. I picked her up around 1:00 a.m. I made like \$2,400. I hadn't had money and I was like, "For real? Are you serious?" Well, after that I got in the game. (D13)

Women could serve as both recruiter and mentor, and some pimps first learned how to work the underground commercial sex economy from women. One respondent explained that he was recruited as a bodyguard for a sex worker, but she also taught him the business of pimping: "I was actually approached by a female and she got me in. I was 17. She was at first looking for someone to be a body guard while she goes on calls and stuff ... I was making sure she wouldn't get beat up. She gave me money. She taught me about the business" (A7). Similarly, other pimps were engaged or approached to serve a particular role in established businesses: "It was already structured when I walked into it. She said she already had the ads on the Internet, had a friend at the strip club who had the clientele, and said 'I just need someone to run things, provide money, and decide what to do'" (A1). Pimps noted that women often already knew how to work with a pimp, and taught new pimps about their role in the business structure.

Women also taught some pimps about the rules and regulations that were generally enforced upon employees. A 41-year-old interviewee explained his initial surprise at this power dynamic: "That was one thing that threw me off. She was already advanced. She let me know certain things she was doing she shouldn't do. I wasn't pimping at first ... She gave me the dos and don'ts" (E12). Another interviewee reported: "My girlfriend was the first to get me into it. She taught me the rules, but only the way she

wanted me to know. She fed me the game under false pretenses. So, after I read a lot of books and figured it out myself, I switched the tables on her” (A3).

## **Drug Dealing to Pimping**

*When you do underground stuff, other underground people come to you. (H7)*

Findings from this study support the research of May, Harocopos, and Hough (2000) who found the respondents in their study were intertwined with other underground economies and that several sex workers described their pimps as also being their drug dealers. The pimps in this study described how other illegal economies served as one entry to pimping. Eighteen respondents (25 percent) worked as drug dealers prior to working as pimps; 13 respondents (18 percent) continued to deal drugs while they pimped. Respondents described this relationship as largely driven by links between the demand for drugs and the demand for sex. For one interviewee, that connection became apparent when his drug customers sought sex at the same time they sought drugs: “Like I say, they weren’t my hobby, I sold dope. When I sell, people would say, ‘Hey, do you know where I can get girls at?’ and I say, ‘I got you’” (D4).

As a result, respondents reported that the same individuals often pimped and sold drugs. One individual who continued to deal drugs while pimping explained that people in his childhood community often engaged in both businesses simultaneously: “Coming up as a kid, it was all around me, people who venture into business activity in drugs, and people who gravitated to that business. It was a combination of drugs and females; they go hand in hand” (A2). Similarly, some respondents reported that drug dealers became pimps after meeting women through drug dealing. An interviewee who dealt drugs prior to working as a pimp explained, “Where I’m from, the majority of guys get women because they sell them weed ... Drug dealers end up being pimps” (G12). Another respondent explained that many drug dealers were already involved in sex trafficking networks:

The game has changed. It’s all ex-drug dealers. Everyone who is an ex-drug dealer is in the game. Most of them were already in the business. When you’re drug dealing you accommodate so many females. You’re paying them for sex. The drug dealers end up flipping it. (C4)

Respondents cited different reasons to switch from drug dealing to pimping. One interviewee noted the impact of drug sentencing laws: “Guys I used to hang out with, former drug dealers became pimps. All of us ran circles together. That’s the new thing. Guys are getting too much time for selling drugs. They already know a lot of girls from selling drugs” (C4). Beyond the threat of long sentences, droughts in the drug supply in the mid-2000s also may have caused some dealers to transition into pimping:

There was a drop where no one could get dope, in the middle of ’06 or ’07. Unless you were a crack addict, it was way too hard to find. So it wasn’t easy to get anything to sell. My girlfriend at the time said, “I’ll do anything for you, Daddy.” I mean, I looked like a pimp but I was a square, really. I knew what she meant, but I didn’t know what to do. But, it’s not hard to get into if you’re hood or street. (A3)

Finally, some pimps simply saw pimping as an easier and more lucrative economy than drug dealing. One respondent explained why he transitioned from dealing marijuana to pimping: “All I sold was weed. It was too much. I had to have pounds to make money. [With pimping,] you didn’t have to re-up. With females, you didn’t have to wait. It’s all there” (C8).

## **Legality in a Foreign Country**

This study’s interview sample included five respondents who reported that they were born outside the United States. Of those five respondents, three reported that prostitution was legal in their country of origin. For those respondents, the legality of prostitution in their country influenced their decision to engage in the UCSE in the United States. In some cases, interviewees stated that they did not understand the illegality of prostitution and pimping when they became involved in the UCSE within the United States: “I grew up in a country where prostitution is legal, so when I got involved here, I didn’t look at it as illegal. I didn’t fear that I was doing something wrong” (H5). A foreign-born interviewee, who identified as Latino, shared a similar sentiment: “I didn’t think the work was risky. I thought the work was legal” (G6).

The three individuals reporting legality of prostitution in their home country were born in the Americas. The legal status of prostitution in countries outside the United States greatly varies, ranging from completely illegal to legal and regulated.

## Self-Perception and Emotional Motivations

*You have to understand that when the economy is moving fast, you got to move fast. It is not a lifestyle for a slow or boring person. If you get into it, you have a wild streak in you. (G9)*

While many respondents highlighted the role of external influences in their entry into pimping, personal motivations and self-perception were equally important motivators for some interviewees. One pimp recalled a childhood memory that shaped his self-perception:

My little homies were always trying to do weird shit. I was always money-motivated. They'd be off breaking windows; I'd go inside and get the money. There was an ice cream truck parked on our block for a week. They stole the ice cream; I went for the cash box ... I liked to have money, so people would hang out with me. For me if we are going to do this, [I would ask,] "How are we going to make money off it?" (E11)

Another respondent explained that he started pimping at an early age because his personality enabled him to convince women to do what he wanted:

It started in high school, middle school really. [It was] 8th grade. Just being the dude that can talk a female into having sex with me and a couple of buddies. Always having the gift of the gab, always being able to talk to convince a female to see my point of view. It's like challenging yourself. Seeing how far you can get a female to go. That's how it started. Seeing what I could talk a female into doing. (B3)

Self-perception was also shaped by commentary from friends and family. One pimp noted, "I was 30 [when I started pimping]. All my life people always told me that's what you need to be. 'You're good at it'" (D13). Another respondent reported, "A friend of mine had watched me— when he was growing up and I was growing up—and he said it was in me" (D7). Interviewees also drew comparisons between the types of personalities that enable success in different illegal economies when discussing their own aptitudes. An offender explained that "with leadership and the gift of gab, you'll be able to excel in [the pimp] lifestyle. If you have a more calculative mind, [you'd be] better in the other lifestyles—drugs and everything" (E5).

The choice to facilitate sex work could also be emotionally-driven. For one interviewee, his decision to pimp came in part from an anger toward women and a desire for emotional escape. He explained, "I got a divorce. I was real hurt, young at the time. A friend of mine said pimping was like therapy; I can alter my feelings and direct them in a different direction" (E12).

Self-perceptions and emotional motivations informed respondent choices to engage in the sex market, just as external factors did. One offender reflected: "It's not for everybody. Some people might try, but it's like a calling ... Many people around me tried to do it, but it didn't last too long" (C8).

## Women Who Pimp

Women become involved in facilitating prostitution in a variety of different ways. Their roles can range from being simply the "bottom" and maintaining a more selective relationship to the pimp and clients to personal control over the entire pimping operation (Raphael and Myers-Powell 2010; UNGIFHT 2008; Williamson and Cluse-Tolar 2002). The limited research on women who pimp has shown that female pimps often start as sex workers and can be coerced into pimping because of an intimate partner or another pimp (Raphael and Myers-Powell 2010). While the majority of respondents in this study were male, data collection included interviews with nine female pimps or bottoms convicted of charges related to pimping or sex trafficking. One female respondent explained how her own childhood observations of women engaging in sex work informed her choice to become a facilitator:

I saw women all the time with men, paying men everything they make and not making anything. If they leave, they leave with nothing. I saw that as a child growing up with my

mom. I wanted to go about it a different way. When I talked to girls in the club [I say,] “I’ve had a pimp. I know what it’s like to start all over leaving them.” A woman connects better with a woman. Then a woman comes and says “I get what you’re going through, here’s how you can make a difference in your life.” The girls I worked with in a club, I told them to go back to school. Half the women dancing are there because they are single mothers and have kids to support. I have a kid so I know how it can be. I always kept it honest. (H8)

While all female pimps in this study engaged directly in sex work prior to becoming pimps, female pimps also cited many of the same factors that influenced men to become pimps. Female respondents noted the impact of family member involvement, neighborhood exposure, and mentorship on their decisions to pimp. Some female respondents also segued from drug dealing into pimping.

## **Summary of Respondent Paths to Pimping**

Pimps found different entry points into the UCSE and were driven by multiple factors. Common among study respondents were exposure to family member involvement in the UCSE, the impact of the neighborhood environment, male mentorship, and the role of women in the initial recruitment of men into pimping. Yet some pimps also recognized their own internal drivers that were not linked to external forces. They explained how their personality, often from a young age, made them feel they were well suited for the position. In other cases, emotions drove interest in pimping; as one pimp described above, he first entered the field as a means to alter his feelings following divorce.

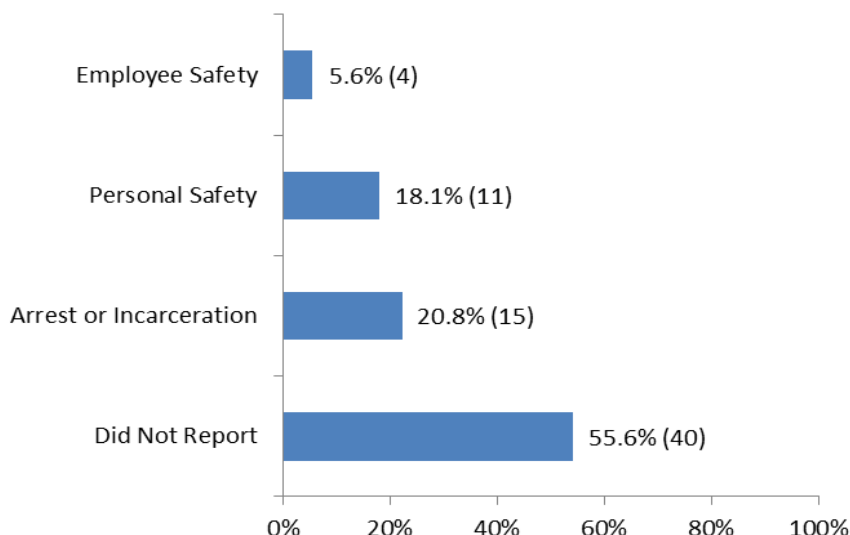
Some respondents expressed remorse for their chosen path, while reflecting on the cultural and social pressures that impacted their own decisions: “Just being raised up and the money was coming in the street life, all that plays a part in my thinking. I didn’t learn who I was and what I was becoming until the end. That’s the old me. When I got caught up in that mentality, I couldn’t stop” (G3).

Despite the ease with which some respondents reported entering the underground commercial sex market, interviews highlighted the perceived risks involved in pimping. While the risks ultimately did not dissuade interviewees from engaging in the underground sex economy, they did at times impact business policies and practice.

## Perceptions of Business-Related Risk

Respondents varied in their perceptions of the risks involved in pimping and respondents who interpreted their work as risky expressed different fears. Concerns about arrest and prosecution were commonly shared, but respondents also feared for the safety of employees and their personal well-being. Figure 5.6 illustrates what respondents reported as the greatest risk(s) of working in the UCSE.

**Figure 5.6 Riskiest Outcome**



## Fears of Arrest

*I was oblivious. I was like, I'm Mr. PI—top of the world. Can't nobody touch me. They touched me. (D7)*

As Figure 5.6 demonstrates, arrest was the most prevalent fear expressed by respondents. One interviewee reported, “Getting arrested was the main thing. That was the only thing I was worried about, really” (D16). A woman charged with sex trafficking, who partnered with her significant other, explained her greatest fear while pimping: “That everything that happened would happen. We had a disagreement about one of the girls because I was questioning her age. One of the other girls said something to me. He said he checked her ID. Then a month later, this happened (referring to arrest and incarceration)” (H7).

As a result of fears surrounding detection and arrest, interviewees attempted to mitigate risk by proactively identifying law enforcement stings prior to committing a transaction that could incriminate them. Strategies to identify undercover police officers varied. One respondent explained, “You ask if they are the police. You see if they look too clean” (C5). Another respondent felt visual identification was not difficult. He stated, “You know the police—their body language and their movement” (D3).

Other respondents noted that police sometimes acted inappropriately during sting operations. One pimp trained his employees to describe customer actions aloud. The respondent believed that doing so could render useless any vocal recording of a sting where a police officer acted inappropriately:

*Lots of things the police can't do or they're not supposed to do. Maybe they're not supposed to touch you, but that never stopped nobody from going to jail ... Every time they make arrest, they have to record it as a solicitation. The recorder could be—with technology it could be a micro-recorder—you could get butt naked with it on ... If the officer were to touch you, they can't see that, so you would have to say, “Why are you touching my coochie?” Or something like that. Putting it out there verbally. If that's the police, that's going to kill their case. (D8)*



### Hiding Behind Legal Businesses

Legal business fronts minimized some respondents' fears of arrest. Previous studies have found that pimps often rely on legal businesses, as locations for recruiting women or finding clients, or as covers for illegal activities (Raymond et al. 2001). These businesses can include bars, hotels, clubs, and legal escort services. Sex work and sex trafficking can also take place in massage parlors, spas, saunas, and other legitimate businesses (Weitzer 2009). Many studies confirm the existence of sex work and trafficking within these seemingly legitimate businesses (Bales and Lize 2005; Hughes 2000; May et al. 2000; Norton-Hawk 2004).

Seven respondents reported using escort services or other legal structures to function as a front to facilitate prostitution, such as adult entertainment agencies, escorting services, and massage parlors. Respondents were able to manage many components of their business legally, while working to conceal the fact that the bulk of profits were earned through commercial sex. As one respondent explained, "We filed taxes and opened a business account ... It was an escort service that allowed for massage and strip tease, but it was the acts of prostitution that made it illegal. We had them sign contracts [that included prohibitions against prostitution], but we turned our heads" (A8).

Legal business structures provided a sense of security since they functioned under the guise of legality; as a result, legal structures sometimes made respondents feel that their businesses would not come to the attention of law enforcement.

Similarly, another respondent explained, "There are certain lines that police couldn't cross, so I'd have girls cross the line, to see [what they did]" (A7). Other respondents felt that by creating legal businesses to mask illegal activities, they were less vulnerable to prosecution (see text box).

Respondents also believed that working with minors was the primary reason that pimps were arrested and incarcerated. As a result, pimps considered avoiding minors as the best tactic to avoid arrest. An interviewee explained, "Honestly you just have to stay away from minors. I've never known a pimp that got in trouble for messing with adults. Law enforcement focuses on minors" (E2). One pimp reflected on his conviction and resulting incarceration: "It wasn't a question of color or background. The only thing that got me caught up was the age difference. If I would have known what I knew now I wouldn't have had her working for me. She was 13 but told me she was 18. She looked 18. She carried every bit of the look of it" (D17). Another respondent reported, "Now that I sit and think about it, it was risky. Today's kids and females grow up so fast that you can't determine who is 18 and who is younger. If I wasn't caught with an underage girl, I wouldn't be picked up" (G15).

The majority of respondents reported that they were aware of the penalties associated with trafficking minors, and thus took steps to ensure that their employees were above the age of 18. Respondents stated that minors sometimes lied about their age, leading some pimps to ask potential employees for legal identification. Two pimps noted that it was a red flag if an individual did not have or had lost legal identification: "Even when I asked for ID—red flag in pimp game, if she says 'I don't have no ID.' If she's 18, you got to have some kind of ID to do anything" (D5). Another respondent encountered fake forms of identification: "You got fake IDs. You gotta go deeper, birth certificates and everything. If you trying to go ahead and do this, you gotta believe what she says, that's what I did, went ahead and took the risk. Having someone younger is riskier. Cause their mind set—if the law catch 'em, even if you give them directions on what to say and what to do, they get jittery" (D7). Respondents also

reported incidents in which family members vouched for the age of a minor. One respondent explained, "This person I was involved with had a fake ID, her mom cosigned for her, her story was accurate with her mom's. She was 16" (E2).

As a result, respondents explained that avoiding work with minors was more difficult than simply requesting identification or attempting to verify age. One respondent reported his experience with a juvenile, who he witnessed get booked in an adult jail facility, which made him think she was over 18 years old:

This girl I had on my case, she lied to me for a whole year. She was 16. The first month I had her she went to jail. I bonded her out on the information she gave me. I didn't know you could slip through a jail and be young. I brought this up before my lawyer and in court. They said, "If you didn't know she was 18, you should have known she was 18." (G3)

While arrest was a central concern for some respondents, other incarcerated pimps stated that they did not know that their actions carried substantial punitive risks. A respondent explained his belief, "You

don't get locked up for pimping. Who gets locked up for pimping? ... I didn't really think people get locked up for pimping" (E12). Another respondent reported, "When I got involved, I didn't think of the risk. When you don't know about something you don't think about it. I didn't think I could get arrested given the capacity I was involved" (H4). Similarly, a woman who worked as a bottom did not know that she could be incarcerated for her involvement in sex trafficking. When asked if she perceived her work as risky, she stated, "Well, I always thought that this kind of business was a misdemeanor, and I never thought I would be in prison for organized crime, or for pimping and pandering, because I didn't think I was pimping. But then I got indicted. I always thought for a misdemeanor I would just have to post \$500 for bail, so I didn't think it was a big deal" (A8). Another respondent reflected, "I look back, you don't have no worries. You don't care about shit or worry about the police. If you told me I would have been booked for pimping, I wouldn't even have thought about that" (B3).

Underestimations of the involved risks were well captured by respondents who drew comparisons between pimping and other illegal economies. One respondent stated that he transitioned from drug dealing to prostitution because he believed that drug dealing carried greater risk of incarceration. The respondent explained, "I used to sell drugs. I looked at it like this: I thought I would go to jail for a long time if I was caught selling drugs, but I wouldn't go if I was prostituting" (C8). Another interviewee had similarly weighed his odds and believed pimping was a safer route than dealing drugs. He explained his thought process: "I can either do [pimping] or risk going to the Feds" (E11). One respondent explained his transition from drug dealing to pimping:

I thought about prison, most definitely. To be honest, I was psyched thinking I was doing the right thing. I thought about the lifestyle I lived prior to that—gang banging and selling drugs and all that type of stuff—I've grown over the years. I thought since I wasn't engaged in those violent things I was halfway on the path to doing right. (D8)

Other respondents had not feared incarceration because they did not believe they were committing a criminal act. A respondent explained, "I always felt like I had done a lot of things, been shot twice, been in fights, robberies – a whole bunch of stuff. Been robbed, tied up. I thought [pimping] was nothing. I was not making them do nothing, not telling them to do nothing. I felt like not telling you to do nothing, wasn't doing anything evil" (E10). For these respondents, there was no perceived risk of law enforcement detection to fear when they did not recognize a punishable offense or moral transgression. Fear of arrest first requires understanding and awareness of legal wrongdoing.

## Fears of Personal Safety

Due to the nature of their work, pimps feared for their personal safety. One respondent reflected, "I thought I was going to die, that someone was going to kill me. Your own brother would put a bullet in your head for the money. When you have money, money breeds certain things in people" (C4). Another interviewee reported the dangers of responding to employees' calls for assistance: "Going in blind when those tricks was threatening them. That was the riskiest. I never knew what was on their mind when I had to go deal with them" (D7). As a result of fears surrounding personal safety, some respondents armed themselves; 16 percent of respondents in this study reported carrying weapons. However, other interviewees did not carry weapons and attempted to avoid situations where such measures would be required. One pimp reported, "I knew how to talk myself out of a situation" (E5).

Female pimps and bottoms that simultaneously managed employees and engaged in sex work experienced additional fears regarding personal safety. Their fears were shaped by past experience; female pimps reported numerous instances of on-the-job violence. A female pimp explained that she was gang raped at age 16:

I got raped. I got gang raped. I don't know where she [my friend] was at or what happened. I don't drink but I was drinking. They slipped some liquid in my drink. [They] broke a bottle inside me. When my mom finally got to the hospital they looked at me because they couldn't help me until my parents were there. I was 16. They found like six different men's sperm inside me. I did press charges. They had a police [officer] outside my door coming to talk to me ... I didn't remember nothing. I would have flashbacks of that night but wouldn't remember who did it. (D16)

Another female interviewee, serving time for conspiracy to commit sex trafficking, explained, “I have been robbed and raped and punched in the face. I was raped by a client. I was robbed three times” (F1).

Beyond physical violence, other personal safety fears were reported by both male and female pimps. For male pimps who engaged in sexual relationships with their employees, the fear of contracting sexually transmitted diseases was also present. One pimp reported, “I was worried about AIDS” (D3). Fears surrounding poverty and hunger, while not commonly shared, were also described. One respondent stated simply, “My only concern was not starving” (E5). When asked what component of his work caused personal concern, another interviewee responded, “I like that question. I was always worried about something because I am a deep thinker. When I would sit back and think, the worst I would think about was hunger” (D13).

## **Fears Around Employee Safety**

Employee safety was also a concern expressed by respondents. Pimps feared their employees could be raped, contract sexually transmitted diseases, or even be killed while working. One respondent explained, “I was more worried about them being harmed. We had a bond, this was my family. My biggest fear was that something would happen to them, which is why I made the ‘don’t drink and drive’ rule. I had them tested, for them. They all had children, so the safety of our kids [was a concern], too” (H8).

Respondents had varying perspectives on employee use of weapons for self-defense. Twenty-two percent of respondents reported that their employees carried weapons while on the job. One respondent avoided carrying a weapon due to a prior charge, but did allow his employees to carry weapons: “They had their little tasers, mace, and pocket knives” (E10). Another interviewee explained, “I got them these tasers, I guess you call them stun guns. They looked like a cell phone. Turn it on, hit the talk button. Starts clicking, gets 1 million watts. They were expensive, like \$99. I bought them online” (G10).

Other respondents reported that the pimp served as the primary line of defense against customers who became violent: “Some [girls] might have mace. No sense in having that if I’m right there with a pistol. They already know that I’m going to shoot. If I have a problem, I’m going to pull the pistol out” (G12). Similarly, another respondent reported that his employees carried weapons, but emphasized the role of the pimp in ensuring the safety of employees by stating, “Girls carried mace when they worked the streets. They had a code of conduct that was their safety, and pimps had a code of conduct that we go by to make them feel safe” (E2).

In lieu of weapons, other pimps tried to arm their employees with information to help them recognize and avoid dangerous situations. One pimp explained his security approach:

The only security I give [employees] is how to protect yourself. No gun, no knives, no mace, only understanding and knowledge about how to protect yourself. Whenever you go to trick’s house, if there’s no furniture in that house, get out that house. No furniture is a no, that’s a rape house. I’ve learned that the hard way. If dude says, “Hey I just moved in, I’m waiting on furniture,” get out of that house. When girls get raped, they get raped in a vacant apartment. That was one of my things. Things that he say and do going to give you a red flag. I ain’t have no gun, all I got is my mouth piece. (D5)

Other respondents tried to mitigate the risks of client violence by carefully choosing the locations in which their employees worked. One respondent reported:

You are not going to put yourself in a place where you need security. I am not going to be in the hood. Don’t need security if there are police out there. The girls had mace or pocket knives ... had me on speed dial if they were having a bad situation. (D3)

While pimps took some steps to ensure employee safety, safety could not be guaranteed. Some respondents reported that employees were raped while working. Interviewees took varying levels of remedial action. When asked if he took his employee to the hospital after being raped, one offender reported, “I would ask them; it depends on how they reacted. Some of them would act like it is okay and we would just keep going. Others, I would drop them off at a hospital. I would wait in the car or maybe go in with them” (B4). Another respondent whose employee was raped while working took her to the hospital, but did not go inside: “When I first started, a girl got raped a few times. I took her to the hospital

... She probably told them the truth that she got raped. She met a guy at the club and went to a hotel. I would take her but I didn't wait around in no hospital" (G3).

One pimp expressed his remorse that he was not supportive of his employees when they were sexually assaulted. He explained, "We'd go to the hospital. There were some girls who were raped. So at first I didn't know what to do. I blamed it on them, but I wasn't supposed to do that. I was supposed to stick by them. I didn't know" (A3). While interviewees took different steps to address employee safety, both preventative and remedial, employee safety was an identified fear.

## Summary of Perceived Risk

Respondent cited multiple risks involved in pimping, with arrest, employee safety, and personal well-being as primary concerns. In response, some pimps attempted to implement risk mitigation tactics. Despite the risks, some pimps still felt it was possible to work within the underground sex market with impunity. When asked if he believed other pimps understood the involved risks, a respondent explained, "Some don't. Some don't even care. I got pimp friends who are in their late 60s still pimping, [and they have] been pimping since high school. They never spent one day in jail. Those are the ones I look up to" (E2). Other respondents expressed remorse regarding past actions and acceptance of the sentence they received: "I messed up my life. Other people's lives too. That's my burden to carry" (E11). The same respondent concluded his interview by reflecting, "I'm atoning. The old pimp in me beats in my heart and in my blood ... Me coming up, I know I could have taken the straight [and] narrow path, I chose to deviate. When I did that, everything that came my way I earned" (E11). An offender serving a 14-year sentence reflected on the value of serious punishments for crimes: "I think that my comprehension is high enough I could've taken the warning. I think when hard lessons [are given] out, firm lessons are gained. If I can't have a pair of Chanel loafers, that's ok" (G13).

For respondents who admitted to pimping or sex trafficking, the perceived benefits presumably outweighed the understood risks.

## Chapter Summary

This chapter explored respondent perspectives regarding identity and popular perception of pimps, entry into the underground sex economy, and business-related risks. While respondent perceptions varied, some cross-cutting themes emerged.

Respondents viewed popular conceptions of the term "pimp" as a distortion of sex market facilitators which places undue emphasis on the role of violence in pimping. Some respondents reported the use of violence, but disputed common perceptions of its prevalence and regularity. At the same time, interviewees acknowledged that poverty, economic need, past abuse, and the use of emotional manipulation all have bearing on the meaning of "choice" for individuals who engage in sex work.

Similarly, respondents also reported that external factors influenced their choice to become a pimp. Common influences included the normalization of sex work through family experience and neighborhood context, pressure from a family member or friend who served as a business mentor, and encouragement by a female peer or partner who expressed desire to engage in sex work or was already actively working in the sex market. Internal and personal factors could also play a role. Multiple interviewees felt they were well-suited to be a successful pimp based on personality, temperament, people skills, and even a propensity for manipulation. Both external pressures and internal considerations shaped respondent choice.

Finally, respondents shared their perceptions of the risks involved in pimping and explained the concerns that factored most prominently into their assessments of risk. Arrest was the most prevalent fear shared by respondents, with personal safety and employee safety also considered.

## Chapter 6

# Networks, Relationships, and Management of Pimping

### Introduction

Relationships and networks are essential to pimps. Not only is the internal business sustained through the control of one or more women, pimps also benefit from networks with other pimps, lucrative relationships with legal businesses, and the blind eye of complicit law enforcement officers. According to Weitzer (2009, 229), “The management of prostitution is one of the most invisible aspects of the trade,” and little research exists on the methods employed by pimps to develop, manage, and network their businesses on a daily basis. Levitt and Venkatesh’s (2007) two-year ethnography of pimping and prostitution in Chicago provides transactional data of how pimps managed their business, and Raphael and Myers-Powell’s (2009) interviews with five former pimps reveal the extent of their management over their businesses, with their control extending over their workers’ living arrangements, transportation within and between cities, and wages. However, few other studies provide primary source data regarding the management structures and networks that pimps use to facilitate sex work.

This chapter seeks to contribute to current research on the establishment, structure, and organization of pimp-managed businesses through data collected from interviews with 73 individuals that have been charged, convicted, and incarcerated for crimes related to facilitating commercial sex. We first consider the actors involved in pimp-managed commercial sex. Then we examine employee<sup>58</sup> recruitment practices, the rules and regulations imposed by pimps including methods of discipline, the networks between pimps and their business competitors, and the role of travel in expanding networks and accessing new markets. Finally, we discuss the role of legal businesses and complicit law enforcement officers in the UCSE.

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<sup>58</sup> Throughout this chapter, the men and women who were compelled to sell commercial sex acts for respondents are referred to as “employees” based on the format of the study’s interview protocol, which approached pimping and its related structure and networks as a business.

### **Main Findings from this Chapter Include:**

**Business structure:** Findings support research suggesting that pimps manage pre-transaction preparation including finding clients, establishing locations and times, and determining the price of the transaction (Levitt and Venkatesh 2007). However, this study also indicates that the duties of a pimp vary drastically across facilitators; while some pimps take full control of business management, others provide only limited oversight and leave much of the business operations in the hands of their employees.

**Employee recruitment:** No previous study explores the process of employee recruitment from the perspective of pimps or sex traffickers. This chapter contributes to extant research by detailing the locations where pimps recruit, the individuals who are targeted, and the methods employed to recruit individuals into sex work.

- **Demographics of recruited individuals:** Pimps recruited individuals of all ages, genders, and races. However, multiple pimps noted that white women are more profitable in the sex market and easier to manage. Pimps also reported that law enforcement has placed a heightened emphasis on arresting and prosecuting individuals who pimp underage women. As a result, many offenders avoided minors, in part due to fears of arrest and prosecution.
- **Location:** Pimps recruited sex workers in different spaces. Findings from this study corroborate earlier studies that suggest pimps and traffickers recruit women in a variety of locations—advertisements, businesses, online, malls and shopping venues, social events, bus stations, and night clubs.
- **Methods of recruitment:** Prior research has suggested that pimps appeal to individuals' emotional dependencies and economic needs through "finesse pimping." This study supports this literature by finding that different forms of coercion and fraud, sometimes independent or even free of physical violence, are used by pimps to recruit and control employees. These forms of coercion and fraud included feigning romantic interest, emphasizing mutual dependency between pimp and employee, discouraging women from "having sex for free," promising material comforts, and establishing a reputation as a "good" pimp.
- **Women in recruitment:** Pimp-managed employees played a critical role in recruiting individuals to engage in sex work. Employees approached individuals, encouraged friends to engage in sex work under the pimp, bolstered the pimp's reputation, and explained the business to recruited individuals.

**Rules and regulations:** Sixty percent of respondents reported imposing rules on employees. Findings from this study offer insight into the rules imposed by pimps on employees, including: the role of drugs and alcohol in the control of sex workers; limitations on clientele; restricted communications with other pimps; and earning quotas.

**Punishment:** Pimps responded to rule violations in multiple ways, including physical violence, isolation, and confiscating possessions. Even in the absence of clearly articulated rules, pimps used discipline to exert control over employees and encourage dependency. Fifteen percent of respondents to this study reported using violence to control their employees, though study findings rely on self-reported information and it is possible that the use of violence was under-reported. Those that discussed using violence indicated that physical violence was always used in conjunction with other forms of coercion. Coercion through psychological and emotional abuse was cited by respondents as the most common form of punishment.

**Competition between employees:** Pimps relied on competition between employees to maintain control and drive earnings. Competition also provided an "incentive program" among employees, which included more personal time with the pimp and spending money.

**Relationships between pimps:** Some respondents claimed that pimping was an independent and competitive business, and that other pimps could not be trusted; whereas, other respondents stated that they looked to other pimps for support and partnership. These respondents looked to their pimp partners as family and felt that they could go to them when in trouble.

**Travel:** Travel was an essential business practice for some respondents. Seventy percent of respondents reported working in more than one city. Reasons for travel included recruitment, police crackdowns, special events, tragedy, and employee appeal. Pimps relied on networks in other cities to provide advice on where to find clients and how to navigate the UCSE in that city.

**Relationships with legal businesses:** Some pimps enjoyed lucrative relationships with legal businesses. Hotel employees and managers often turned a blind eye to prostitution occurring within their establishment. In some cases, legal business employees would actively support a pimp in order to earn additional income.

## Actors in the Underground Sex Market

This section considers the actors participating in pimp-managed commercial sex businesses. In addition to pimps, individuals who engage in sex work, and the customers who purchase sex, other actors can be involved as support staff or middle managers. Twenty-two respondents (30 percent) reported working with a bottom, an employee who engages in sex work but also provides management and oversight over other employees. Eighteen respondents (25 percent) reported paying non-sex work employees to complete additional tasks associated with the business, such as driving employees to transactions and providing security. The below section looks at five primary actors within the economy: the pimp, bottom, non-sex work employees (e.g., bodyguards and drivers), sex workers, and customers. As findings in this chapter are drawn from interviews with pimp offenders, the roles and responsibilities of each actor described here are based on the perceptions of pimps.

### Pimps

While nearly all respondents described themselves as “business managers,” pimps described their role within the underground commercial sex market in many different ways. According to Levitt and Venkatesh (2007), pimps manage most of the pre-transaction preparation, such as finding clients, choosing a location and time for the sex act, and determining the price of each transaction. Levitt and Venkatesh (2007, 26) also found that pimps essentially “perform an important marketing and protection function.” Our findings indicate that some pimps posted advertisements, received client calls, or even provided call scripts to their employees as a means to maintain control over marketing and transactions. Yet findings from this study also indicate that pimps vary greatly in the duties they perform within the UCSE and the level of direct management they impose on employees. Pimps described their role most frequently as relating to recruiting and instructing their employees, managing finances, and providing protection and security.

Respondents described themselves as managers who played an important role in the business by recruiting new employees and teaching their employees how to work within the UCSE. One pimp explained that he “made sure they did all they were supposed to be doing. Douched themselves, cleaned themselves, showered themselves” (D9). Another respondent explained that his role was to teach his employees to make money trading sex safely while evading law enforcement: “I taught them how to make money better, safer. When they were dealing with people, I told them don’t leave stuff online. The only thing not recorded is the instant messenger (IM) chat. Take everything from email to IM. Don’t use the cell phone too much” (G13).

Beyond personnel management, pimps also described their role in financial management. Pimps routinely kept tight control over earnings. A respondent explained, “If there was a tip, they could keep that, but otherwise all the money had to be turned in” (A1). Another offender stated that he kept all earnings in part because he believed his employees would not manage their money appropriately: “Of course, we get 100 percent. With the 100 percent, you make sure [they have] clothing, food, and medical. If you give these girls who come from low-income housing \$5,000 to \$6,000, they’ll be broke in a week. Spend it on foolishness” (C4). Beyond money management, a respondent also described his role in security:

All I really did was collect the money and distribute it, or if there was an issue with the girl’s security, I’d take care of that. They would call or text me. I had the girls go together, have a buddy. I had a time when I was driving around and couldn’t be everywhere, that’s when I hired a driver. I would tell the girls that communication is important. If it’s a half-hour call, and you’re there for an hour, I’m going to think something is wrong and I’m going to need to go up there. If I have to go up there than I’m going to have to kick in the door. Because I know if it’s a half-hour call it’ll really be 15 minutes, so I always have the girls call or send me a text after 15 to let me know how long it will be. The other girl will call, then I’ll call, and if [I hear] nothing, that’s when it’s a problem. (A7)

Pimps described themselves as essential to employee safety. They often felt that they were responsible for any issues that may arise while an employee was on a date and sometimes took precautions to ensure employee safety. A bottom explained, “The pimp acted as bodyguard. He’s on speed dial and walkie talkie.

All you'd say is 'We need your help.' It only happened twice. The client was getting aggressive. The pimp just beat them up" (E1). While active interference was not routine, pimps made their presence felt. A pimp explained, "I'd be at bars just waiting for them to finish doing what they doing. Walking in the mall with them or behind them. Whatever we doing for the day, I'm close around" (D7).

While pimps in this study stressed their role protecting employee safety, past research has explored the rates of violence experienced by sex workers with pimps and sex workers without pimps. The sex workers in Levitt and Venkatesh's (2007) study reported violence at the hand of either their pimp or client at least once a month. Because pimp violence was significantly higher than client violence, the rate of violence suffered by sex workers with pimps ultimately negated any differences in client violence between sex workers who did and did not have a pimp. There is disagreement over whether pimps ultimately protect sex workers from client violence, with some studies finding the affirmative and others finding the contrary (Norton-Hawk 2004). Without speaking to the individuals employed by respondents for this study, it is not possible to know the violence perpetrated by respondents against the individuals they pimped, nor if pimp-initiated violence was higher than client-initiated violence against sex workers.

The role of a pimp was not a clearly structured position requiring concrete hours or an established set of job duties. Pimping allowed for a great deal of freedom. Not surprisingly, respondents varied greatly in their perception of the difficulty of their jobs and the duties it entailed; some pimps emphasized the challenges of maintaining the business, while others felt they did little to sustain their businesses and were able to collect money after "doing nothing." Not all pimps provided the day-to-day operations identified by Levitt and Venkatesh. In fact, pimps reported that their employees routinely posted their own advertisements, received calls from customers, and transported themselves to dates. Some respondents described going days or weeks without speaking to their employees, and reported that they gave employees liberty to determine fees. Pimping often occurs with little evidence of direct, hands-on management by pimps over employees. In some cases, pimps delegated duties to their bottom.

## Bottom

*You want a bottom girl, head bitch or head ho, who runs everything when you're out of town and knows how to do everything a pimp does. Once you get a bottom girl, it comes automatic. (D5)*

Thirty percent of respondents reported working with a bottom. Two pimps described their bottom as a business partner, rather than employee. Bottoms completed a variety of different jobs within the business structure, and explanations of the role of a bottom varied across respondents. However, respondents had a bottom generally agreed that bottoms were experienced sex workers, carried some management duties, had a high level of knowledge about the business, and often had worked with the pimp for a longer period of time than other employees. In some cases, the bottom was also the mother of the pimp's child/children. One respondent explained that his bottom was the most knowledgeable employee that worked for him:

I had one girl who has been around for a long time—8 years. She was the bottom. The bottom is the girl who has the most knowledge of the game, and knows how to get the most money. She understands the way the pimp runs thing. She doesn't run shit or do shit. It is a privilege for her. A pimp trusts a bottom a little more than other girls, but she could be his worst nightmare. (C9)

For some pimps, bottoms trained new employees: "[The bottom] initially booked dates for the new girl. She taught ... girls how to book their own dates" (D18). Another respondent explained the training duties of a bottom: "If a female was fairly new, depends on how long [she has been] engaged in prostitution, my bottom might help her out a bit and show her how a call is done" (B3). A woman who worked as a bottom similarly explained, "[I would tell them] words they should use, how they should carry themselves, and how to protect themselves" (D21).

Other pimps tasked their bottoms with multiple administrative and supervision duties involved in the management of a multi-employee business. Daily activities completed by bottoms could include "getting [the other women] up, making sure they were dressed right and on time for stuff. Picking them up" (E16). Some respondents also saw the role of the bottom as someone who ensured that employees were content: "Her role was just basically to keep all the girls happy, make them feel welcome. My role was to oversee



everything. I collected the money, gave the orders” (E2). For some pimps, bottoms served as the primary personnel manager while the pimp managed the money. One respondent explained, “My bottom had the program, I was just around. They’ve done it before, they weren’t new to gentlemen’s clubs and prostitution. She just put a little team together and I was basically the management to say we should do this with the money” (G1). Another respondent explained that the bottom completed more general, everyday management duties. He stated,

A bottom girl set dates, made sure girls are properly dressed, hygiene properly taken care of, bills paid, need to go to doctors, had something they need to talk about but couldn’t talk to me ... When a female asks a blunt question, “How we do this?”, instead of calling me, “Hey Daddy what we do?” Just ask the bottom and she will tell you. (D5)

Pimps exerted more direct control over and provided specific instructions to their bottom, which allowed a pimp to impose rules and discipline indirectly over the rest of his employees. Speaking about the pimp she worked for, one bottom explained, “He advised me a lot, he dealt with the money—keeping the money on the cards, he was sort of the inside guy. Just because when females wanted a job they don’t want to work for the male, they want to work for a woman, so he knew that money was coming in but didn’t know ... the specifics” (A8). Pimps could also instruct their bottom (or other women, as in the case below) to incite violence as a means of control, without personally using force:

You had your bottom chick. I had female cousins also, that were [there] if I needed assistance. I always enjoyed having a female doing the discipline rather than a male. Women like to listen to women. A chick will buck on you because she wants you to hit her; she knows she can get you locked up. A female-on-female fight is not as serious as a male-on-female [fight]. (C4)

A pimp’s relationship to his bottom often extended beyond business-related job duties; one respondent explained his relationship with his bottom: “We lived together; we took care of the household. It was pretty much both our money. It was more like a relationship than pimping and prostituting. We both had responsibilities” (E12). Personal intimacy often meant that the business management relationship was complex. One pimp stated that while he had an intense bond with his bottom, their relationship would end if she stopped engaging in sex work: “Me and my bottom had a bond out of this world, had a relationship, not boyfriend or girlfriend, but real serious. But if she was ever to stop hoing, she is gone.” (B3)

## **Non-Sex Worker Partners and Employees**

Pimps sometimes employed individuals who did not engage in sex work to complete a number of different duties associated with the business. Twenty-five percent of respondents reported employing people to fulfill business-related tasks outside of sex work. The duties of non-sex work employees ran the gamut. One respondent had a butler and explained, “I always kept an in-house nanny on standby in case anyone had kids” (D18). Others employed people to assist with advertising; an interviewee noted, “My friend would hand out the cards and help with the women and I handled the business side—the money” (G5).

As businesses grew, additional employees became increasingly necessary to answer client inquiries and manage security. Drivers were also employed to chauffeur pimps and employees. A female pimp explained, “I had a couple of drivers ... It depended on how far they drove; they would get \$50 for an hour away and for gas” (F1). Employees could fulfill multiple duties. Another respondent explained, “In the beginning, I was receiving the calls, but then my drivers started taking them. It was a different number in each city, and the drivers were taking the calls and driving the girls. I had a driver for each woman, so I had five” (H5).

Another respondent, who ran an escort service, hired a secretary to help her manage incoming calls. She explained, “I answered the phones. No matter what time of day. We had myself and a secretary, another lady. I didn’t have to pay her. She did it because she wanted to be cute and use her sexy voice” (H8). The same respondent hired a full security team to protect herself and her employees while they worked:

I had security. At one point a girl got robbed at gunpoint by three guys. I got 17 guys on security detail. Paid \$200 a day. Fifteen would work in a day. Two security on me at all

times, one security per girl. At some point we got to that way because of pimps. We'd take women from pimps and they were mad. I went through a security agency. They did background checks and everything. They didn't know at first what they were hired to do. Then one day I took them out to eat. I explained to them why I wanted to hire them. They worked for me for a week, making sure the perimeter of everything was ok. At first, they didn't want to do it. But I said it's going to happen anyway. Might as well get paid \$200 a day and protect a girl, or get \$25 a day with another job. (H8)

Despite the process described above, hiring through a security company or other formal hiring agencies was not a common practice cited among respondents. While the roles of non-sex worker employees varied, one commonality across respondents was that additional employees were usually family members or friends of the pimp.

## Sex Worker Employees

Working with at least one employee who engages in sex work is, of course, a requisite for a pimp to enter the UCSE. Sex workers engaged in commercial sex acts, but also fulfilled a host of other business responsibilities, which varied across respondents. As noted above, some pimps took full control of advertisement and scheduling, while others expected that the bulk of business responsibilities would be completed by employees.

The number of individuals employed by each pimp varied across respondents. While the size of each interviewees' business changed over time, 28 respondents reported the average number of employees involved in their businesses (see table 6.1). Among those 28, the median number was five employees. One respondent stated that he employed 15 women over the course of a few years. Another respondent expressed his preference for only one employee at a time, citing concerns regarding the additional costs of multiple employees: "I usually had one. You make good money with one. That is because you're spending more money when you have more people. ... Plus, females are hard to get along with when they're living together" (D13).

Different business models could dictate or influence the number of employees a pimp managed at one time. One respondent explained his preference: "Four girls at one time. The way I'm doing it, it's not a commercial thing where I have 20 bitches. Everything a bitch gets, it's coming to me. It's pimping for real. They give me it" (B3). According to the respondent, pimps with a higher number of employees were less able to exert direct control over employees and collect all proceeds.

**Table 6.1 Average Number of Employees per Business**

Base City	Average Number of Employees
Atlanta (n = 5)	4, 5, 5, 5, 9
Dallas (n = 5)	3, 3, 5, 9, 36
Denver (n = 4)	4, 4, 4, 7
Kansas City (n = 1)	10
Miami (n = 3)	12, 13, 18
San Diego (n = 8)	3, 4, 4, 4, 4, 5, 5, 6
Seattle (n = 2)	2, 3

Turnover rates could be high, as pimps reported that women frequently came and went. Among 49 respondents who estimated the total number of employees they worked with over the course of their involvement in the sex market, the median number was 20. One respondent explained:

Girls would always come and go. Besides the four that stayed with me, girls would come and go, all the time. Work for a weekend and then head back to the boyfriend after saying

they've made enough. That's what people don't realize; these girls are in relationships, they come from stable homes too. They can be married and have a family. (A4)

Due to such high turnover rates, multiple pimps worked with large numbers of employees over the course of their involvement in the sex market. Ten respondents reported working with 100 or more employees. One respondent explained:

I'm going to say [I worked with] 500 to 600 [employees]. From around the world. A female going to do one of two things—pay and be on her way, or she pay and stay. The one that pay and be on their way, they may pay you for a day and you don't see them no more. Came in, left her clothes, and I don't see her. They come like street cars, five minutes apart. (D5)

High numbers were quoted by other respondents as well. When asked how many women worked for him over the course of his involvement in the sex market, one respondent reported, “about 300. They're like a rotating door” (H7).

While many respondents reported high turnover rates, some pimps reported stability in their employee base: “I never had a broad really leave me. In the line of work I was in, it wasn't a force thing, it was a choice thing” (G15). Similarly, 18 percent of respondents reported only working with one to four employees over the full course of their involvement in the sex market. While pimps varied in their estimations and preferred business size, they generally shared the need to either retain employees or expediently replace employees who departed. The demographics of individuals targeted by pimps to engage in sex work are discussed below under ‘Employee Recruitment.’

## Customers

*I'm dealing with anyone: lawyers, police officers, some judges, and the common dude on the corner. My son was in middle school; some of his teachers would come. (H7)*

The final primary actor in pimp-managed sex work is the consumer who buys sex. Respondents expressed general agreement that their clientele was diverse, spanning ages, races, genders, occupations, and socioeconomic statuses. “Wives would call up. They don't want to be putting their mouth on something at a club. I would have a lot of women who had money who would call from a rich neighborhood. A lot of times the women would call up for their husbands” (F6). Clients also sought a broad spectrum of different services; one respondent who ran an escort service reported, “You do get customers that call just to go out to eat. There are old men ... They call and say they want to go here and you need to be dressed this way. They want someone without tattoos, or they love tattoos, or certain color hair or eyes” (H8).

While acknowledging the diversity of their clientele and their requested services, some respondents did report a customer base or “preferred” clientele. One respondent explained, “Any of the construction workers—that is where I made most of my money” (F6). Respondents' preferences for a particular clientele were not always monetary. Another interviewee, who reported that a large percent of his clientele were enlisted in the army, explained, “Army dudes aren't going to jeopardize their career. I know that type of dude. A lot of white guys. That's thumbs up, they don't to try no bull. Older men, obese men, they don't try to pull anything” (G11).<sup>59</sup> As discussed below under ‘Rules,’ pimps also placed explicit limitations on clientele, most commonly prohibiting transactions with African American men.

At times, pimps would also try to encourage repeat transactions with profitable or preferred clientele: “The thing is to establish repeat business. You don't want to go there and act all crazy” (D8). Repeat clients could provide a more steady and reliable income than one-time dates. Another interviewee reported, “I would tell [my employees]: if you get a trick for \$100 or more, get his phone number, give him your number. That's the only way we made money during the week” (D13). Some clients sought sustained relationships: “[Men will say,] I'll give you \$1,000 a week every Friday, come see me Monday and Wednesday” (B3). Client preferences varied though, and did not always provide for repeat transactions: “Some clients liked girls that they can see over and over. Some liked variety” (F1).

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59 For additional discussion regarding clientele preferences, see “Limitations on Clientele.”

## Employee Recruitment

Pimps rely on employees to earn money within the UCSE, so recruitment is an essential piece of the business. Law enforcement interviews suggested that recruitment tactics used by pimps vary from psychological manipulation to physical force and the use of drugs. Offender interviews also demonstrated variation in tactics, though pimps generally emphasized the use of mental and emotional persuasion over violence or drugs. A 45-year-old pimp explained his recruitment process, which involved detailed questions to determine his potential employees' expectations and background:

I would get a phone call from one of my partners—[he'd say] "I got a little girl, make some money." He'd give her my number, she would call me up and we would chat, and set a time to meet up. [I'd say], "You can come to me." When I sat her down with me we would go over what's going on with you. If you're trying to make a career or pay your rent, you want somebody who is really going to hold it down for a certain amount of time, because you know, after I talk to her, and get an understanding of how you was treated, if you have ever been sexually abused, if you have a relationship with your mother or father, because a female needs relationships.

You need an idea if she can take orders and follow instructions. If she likes money or needs money; there's a difference. Just like an interview, "Are you a people person?" [You have to] get a good idea of the female. I always ask questions, because I want to get with someone who is compatible with me. I don't want to get with no hard head. If she has a lot of drug problems, if she has a lot of folks or pimps, I don't want to deal with her.

If you have a lot of pimps, she doesn't really know what she's doing or they don't know. In a woman's life, she is not going to have more than three or four [pimps] over a 20-year period. Once I get an idea if she's a good girl, bad girl, if she's a thief, [if she] can hold a conversation, if she knows different languages, ethnicities, [if she's] dumb or smart. I don't mess with bipolar women at all, I've had experience.

Once we talked, I let her know what my deal is—I provide you with transportation, living. [You're] well taken care of, not want for anything, you have your own car, own place, protection, and a bunch of clientele because if you don't make no money, I don't make no money. So then I set her up and go find some clothing.

If you have been abused, I need to find out how much abuse you have had. Too much abuse is really not good. Raped ever since she was age 3 and now 19 or 20? She ain't going to have no balance. If she's been molested or maybe her brother or cousin tampered with her, you can get through that. Everyone, I want to make them comfortable, absolutely comfortable. If she's not comfortable, she's not going to perform. You always gotta be honest with your female, because if you lie to them then you lie to yourself, and you're playing yourself out of money. (D5)

Another 38-year-old pimp, who learned marketing techniques through previous sales experience, offered a full description of his own recruitment method. It entailed an involved process dependent on creating impressions to intrigue potential employees:

I'd go into the club dressed real nice, have my hair corn rowed. I let my mustache grow, had two diamonds [in my ear]. Wearing Cole Haan, Polo, Gucci, Coach on the feet, same as the wallet, belt—everything matched. Looked really nice. I'd go in and order, I wouldn't go that often. They'd know I want a table in the back, champagne. I sit at the back, girls would automatically come. Black girls that came up, my homeboy would pull them to the side. Anything that wasn't black, they'd sit at the table, I'd pour them drinks. I didn't say anything slick. I'd purposefully not show them any attention. The girl would notice I'm not talking to her. The next couple times, I'd come in during the week and not get a table. I'd sit at the bar, buy her a drink. This is a process. If a girl is already a prostitute—[it would take] one and a half to two weeks. If not, we're going to do a lot of kicking it, having sex, smoking weed. She's thinking this is a special dinner—but it's not—it's my routine ... If I had other girls, after I'm kicking it with her for a couple of weeks, I'd have a girl dress

really nice—not whorish—I’d have her dress nice in form-fitting clothing. I’d have her drop off a yellow envelope when I’m having lunch with the new girl to be. She’d say, “Hi Daddy, give me a kiss.” I’d say, “Hi Michelle ... how are Becky and Jenna?” ... The whole goal is to get her jealous and curious, and get her to think, “What’s up with this envelope?”

They labeled me a con man. I didn’t think of it as con, but it is. I’d sit there, open up the envelope and flip through it. It’s my money I probably made last week. She sees hundreds, twenties, fifties. She’d ask, “I don’t mean to get in your business, but who was that?” I’d say, “I told you before, if I told you I’d have to kill you” with a smile. And I’d say, “Everyone doesn’t want to make \$1,000 a day. That was Carrie, let’s finish our food.”

I learned these techniques being involved with sales and marketing. [I learned] how to influence people. All of those books, tapes, and CDs. They were all in my library. She would probably ask if I’m a pimp. I would say with a straight face, “Are you a ho?” She’d say no. I’d say, “Did I approach you like you’re a ho? Like I said, everyone doesn’t want to make \$1,000 a day.” We’d go home, I’d drop her off. Before I was four blocks away, my phone was blowing up. (D18)

While not all respondents reported that they actively recruited women (instead, they reported women approached them), there were similarities across respondents regarding the age and race of recruits or new employees, the locations where pimps met new employees, and the types of tactics employed to compel women to engage in sex work.

## Demographics of Recruited Individuals

The individuals who become involved in the UCSE are demographically diverse, and pimps target individuals across race, age, gender, and socio-economic background. However, some respondents expressed preferences regarding the demographics of the individuals they recruited. The information below is not intended to produce a profile of the individuals most frequently targeted by pimps for commercial sex work. However, the following section offers some insight into the considerations that shape pimps’ recruitment tactics.

### Race

*I tried to keep people that were marketable. (A5)*

A majority of respondents stated they preferred to hire white women. Explanations of the rationale for this preference varied. Some pimps believed white women could make more money, due to the interests of their clientele. One respondent reported: “They have a saying in the pimp game, ‘If it ain’t white, it ain’t right. If it ain’t snowing, I ain’t going’” (D18). Another pimp explained, “Some dudes exclusively chase white girls. That’s their thing. Go to the suburbs, malls, that kind of thing” (D10). As chapter 4 discussed, law enforcement officials in San Diego observed that pimps often prefer white girls since they are able to make more money, while Dallas-based law enforcement explained that white women are often expected to earn more money and thus assigned higher quotas. An offender also explained his preference for white employees was monetary: “Only white. I mean, everyone says in this business that they’re the only ones that make money. Because the main clientele was Asian or Indian, and they want white, they only want white” (A4).

Demand in different geographic locations also determined the recruitment and employment of different races. Pimps sought out different women based largely on their marketability to the local population. One pimp explained the trends he observed at one point while working in California: “Asians were a hot commodity so they go quicker. Caucasians and Latinos not that much because [I was working] closer to the border. African Americans are everywhere. Asians were the commodity” (E15). Other pimps sought other races for the same reason. They expressed a sentiment that certain races appealed more to the clientele in the area they worked. Relative exoticism thus drove demand because “the client base wants anything exotic looking” (D18).

Other respondents explained that their racial preferences were based around assumptions about the ease of employee management. A respondent distinguished between white and black employees by stating, “A black ho will make you pimp, a white ho will let you pimp.” He explained, “The key to that phrase is black girls talk shit, will stab your ass, fight. Even if they’re cool with everything, when the police bust them they’ll turn on you” (D18). Another black respondent shared a similar perspective on employee management, stating that the actions of his employees reflected on his own merits as a pimp: “I don’t deal with black girls, unless she is a superstar. The way the woman acts shows how good of a pimp you are. My preference is not black—most were white, Hispanic, and Asian” (C9).

A woman’s ability to blend into different environments without attracting attention from law enforcement was also considered by some pimps. One pimp explained,

One thing about a white girl that a black girl cannot do—you can stand a white girl on any corner around the world and she can sell [sex] from here to New England to France ... a white girl can sell [sex]. Still a white world. That’s why my partner likes white girls. What they make from a white girl takes two for me. (D5)

Sharing a similar belief, an African American respondent offered the following explanation of his preference for white or Asian employees:

Caucasian and Asian women would blend in anywhere. They can hang around Manhattan and no one is going to be like, “What are you doing around here?” When it comes to a black girl, [that can] kind of [be] one of those red flags to anyone. [Then people ask,] “What are you doing around here talking to this person or that person? You are up to no good.” (E3)

Other pimps expressed a preference to work with black employees, often citing concerns over law enforcement detection. One African American pimp explained he could more easily evade law enforcement if he employed only black women:

I’m what they call a duck master—I deal with only black girls. If I am going through a certain kind of state and the Cadillac has only blacks, police just let me through. White girls—doesn’t look right. If one of them come back as a known prostitute, they say they already know what you’re doing, you’re a pimp...My partners love white girls because it’s more profitable. (D5)

Pimps also made observations about how employee race could impact likelihood of arrest and incarceration. According to some respondents, the race of employees also had an impact on charges and the length of sentence imposed. One interviewee reported that the length of his prison sentence was impacted by the race of his employees: “They were only white females that I was charged with because that’s all they care about. If these females weren’t white I wouldn’t be facing all this time right now” (C8). Another respondent also believed that prosecutors charged pimps differently based on the race of their employees:

**Respondent:** In [my city] there is a district attorney and her daughter was prostituting and she found that out. When that happened, I don’t know what she did or what she said—but it turned into two different charges. If the girl is white, it’s called slavery.

**Interviewer:** Modern day slavery?

**Respondent:** Yeah. They added new types of rules to it. On the Internet it’s considered human trafficking because it’s across state lines. In the beginning, none of that was there. In most cases, it would just be pimping and pandering.

**Interviewer:** If girl is not white, it’s pimping and pandering?

**Respondent:** Right.

**Interviewer:** In your case it was not a white girl?

**Respondent:** Right. I got a friend, he is here for the same thing I am, we got caught at same time but different types of women, but he got 15 years to life. White girl. It was his girlfriend. The girl I was caught with was my brother's little cousin. She was 14. (E13)

The respondent quoted above was sentenced to three years in prison.

Despite differing rationales, the majority of pimps expressed a preference to employ white women. While respondents might state a preference for a particular race, they also reported that they employed women of all races. In many cases, their reported preferences did not align with the race of the women they primarily employed.

## Age

*I had a lot of respect for the game. If a girl was under 18, she wasn't going to work for me. (G3)*

Speculation exists over whether there are significant age differences between sex workers who have pimps and sex workers who work independently. Norton-Hawk's (2004) comparison of independent and pimp-facilitated sex workers found that the individuals in her sample who had pimps had earlier average ages of first commercial sex activity. May, Harocopos, and Hough's (2000) study provided statements from respondents discussing how younger sex workers are more likely to be pimped than older ones. Neither of these studies, however, systematically confirms nor refutes claims over the minor status of pimped or independent sex workers.

Law enforcement in multiple cities observed that minors involved in sex work are frequently pimp-controlled and pimps in this study observed that a growing number of women engaging in prostitution are minors. As one 36-year-old pimp stated, "Almost everyone I knew who came into that lifestyle came into it as a youngster. Or someone manipulated them" (D10). However, the majority of respondents reported that they did not attempt to recruit underage women. One offender, who worked in the UCSE for over 15 years, explained that vulnerability leads minors to initially engage in sex work:

Now a 15-year-old girl runs away from home. She knows she can't get a job, nobody will hire her ... She has only one thing to offer, and that's sex. And she knows this. She's in the street, she's got to eat, and she's got to survive. I know girls that have sex with men for something to eat and a place to stay. She goes on the track and does some prostituting to make some money, if the dope boy doesn't get to her first. Nine times out of ten, the dope boy will get her and get a hotel room and call his friends. They'll all have sex with her and then they'll get tired of her and she's back on the street. Then she's on the street, girls ask who she's with, she says she's by herself. Then a guy picks her up, asks who her pimp is. She says she's by herself. Then he does what he wants with her, because she doesn't have any protection. It is best for a woman, if she's working the track, to be with a pimp. If she's 15 and working and ain't with nobody, my ladies will tell her, "Get someone, we don't want you down here. Because you're too young and we don't want the heat." You have some ladies that have kids [that are] 15 years old. And most of the cars stopping used want her because she looks young. (G7)

For respondents who knowingly recruited younger women, their reasons varied. Some pimps recruited younger women based on their marketability. One respondent explained, "As a rule, most men would prefer a younger looking girl than an older looking girl" (G7). At the same time, respondents reported that clients had different preferences: "Some guys want a woman who is 50 years old because she knows everything; some want a 13-year-old girl" (G7). Pimps also noted that younger women could be easier to manage. A 20-year-old pimp explained that younger women were less likely to have already worked with another pimp, and thus did not carry expectations or assumptions about the way a pimp would or should run the business: "I don't really like people who is used to someone else. If I chose to get somebody, it would be somebody new who hasn't really done it before. So I don't have to worry about them being used to someone else" (E13). A 45-year-old pimp reasoned that young women were more ambitious, would work harder to earn money, and would not burn out after a couple years at the job:

The difference between a young female and an older [female]—the young is going to be more ambitious. She's more reluctant to accept everything because they want to know what it's like to buy a pimp or a Cadillac or pimp coat or live in a nice apartment with a family. If you have what we call a "seasoned female," she might be with you a couple of years and then burn out and go to another pimp. More structure to older females, more understanding with younger females. (D5)

Other pimps recruited minors because they themselves were underage and thus connected to younger social circles: "When I was in high school, I would do high schools. Because I was younger and couldn't get into certain clubs" (E13). Law enforcement officials in San Diego similarly observed that minors who pimp usually recruit other minors through high schools or malls to engage in sex work.

While a few interviewees highlighted reasons they recruited younger women, most respondents stressed the importance of avoiding any business relationship with minors: "I was determined to stay away from the younger bitches. 16 gets you 20" (B3). As discussed in chapter 5, many respondents reported that minors lied about their age so that a pimp would hire them to engage in sex work. Similarly, law enforcement officials from multiple study cities observed that minors sometimes pretended to be over 18 years of age and are commonly marketed as adults. One 32-year-old respondent explained that law enforcement often misconceived the relationship between pimps and minors, assuming that pimps actively seek out underage girls:

This particular business ain't about pimps going to high school and recruiting a girl. Government don't understand how this game original come about. Girl run away from home, look older than what she is. They think pimps are going out and enticing them. A percentage of them might be out seeing if they can get a young girl, play on her, try to use her to get money. (G3)

The same respondent reported that his felony conviction resulted when he hired a minor who lied about her age:

The money was coming, I had three or four girls. We used to go out of town. They would get arrested, I would get them out. I even got arrested. You could go through my name, I had a criminal history, but it was all misdemeanors. The only thing that got me in here was I had a minor sneak up in my stable and she lied about her age. Some girls want to get out there and be grown when they ain't grown. I got manipulated and it was too late. (G3)

Working with minors or younger women introduced challenges and liabilities that some pimps preferred to avoid, and some respondents expressed a preference for working with older women. One 28-year-old respondent explained, "If they get stopped [by the police], they're runaways. They got to go back home. You can't travel with them. It's just a hassle" (B4). In the words of a 38-year-old respondent, "Bitch better have a felony charge and stretch marks to mess with me. I know she is grown and been to jail" (D3). Another offender reported that his choice to work with older women was not only based on concerns over prosecution, but also dictated by his principles: "If a female got caught she got a misdemeanor, but if she's fewer than 18 it's a whole different game. But it's not just that, I have principles too. I mean, a lot of people look at what I'm doing and they don't like it, but, I can't have any of that. I tried for 21 or older, but 18 is the youngest I'd even consider" (A7).

## Personal History

Studies have highlighted some common characteristics of women targeted by pimps. According to extant research, pimps and traffickers often sought out women for whom they could promise and provide financial support, safety, and personal relationships. As a result, they target women who are economically disadvantaged, dependent on drugs, victims of previous sexual assault, or lacking in emotional support (Raphael and Myers-Powell 2009, 2010; Raymond, Hughes, and Gomez 2001; and Wilson and Dalton 2007).

Law enforcement respondents indicated that pimps often targeted women and minors from disadvantaged backgrounds and groom women and girls through promises of living in a big home and



affording a fancy lifestyle. Offender respondents corroborated these findings, as one pimp explained: “I would look for deprived [females] or females in bad situations or runaways” (G8). Another respondent described his ideal employee, who was economically disadvantaged and experienced previous abuse:

My perfect employee for business had a taste for things that glitter, was persuaded easily, was sexually active, was damaged (i.e. daddy issues, victim, etc.), motivated by poverty, and willing to go the distance. (E11)

Other respondents emphasized that hardships opened recruitment opportunities for pimps. One respondent explained that “most [recruits] came from broken homes. Mom and dad were divorced. Mom wasn’t paying them much attention. Even though they were pretty and had nice bodies, they still had low self-esteem. You can tell by body language—hunched over, sad looking” (D7).

Whether or not they explicitly sought vulnerable women, pimps observed that their employees often had histories of sexual assault. One 22-year-old pimp explained, “[They] all had the same story—[when they] were younger, they were molested in their home ... Not too in with their families. Not family relationships as good as they could be. Drug habits” (G11). Another respondent remarked on the pervasiveness of sexual abuse among the women he pimped: “Of the five [employees] I had, all five had been raped before. It was by uncles or stepdad” (G12). One offender noted, “A lot of times I’d say they were from broken homes. They were from all over, no trend of where, they’d come from wherever” (A8). Another interviewee reported similar observations: “Either they been molested by their father, their mom was on drugs and used them to support their habit. Runaways, they ran away from home at 14 or 15 and wanted to get out and have sex” (G3).

Other interviewees also acknowledged that economic need, past abuse, and low self-esteem impact a woman’s choice to sell sex: “A lot of prostitutes was forced into this life style [by living conditions], and then there are a lot that chose because of things that happened in their past. Some were sexually molested, some have low self-esteem, some think they might as well get paid for it” (E2). Citing both sexual assault and learned family experience, one female respondent believed that some women were raised to expect to “get something” out of sex:

They make out pimps as being bad, and they’re not. Oftentimes the girls are in bad situations. Oftentimes the father is molesting them. Most of the girls [are] abused from the time [they were] ten up. And it’s common for black women to teach daughters, get something out of it if you’re going to sleep with someone. And we see our mothers being promiscuous. (G8)

Other pimps reported less consistency in socioeconomic status and past abuse. When asked if he tended to recruit a particular type of women, a 25-year-old African American respondent noted that he employed women of all different economic means, but did observe some socioeconomic trends:

Different backgrounds, different circumstances and scenarios. Some from well-to-do families who really liked to party, get high, love to [have sex]. Come to the parties and dance and work and entertain. Some of the Caucasian females were from lower economically developed families, trailer parks. They were trying to make money to support their family and feed their family. Their backgrounds were different—all kinds of Caucasians. Hispanics, different backgrounds, different types of family. African American females, basically all of those females were from the hood, the ghetto. Hard times. Lots of girls were raised in foster care. Didn’t have much. They come to make money. (H1)

There were other observations that ran counter to common conceptions and extant literature regarding the individuals who work for pimps. One pimp explained how experience changed his own assumptions: “I assumed in the beginning that they are damaged women but I have had wives of preachers who came and hoed for me for a month. Some do it for the money, some do it for the thrill, and some do it just to do it” (C9). Other respondents reported that there was no shared background among recruited employees: “Every girl that come, you don’t really know where from. Some might come from another pimp. Some, like my bottom, might come from a decent home. She was tired of following grandma’s rules” (B3). Another respondent explained, “They aren’t just like anyone down on their luck—they are college students. I’ve

had women who are married and come through” (D13). Similarly, offender respondents reported that any woman, regardless of her situation, could be manipulated to engage in sex work:

**Interviewer:** Is there a certain type of girl who can be manipulated?

**Respondent:** I believe any female is doable to change, by that I mean going to make money. I have seen girls that come from college, that come from money, who have been changed by this process.

**Interviewer:** How long does that change take?

**Respondent:** It can take anywhere from a day to a few months.

**Interviewer:** Do you think that it’s a difference between a day and month if they come from a better family?

**Respondent:** Yeah, if they come from a good home, stable family they’ll take a bit longer, but they come around. (A4)

One respondent stated that he actively avoided working with women who had experienced sexual abuse or were economically disadvantaged, suggesting that women who engaged in sex work for reasons beyond personal choice might not be as reliable or invested in the work. He explained, “To be quite honest, it’s not like I have it on my mind that I am going to target weak people. A lot of people think you target weak people down on their luck, that’s not my criteria. That puts you in a situation that you are just in it for that, and it’s not your choice” (D8). Another pimp suggested that the majority of women who sell sex under pimp management share an enjoyment for the work rather than vulnerability or a history of abuse:

But realize this: you enjoy doing what you’re doing. You’re doing what you’re trained to do. So, every woman doesn’t want to be a stenographer or go to the penitentiary and interview a convict. There’s always a segment of society that chooses to be a prostitute. Of course, if some girls had an alternative, there would be a fraction that go in another direction. But there are some that want to experience this. That are born for this. (G7)

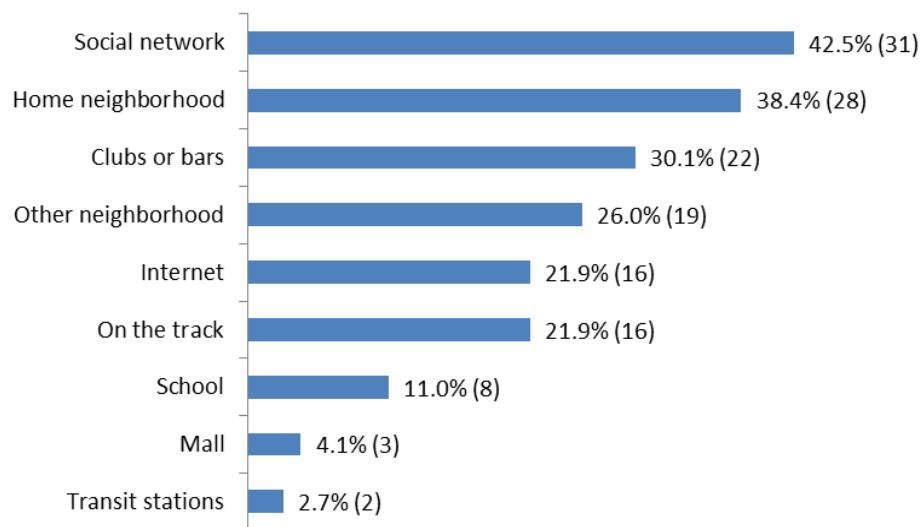
While findings did indicate that vulnerability and past abuse can be and are exploited by pimps, there no simple profile of women targeted by pimps for sex work. Pimps reported recruiting and employing women of all races and backgrounds. The following section considers locations where pimps commonly recruit new employees to engage in sex work.

## Locations of Recruitment

Pimps and traffickers recruit women through a variety of public locations: advertisements, businesses, online, malls and shopping venues, social events, bus stations, and nightclubs (Hughes 2000; May et al. 2000; Raphael and Myers-Powell 2009, 2010; Raymond et al. 2001; UNGIFHT 2008). Respondent interviews corroborated the tremendous diversity of recruitment locations and suggest that pimps are generally not discretionary in their recruitment locations and rather take advantage of daily social interactions to connect with potential employees: “Malls, college campuses, clubs, restaurants. It’s a full-time thing. If I’m at a gas station and I look at you...” (G10). Recruitment does not occur in a discrete location that the pimp and prospective employee seek out, but rather plays out in highly public spaces. Another pimp explained he was always looking to recruit women: “Wherever I go, I talk to people. I try to talk to as many people as I could wherever I go. If I was going to the grocery store, I try to talk to people there” (E16). That said, pimps can and do use location as a tool of recruitment by targeting particular areas based on their assumptions about the women that inhabit them. Certain locations were frequently mentioned and warrant additional consideration.

Figure 6.1 below presents commonly referenced recruitment venues. The following sections consider respondent descriptions of common recruitment locations and recruitment methods and are not mutually exclusive.

**Figure 6.1 Recruitment Venues**



## **Neighborhoods and Social Networks**

Prior research indicates that pimps recruit women through home neighborhoods and personal networks, such as through the friends of the individuals they pimped or friends of family members (Bales and Lize 2005; Hughes 2000). The use of personal networks and relationships can often be the most effective recruitment method (Bales and Lize 2005). Interviews with pimps corroborated these findings; 43 percent of respondents recruited new employees through their social network, while 38 percent of respondents recruited in their home neighborhoods. One female pimp explained how she often found women in her neighborhood to pimp and would engage them in conversation: “I would ask, ‘Well, would you like to make some money? If you want to make some money, I’ll show you how to make some money’” (D17). Another pimp explained that he would seek women in his neighborhood because he could anticipate their economic needs: “In our neighborhood, everyone is looking for a dollar. They don’t have two parents at home, and mom can’t support them or they got kicked out at an early age” (E5). Personal networks or neighborhood affiliations could afford pimps prior knowledge about individuals and open up opportunities to exert social pressures.

## **Clubs or Bars**

Clubs provide a concrete space for pimps to engage women. Thirty percent of respondents reported recruiting new employees at clubs or bars. One pimp explained his process for meeting women at clubs:

Sometimes I just go to clubs. If I go to a strip club or normal club, I just sit back and prey on girls that prey on me. Some girls go to clubs to catch somebody who has money [to] buy them drinks, [act] flashy. If I go to a strip club, I throw some money on a certain girl. I just kick it with her, ask if she wants to get some food and get something to eat. I have it on my mind how I’m going to approach it, what I do.” (G12)

As pimps sometimes targeted certain neighborhoods assuming that residents might be more susceptible to pressure from a pimp, one respondent indicated that pimps target specific clubs based on their assumptions about the attendees. He stated, “If you’re looking for turnouts, go to the bottom of the barrel clubs” (D18). Clubs also provide an environment where an individual’s inhibitions might be lowered through alcohol or drug consumption, which affords the pimp the opportunity to sell his “business idea” to women in more vulnerable mental and physical states.

## External Neighborhoods

Pimps also recruited from neighborhoods outside of their home community. Twenty-six percent of respondents travelled to specific neighborhoods to recruit. Some respondents explained that they sought out neighborhoods based on perceptions of the women that inhabited those spaces: “I wouldn’t go to the ghetto neighborhoods. I’d go to the suburbs where it’s a little more class” (D7). While pimps did not limit their recruitment efforts to specific locations, particular neighborhoods may be targeted where pimps believe that women will be susceptible or open to engaging in sex work.

## Internet

The Internet has become a powerful tool for employee recruitment. Media stories and news reports over the past few years have highlighted the growing concern over the role of the Internet as a facilitator for prostitution, with columnists such as Nicholas Kristof covering the role websites play in recruiting and advertising human trafficking and prostitution (Fink and Segall 2013; Kristof 2012; Neuman 2013). While websites such as Backpage have been used to advertise commercial sex transactions to johns (Kunze 2010; Latonero et al. 2011; Latonero et al. 2012; Smith, Vardaman, and Snow 2009), online advertisements have also been used to recruit employees through job announcements, escort ads, false modeling businesses, and other forms of advertised employment (Sykiotou 2007; UNGIFHT 2008).

Findings from this study corroborate that online advertisements and social media websites have opened the door for new forms of employee recruitment. Twenty-two percent of respondents recruited through the Internet. According to respondents, pimps used specific language to advertise on erotic services websites: “I recruited them on the Internet. At the end of the ad for erotic services I put ‘now hiring models.’ The ads were on Craigslist and Backpage” (F1). In some cases, online recruitment created a steady stream of “applicants” and enabled pimps to run a systematized recruitment process:

I [recruited them] through employment ads, interviews, second round interviews, etc. I had an 1,100 square foot office. I didn’t reveal the specifics [in the ads]. I would say, “Hiring bikini model types—instant cash—must be 18.” People call, they speak with the point center which is pretty much the secretary, not too many specifics are revealed. We do same day appointments. Every interview or appointment is booked within 10 to 15 minutes of each other. When you come in the office, there are five or six girls waiting. (D8)

Extant research has also suggested that traffickers and pimps increasingly recruit individuals through social media, such as online chat rooms, dating websites, and social networking websites (Latonero et al. 2011; Latonero et al. 2012). While uncommon among this study’s respondents, at least two pimps reported the use social media such as Facebook, MySpace, and MocoSpace to recruit new employees.

## On the Track

Pimps also sought employees on the “track” or “stroll,” an area or street known for prostitution within a particular city. Twenty-two percent of respondents reported recruiting employees on the track. On the track, pimps could easily target and hire women already engaged in or interested in engaging in sex work. Respondents explained that women already engaged in the underground sex market did not require training or an introduction to the lifestyle. One pimp explained that his recruitment model focused on the track: “I drove around these areas where people—where tricks—were looking for women to have sex. I stayed in those areas. When I see—whatever female I saw—if she walking in that area and I see her getting in and out of cars, I’m looking to recruit” (D13).

## School, Mall, and Transit Stations

Respondents also reported recruiting at schools (11 percent), malls (4 percent), and transit stations (3 percent). Pimps who recruited from schools started pimping at a young age, and recruited from school while they were enrolled. Transit stations also afforded pimps opportunities to recruit employees. Transportation hubs brought heavy traffic of different people, and drew individuals of all ages who might

be escaping one life or seeking another. As a result, bus stations and subways could help pimps connect to women who were potentially more inclined or easily persuaded to follow a new path. One respondent explained that he sought out bus stations to look for runaways: “Most girls you meet at the greyhound station. Runaways ” (C8). Another respondent reported, “One of my partners, he was a pimp, and he was ho-less. Ho broke. I had a couple of hos and he was like, ‘Take me down to the west end, I’m going to see if I can find me a hooker.’ It [messed] me up because he was like, ‘that’s where the runaways be’” (D13).

Schools, malls, and transit locations could be associated with younger women or minors. Only a few pimps indicated that they sought out particular spaces to recruit young women or minors specifically. Rather, pimps who recruited from malls and schools were generally younger men or minors as well, and sought individuals of the same or similar age.

## Methods of Recruitment

*I believe one of the strong points of this business is manipulation. Say an individual is left wanting, needing. She has aspirations for a bigger future, that’s key. A lot has to do with promising, what you have at that point. So if I have nothing, I can’t offer her anything. (A4)*

Williamson and Prior’s (2009) study of domestic minor sex trafficking revealed how pimps often appealed to their victims’ emotional dependencies and basic economic needs through “finesse pimping,” which involved the recruitment of minors through a bait-and-switch technique of providing wants and desires in return for commercial sex acts. In contrast, some pimps use a “gorilla pimping” style to intimidate and coerce an individual into trading sex through the use of violence or threats (Williamson and Prior 2009). Many respondents self-described as “finesse” pimps, but defined the term more broadly than Williamson and Prior, suggesting that finesse pimping simply meant a pimp did not engage in physical abuse to control his employees. One pimp explained his belief that pimping now is more about persuasion than violence:

Well, [in the media representation of pimps] it seems like [women and girls] are more forced or tricked. In actuality, you can’t make anyone do anything they don’t want to do. It is their choice in the end. Back then, in the old days, they called it gorilla pimping, slap the girl around. It’s not like that, it’s more subliminal. You trick them, you kind of persuade them in a way ... they are having a hard time, they are in town, money is tough. There is no line of work they can find at the time. Do a couple dances for this club. Slowly usher them in. “Try this, you got the right stuff.” Eventually they get real comfortable with it. They’re making almost six or seven [hundred dollars] a week. “You are making more than what you do on a regular job, what you got to lose?” “You’re not from this area so no one really knows you.” “You can go home whenever you want; I am not making you stay.” Once they get comfortable, they don’t want to leave. The money is good. (E15)

Pimps in this study did not commonly admit to the use of violence to either recruit or control employees; despite both prior research and common perceptions of the role of physical violence in pimping, only 15 percent (n = 11) admitted to work-related violence.<sup>60</sup> While study respondents did not disclose the use of physical violence in recruitment, multiple respondents described other coercive and fraudulent tactics to attract and persuade new employees to engage in sex work. Pimps chose and adjusted these methods based on their perceptions of the woman they intended to recruit: “Not all girls are the same, you can’t approach them all like that. You have to figure them out, figure [out] how to manipulate them” (A4). Similarly, law enforcement respondents in this study also observed that pimps’ recruitment tactics varied depending on the characteristics of the woman or girl they intended to recruit. Perceptions of vulnerability influenced recruitment methods: “How I approached it depended on how bad their situation was. In a bad situation, I’d say, ‘You’re already having sex with guys and not getting anything, you should get something.’ In a better situation, tell them they’re pretty and they should be modeling. Then tell them they can get paid a little more if they do this or that” (G8).

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60 Findings from this study are based on self-reported data. Based on prior research with pimp-managed sex workers, it is likely that respondents under-reported their use of violence.

The methods of manipulation and persuasion described by pimps were direct and verbal (e.g., promising a better life by engaging in sex work), as well as non-verbal and indirect (e.g., clear demonstrations of wealth, first developing romantic relationships). Table 6.2 presents the often used tactics of persuasion to encourage women to engage in sex work for a pimp. The following sections explore each tactic in greater detail.

**Table 6.2 Persuasion Tactics**

<b>Tactic</b>	<b>Features</b>
Romantic or sexual relationships	Often used to recruit individuals not previously engaged in sex work; appeals to individuals' emotional needs
Mutual dependency	Emphasizes the benefits of a pimp/sex worker relationship; encourages concept of shared, day-to-day subsistence
Monetizing sex	Encourages women to get paid for activities they were already engaged in; often used to exploit women in economically vulnerable situations
Associated lifestyle	Verbal promises of material comforts; outward display of wealth and business profits
Reputation	Pimps build reputations around how they treat and take care of employees; generally helps attract individuals interested in or already engaged in sex work

## **Romantic or Sexual Relationships**

Respondents regularly engaged in romantic or physical relationships with women prior to pimping them. Cobbina and Oselin (2011) have observed this practice, finding that pimps and traffickers may originate as the romantic or intimate partners of the women they ultimately facilitate in commercial sex. Particularly when recruiting women who had not previously engaged in sex work, respondents frequently commenced a business relationship by first expressing romantic interest. As a result, personal attraction played an essential role in recruitment. One pimp explained that the relationship “started off with a physical attraction, someone attracted to me or the tools, like cars, designer watches” (D8); another respondent noted that “looking good, smelling good, feeling good” (B3) helped him recruit women. Dating was often the first step to recruiting women into sex work. A respondent explained that he would “probably date [prospective employees] first, see if [I could] get comfortable with them” (D7). Pimps also routinely misled prospective employees into believing they were interested in developing a romantic relationship. One offender explained how romantic relationships were used as a tool, comparable to extortion:

It was really like, it's going to sound bad, but it was extortion. It wasn't really like extortion, it was just the way it works. The way you put it to a person. A person tells you they love you, but how much do you love me, how far will you take your love for me? (E13)

Pimps also reported having sex with individuals as a way to measure their willingness to sell sex. A 20-year-old respondent, who started pimping at age 16, explained, “One thing I would do was that I would sleep with them once, to see where they were at sexually” (A4). Other respondents encouraged friends to have sex with women to measure willingness. A 24-year-old offender explained how he used his own social network to help him identify and recruit new employees: “We'd have things that were called turn-out parties. One time, I saw three girls walking together. I brought them to my three homies ... and if they had sex with them, from that I knew they would be down because there were sexually active. I don't know if they knew that [was what I was doing]” (A3).

Respondents observed that their employees sought many of the same satisfactions from pimps—such as material comforts, romance, and sex—as they did from an intimate partner. One respondent believed, “A woman wants a man in her life 90 percent of the time, unless she is a lesbian ... the reason of feeling secure, feeling comfort and what not” (E3). As is discussed below under management and organization, pimps often encouraged competition between employees by rewarding high earnings with personal time with the pimp. Romantic relationships were thus not only a tool of recruitment, but also allowed pimps to exert control over employees by appealing to emotional needs and rewarding business profits with attention.

## Mutual Dependency

*We are going to take over the world, the world is ours. No one can stop us. (D7)*

Pimps also recruited women into sex work by emphasizing the mutual benefits of a pimp/sex worker relationship. Respondents expressed the sentiment that they shared a lifestyle, with its accompanying challenges, with the women who worked for them. One respondent explained how this mentality supported business relationships between a pimp and a woman who was already engaged in prostitution: “It was more people who were already a part of the lifestyle, and you come to an understanding or agreement to do whatever it was you need to do. It’s never that easy. It is more, ‘You are a part of it, this is what I am missing in my life. You can fulfill it’” (E3). A 22-year-old respondent explained, “As far as recruiting, I wouldn’t use that. It’s more that I had female friends and [prostitution] is something they do. I know they do it. A lot of the time, they’re already doing it and need protection. You come across another female who needs protection. Then you’re partners” (G11).

Emphasizing a relationship of mutual dependency to recruit women was particularly effective when recruiting individuals who had concrete and immediate subsistence needs. Discussing his initial interactions with possible recruits, one pimp explained: “Basically [women] always come with a story. ‘I am living from house to house, my mom is tripping.’ I say, ‘Hey, here is what I do, you can take your kids here, they can watch your kid, you can work.’ I always lay it on the table, never lie to them. Never take them out and buy them nice things then say you owe me. Never like that” (E2).

The concept of a shared, day-to-day subsistence also helped pimps compel their employees to continue to engage in prostitution. One pimp explained he would ask his employees: “How are we going to make money? Where are we going to sleep tonight? I’m hungry, I’m cold, and I need somewhere to lay my head tonight. How are we going to get the funds to do that?” (E5).

## Monetizing Sex

*They wasn’t into making money, they was just giving themselves away but not getting paid for it. (D17)*

Pimps also recruited women by discouraging them from “having sex for free.” One pimp explained, “Some girls were already doing it. I was basically telling females that they were having sex or unprotected sex with men. I would just tell them that they were already doing it like that without even knowing it, like for alcohol or to hang out with certain people. And it went like that” (A7). Another pimp offered the following description of women who engaged in prostitution:

See, these girls go through a phase. They start off just [having sex with] everyone in the community. At these parties, [they are having sex with] everyone. Then they get tired like that and run into someone like me. I might ask them, “Hey, you ever thought about making money doing this?” Say she did it once but didn’t know where to go. And that is where I come in. I wouldn’t say I turned anyone out. Some of the girls might have gone to a location, didn’t know what to do, who to look for, what to wear. They might have already been with a guy and then ran into me. (B4)

The same interviewee noted that this tactic often made women feel embarrassed or angry, which he suggested was ultimately effective to convince women. Another pimp described how women responded to his recruitment tactics:

I kind of got them into doing it for money. They were just sleeping around and stuff. Like with new girls if I go to a club, I’ll go from there to my house. If they will sleep with me that first night, try not to tell them my name or nothing. I ask them if they know my name. ‘What if I sleep with you, never talk to you again?’ Next week, go to a club. She say she attracted to me, I say, “You could sleep with this person for three minutes. What you doing right now, that is more of a ho than you sleeping with that person and getting some money.” They be embarrassed and mad at first, then be like whatever. I used to rent out clubs, get [them] used to being around me. I’d say “I don’t want to be around you.” They’d say “What do I have to do to be around you again?” (E10)

Again, respondents indicated that telling women they were “already doing it for free” was particularly influential with women who were in economically vulnerable situations.

## **Appeal of Associated Lifestyle**

Some pimps felt that prominently demonstrating their wealth was key to recruiting women into the UCSE. A respondent noted, “Well I had \$10,000 worth of jewelry on, I mean, people get excited. I was driving a Lexus, they liked that” (A3). In some circumstances, pimps were able to offer women a greater degree of comfort; one pimp believed that “mostly the girls come from low-income housing. You start talking about money, always sparks interest and curiosity” (C4). Another pimp was able to recruit women by “offering them a better living and better living conditions” (E2).

The perception of wealth was also a selling point for women already engaged in prostitution. Pimps competed with one another to promise individuals greater living comfort, whether or not they could deliver:

When you see a girl on the track and you want her, you send your bottom girl to recruit her and ask, “How you livin’ over there?” Some pimps live in hotels, some in mansion. You can say, “Hey, you staying in a hotel right now? I can stay you in a house.” You move up in ranks by having more than the next dude or at least a better game. (D5)

Speaking from a similar perspective, another respondent compared recruitment to political campaigning:

We are all competitors against each other, what we are doing is campaigning. How I wear my jewelry, nice clothes. You bring your bitch around, I might not be talking to her, but you’re talking to [her pimp] and you’re campaigning to get to her. You really are not going to put your female in a position for your partners; we’re all each other’s competition. (B3)

Another pimp believed that while some younger women start prostituting for someone their own age (such as a fellow high school student), they later seek out a pimp who can offer a more desirable lifestyle:

There is someone in that high school with them that says, “Look, let’s do this.” The guy might not be able to keep up with the girl, she learns the ropes and decides she doesn’t want to be with him. When you’re young, you want to party, smoke, and drink. She decides he is messing up her money. They know how much they make, it’s not like they’re giving it up and don’t know. I had girls tally up the money and then ask where the money is: “You broke? Why do I continue to give you money and we have nothing to show for it?” She run across somebody who is in [a better] position, nice car, he got other girls. He might be older. She might be 16 or 17, he’s 21. He might have an apartment. His girl is out there with him, she meets her, decide that’s where she wants to be. (E3)

Pimps routinely used the promise of a better life to compel women to engage in sex work under their management. As a result, public displays of wealth were a common recruitment tactic shared by respondents.

## **Reputation**

*I never had to recruit. When your name is on the streets, people know your reputation and people contact you. If you have some kind of business and they want a job, they contact you. (D5)*

In many cases, pimps believed that their reputation as a good pimp was the primary source of attraction to new employees. One respondent explained, “Girls would prostitute out of their houses and knew it wasn’t a good thing to do. They knew I was a family guy, I wouldn’t mess with them. I would do security and say, ‘If you touch them in the wrong way, you will have me on top of you’” (F6). A female pimp discussed how her reputation attracted employees:

I was a good pimp. Ladies are attracted to a good pimp. I wasn’t abusive, I wanted something out of life. They could gain some of the things they didn’t have by making fast



money. I took care of who took care of me. It was a good relationship, if you chose to prostitute then you'd choose to be with the person that treated you the best. (G7)

A male pimp made a similar observation:

There is a term we use, "It only takes one." That's basically, once a prostitute chooses you because of the way you act or the way you are seen, you don't really have to do much else. You can get rich off her. The way you treat her is the way other females are recruited into the fold. I used the hands off approach. My mom came from an abusive relationship, and I've always been taught you don't put your hands on girls. There are other ways to get what you want. I've always been a big dude. My momma told me, "If you're gonna be big, you're gonna be fly doing it." (E11)

Emphasizing the importance of reputation, respondents often openly discussed their work with prospective employees. As one pimp explained, "I just found out that lying to people didn't work, just telling people straight up. They would ask 'What do you do for a living?' I'd just tell them straight up" (A7). Another respondent stated, "If you always tell the truth, can't say nothing about you. If you tell the truth, they'll accept you no matter what. Other dudes smoke, beat them up, [and women] still do it for them. If you tell the truth, they can't say nothing about you" (E10). Respondents also reported simply creating circumstances to make women feel more comfortable about or interested in sex work. One respondent explained his approach, while acknowledging that it was a form of manipulation:

Recruitment was not what I was doing every day; I wasn't looking for females to turn out for me ... there would just be certain people who would ask what I did. I'd say, "I'm a pimp." They'd be like, "Stop playing." I was like, "No, I am. Do you want to get down?" I'd bring three or four other women so they would feel comfortable, and they would think, "Oh, well it must be ok." Manipulation is ok. (A7)

Building a reputation as a pimp was particularly important for recruiting women that were already engaged in sex work. As one respondent noted, "Most of them know what I did. They chose to be out there doing it on their own, and happened to see me or one of my girls and chose up" (G3). Other respondents similarly expressed passive roles in the recruitment process:

Actually, I didn't recruit. Because it was prostitution, and prostitution is a way of life, a subculture, I didn't have to solicit females. They came because of the lifestyle they chose to live. And people recommended if they want to prostitute, you need to be with him, he'll look after you. (G7)

While not all respondents proactively recruited women, they discouraged individuals from independently engaging in sex work by stressing the "need" for a pimp to provide protection within the UCSE. To some respondents, a pimp's reputation was critical to attract employees.

## Women in Recruitment

As the section above indicates, women who were already selling sex under the control of a pimp often played an instrumental role in promoting the business to prospective employees. In some cases, pimps reported that employees would use their own social networks to recruit: "The girls who worked for me would get their friends and bring them to me" (F6). Another pimp explained, "In the lifestyle ... what happens is a lot of girls meet girls who are doing the same thing they're doing. Then they become cool and say, 'Why don't you come be with me and my dude? That way we can stay close and work together'" (E3).

Women also took a more direct and intentional role in recruitment. One pimp explained how recruitment was managed entirely by his bottom: "[My bottom] did [the recruitment]. She would go to lesbian clubs. She'll be on the party grind ... I act like I be selling dope and say 'I want her.' She'll go sell dope to a dude, and get at the girl [with him] on the low" (E11). Employees were able to help male pimps more covertly approach individuals, a fact that was also noted by female pimps. A female offender described how her past experience as a sex worker informed her recruitment method once she started her own business:

I always ask if they have folks—that means, "Do you have a pimp? Are you currently working for someone?" You hear they're working for such and such, you ask how they like

it. In one house, one guy had 13 girls. Tell them I can change their situation, change how they feel about themselves. Working for a man can feel belittling. Working for a woman is more like a partnership, you know the emotional baggage, and you connect. You think about what you've been through as a woman. Lies men always told us are lies men are telling us to get their money. (H8)

Female employees also played an essential role in training new employees regarding business practices: "If a new female came along, I had other females to prep them and let them know what was going on" (A7). The support of employees allowed pimps to take a hands-off approach, particularly when attempting to engage individuals who were already selling sex independently or with another pimp. A respondent reported, "I would see a ho on the track and I would say 'What's up? How you charge? I'm just trying to [have sex].' And she would say, 'I charge \$80.' And then boom, I take them to the house, and I burn off, I leave, and my hos talk. And then they like 'Daddy, she's ready.'" (D13). Another respondent reported a near identical process: "So I pick them up ... and drop them off to the girls I already have. By the time I come home—two or three hours later—they were all set, knew the rules" (A3).

## Choosing Fees

While not frequently reported, some respondents explained that women had to pay a fee when they entered a relationship with a pimp. This fee varied. As one pimp explained, "A woman has to choose me, say she wants me to be her man. And she has to prove she wants to be with me by paying a choosing fee. [The fee] ranges from \$500 to sky's the limit. Someone might have \$10,000, \$15,000. There are others that might not have no money, but they're running from a bad situation and trying to better themselves. I might accept her" (G7). While the fee amount may not have been strictly enforced, some pimps nevertheless felt it was a critical step. A respondent stated, "The girl has a choosing fee. She pays me to get into my household" (D18). While the quotes above indicate that the practice occurs, findings from respondent interviews suggest that the exchange of money is not essential to establish a business relationship between a pimp and sex worker.

## Summary of Employee Recruitment

In sum, pimps employed different recruitment tactics to grow their businesses and did so in multiple contexts, sometimes targeting specific women in particular locations. A pimp's reputation was essential to attract employees that expressed willingness to engage in sex work. Recruitment tactics also relied on manipulation and exploitation of vulnerabilities, and pimps reported misleading women or exaggerating their romantic interest to initially attract prospective employees. Female employees often played an active role in recruiting new employees by boosting a pimp's reputation or making the initial contact with the recruit. Once employees were recruited, pimps employed similar tactics to maintain control over their employees' activities and earnings.

## Management of Work Relationships

Research on pimps and the individuals who work for them has shown that the relationship between the two parties can be coercive, violent, and antagonistic (Norton-Hawk 2004; Raphael and Shapiro 2004; Raymond et al. 2001). Extant research has indicated that targeting individuals who are economically or emotionally weak often allows pimps to exploit these dependencies as a means of control (Raymond et al. 2001).

Respondents in this study emphasized the use of manipulation, emotional abuse, exploitation of vulnerabilities, and encouragement of dependency as methods to maintain control and management over their businesses. While only 15 percent of respondents admitted the use of violence, previous studies with pimp-managed sex workers indicated the use of violence as a punishment or threat toward sex workers who violate their rules (Williamson and Cluse-Tolar 2002). Ultimately, pimps have a significant degree of power when it comes to controlling their workers through threats and intimidation, financial exploitation, and physical abuse. Respondents to this study managed work relationships by creating rules, imposing different forms of discipline when rules were violated, and encouraging competition between employees. These common practices of control are considered below.

## Rules

*One bad girl can knock your whole stable loose. Get rid of the bad apple. If I needed to hit them, I didn't need them. (G3)*

Pimps exerted control over their businesses by imposing rules on employees. Sixty-one percent of respondents reported requiring their employees to follow certain rules. Often, respondents described these rules as an effort to promote employee safety and well-being, while other pimps explained rules as a means to gain control over employees and coerce them into sex work. While pimps shared different policies on rule-making and enforcement, some common rules were shared across respondents. The most common rules among respondents related to the use of alcohol or drugs, allowed clientele, communications with other pimps, and required earnings. Table 6.3 presents the prevalence of rules as reported by our study respondents.

**Table 6.3 Common Rules**

Rule	Frequency
Drug and Alcohol Use	27.4% (n = 20)
Cienteles	20.5% (n = 15)
Communications with Pimps	19.2% (n = 14)
Quotas	17.8% (n = 13)

## Drugs and Alcohol

Past literature on pimps and their attitudes regarding employee drug use has offered mixed findings. Pimp-encouraged and pimp-facilitated drug use has been seen as a “[substitution] for violence as the means of coercing compliance from workers” (May et al. 2000, 8). Researchers have also found that some pimps do actively exploit and encourage sex workers’ drug addictions in order to create dependency upon the pimp and increase the pimp’s control over actions (May et al. 2000; Raymond et al. 2001). Respondents in this study did not corroborate extant literature suggesting that pimps tend to target women who are dependent on drugs (see Raphael and Myers-Powell 2009, 2010; Raymond et al. 2001; Wilson and Dalton 2007). To the contrary, respondents reported avoiding employees with drug addictions.

Other researchers have found that not all pimps encourage drug use. Williamson and Cluse-Tolar (2002) argue that only lower hierarchy pimps, called “tennis shoes pimps,” allow themselves or their sex workers to abuse drugs, while more successful pimps do not allow their sex workers to engage in drug use. Findings from this study also suggest differing approaches among pimps; however, more respondents restricted drug use than encouraged or exploited drug dependencies or use. While six percent of respondents reported that they either encouraged or were complicit with employee use of drugs and alcohol, 27 percent of respondents prohibited or set limitations on the use and abuse of substances.

The small percentage of respondents who encouraged drug use explained the utility of substance abuse to facilitate sex work. One pimp explained, “I’m going to tell you something—most hookers that I had, they used cocaine. So I guess when you’re on cocaine, outside looking in, you want to constantly be doing something. When they get on that cocaine, they like ‘C’mom Daddy, let’s get some money. I want to wear my new hook up.’ They want to get pretty and I’m like ‘Damn, you really want to do this?’” (D13). Another respondent explained that drugs could calm tensions when conflicts between employees occurred: “It doesn’t escalate to a point that it gets physical, mostly verbal. Just be quiet, shut up, sit down, drink this, take a little bit of this” (E15). As the quotes demonstrate, drugs were provided to employees to encourage profit and manage employee conflict.

Other pimps did not actively encourage drug use, but allowed employees to get high. One respondent who also dealt drugs supplied his employees with drugs when they wanted them. He reported that his employees would use “Powder, pills, ecstasy, violet—it’s a new drug, like ecstasy” (G12). Other respondents reported that they also engaged in drug use. One pimp explained, “[My employees had] drug habits. [Ecstasy] pills, weed, cocaine. The majority was cocaine. I was doing it. They came around and tried it. I thought it was their choice, so it was like, go ahead. I always had some on me. They might go out

on a particular play or deal; this particular person might have some. They might offer it to them; they take it and then come back” (G11). Another respondent reported that he was aware his employees often used tips to buy drugs, and he would sometimes supply money to employees for drugs. He stated, “I let them keep the tips, sometimes the tips could be good. I wasn’t in the room; I don’t know what they could’ve done for a tip. If some girls felt like they really needed the drug then I would give them money. Usually they’d use tip money” (G8). Pimps also reported that they supplied drugs to employees simply because they wanted them, rather than doing so for an identified business interest.

More frequently, respondents reported that rules were imposed against employee drug and alcohol use. Some pimps would attempt to avoid hiring women with drug habits altogether: “I didn’t like none of my girls to have a habit. I smoked weed so I didn’t have a problem with them smoking weed. I just didn’t want them to have no hard drugs. I wouldn’t even take those girls. [I would] ask straight up, ‘You have any habits?’ When they have a habit, I’d put some money in their bra, [and say], ‘Take a little to get high with’ [and then send them away]” (B5). Drug habits were avoided because they presented possible complications and additional problems for pimps: “It was for sure that no drugs [were allowed] because that’s basically another problem ... weed, alcohol, everything” (E16). One female pimp also explained:

One thing I didn’t do was mess with girls with drug issues. You bring one girl who’s addicted to cocaine in a house with girls who don’t do drugs, [people] staying up all night, would all do drugs to stay up if she came in, then all the profits go to maintaining the drug habit. Can’t mix the two. I tried it one time, it didn’t work. It made me look like the bad one, making the girl leave. I never had a drug issue; I don’t know what it’s like. (H8)

Some pimps set rules against the use of hard drugs specifically, but allowed for marijuana use and drinking. A bottom corroborated her pimps discomfort with employee drug use by stating “He didn’t allow drugs. He would let people smoke weed, anything else he’d wig out over” (D21). Another pimp noted, “There was no drug use in my family ... In the later years, marijuana was socially accepted. But I didn’t like drugs, contrary to the popular belief that you have to hook women on drugs to get them to do it” (G7). Other pimps expressed rules against drug use as more a preference than a set policy. A respondent explained, “Yeah, no drugs. If you gonna smoke weed, I already tell you what to do a lot, I feel that weed is a downer, makes you tired. When you tired you don’t wanna do anything, I prefer you not to. But, if you feel it’s going to get you where you need to go, then do it” (E13).

Rules against drug use were sometimes related to reliability. Respondents reported that employee drug use could have an impact on money collection. One respondent worried about the impact of drug use on business earnings: “That’s one reason I refuse to deal with girls on drugs. For that itch to get high, [they’ll accept] \$20. I met one girl, real pretty and charging \$50 for the date. I said to at least charge \$200” (H8). Another respondent explained:

I would prefer they didn’t do drugs or drink, so I preferred that they didn’t do it because then the client didn’t feel like the girl was in control. Sometimes we would get calls for a girl that did drugs, so they would book for a couple hours, but I always wanted to make sure they collected the money, because sometimes they would get too doped to ... they had to collect the fee and even tip first. (A8)

For two respondents, drug use could be grounds for dismissal. One pimp stated, “I’d fire her for drugs ... Just like they would do at a McDonalds” (A4). Another respondent reported, “Anything like crack, meth, [they have] got to go” (D7). While some respondents allowed for drug use, respondents more often feared that drug dependencies would affect employee reliability and impact earnings.

## Limitations on Clientele

*Don’t talk to black guys. Don’t date black guys. Because they might be pimps. (E1)*

Twenty-one percent of respondents reported that they did not allow employees to sell sex to either black men or younger men. As discussed at the start of this chapter, 66 percent of respondents identified as African American, and 8 percent identified as multiracial. Black respondents often exhibited prejudices against black clients, and young respondents expressed assumptions about other young men.

Reasons for restrictions varied, but the most prevalent concern regarding black men was that they could be pimps attempting to hire employees. One pimp explained that his clientele rules were “Just no blacks. You can’t distinguish if he is a pimp or not, so just cut all that out of the way. You won’t end up bamboozled. Guy comes and says, ‘I am not a pimp, I just want a date.’ He then takes her to a hotel, and then says he is taking her with [him]” (E2). Another respondent explained, “It’s basically no black men. Most of the time the other black men were other guys who were trying to pimp on them or take advantage of them. Try to rape them or something like that” (E16).

Pimps also reported concerns about violence, compensation, and drug use. One respondent explained:

They are not allowed to date black dudes ... 25 and under, [I] don’t let them date either. Don’t let them date unless [the guy is] 50 [years old] or something. Young dudes usually want to do drugs with them or rob them. Black dudes might try to fight them or might be pimps. They try to take their money or say they will pay you later. It’s always something. (E10)

Another respondent expressed his desire to avoid deals with younger men: “I’d peep and see what type. Young dudes, that’s a no, I already know what they’re doing. They’re trying to pay with counterfeit money, get drugs. There’s no swapping for drugs. They’ll try and play those games” (G11). Sharing similar clientele assumptions, another offender explained, “It’d be no black men, and we wanted them to not be 30 or under. Because sometimes even the younger white men, they won’t tip, or they would think that they could beat the [woman] up, or think they could do it multiple times in one hour” (A8).

Concerns regarding compensation also demonstrated racial assumptions regarding socioeconomic status and employment. A respondent explained his policy: “That’s why I don’t deal with black guys, they don’t want to pay the price or want extra time. If you deal with someone working 9:00–5:00, it’s not going to be a problem” (C8). The respondent’s clientele restrictions seemed to be grounded in the assumption that black men were not engaged in consistent or legal employment. Other pimps made exceptions based on circumstance; one pimp explained “I accepted black customers when they called the ads. No black guy off the track. If he called the ads, he’s bringing his driver’s license” (D13). Pimps generally reported reaching a wealthier, higher-paying clientele through online advertisement.

## **Communications with Other Pimps**

Pimps at times attempted to restrict the communications between their employees and other pimps. Nineteen percent of respondents set rules relating to communication between employees and other pimps. To some respondents, this was a strict and clear-cut rule: “The females couldn’t talk to the guys. Period” (A7). Another respondent explained, “There was no talking to other business owners. The girls would tell on each other, or I knew the other owners, and they’d tell me” (A1). A bottom corroborated her pimp’s regulations surrounding communications with other pimps, explaining employees “couldn’t talk to whoever you wanted to talk to, couldn’t talk to other pimps” (D21).

Rules were sometimes intended to ensure that employees respected a pimp’s authority: “Don’t disrespect me. A bitch got to be in pocket. Another p[imp] come along, don’t be looking at him. Keep your head down, look the other way” (B3). However, respondents also shared the belief that they were protecting their employees by regulating their interactions with other men. One respondent explained:

The reason people tell the girls not to look at other males, or black males, is for the sole purpose of their own protection. If a young lady or girl is looking at another man it is like being in a relationship again. You are opening up a door for you to be approached for you lustin’ or whatever the case it be. The guy catch you looking, he might think he can go talk to her. If you show him no mind, then he will leave you alone. In that lifestyle he going to come up to you, talk to you, and if he don’t like your attitude he might grab you. (E3)

While rationales varied, pimps were able to gain control over employees and further enforce dependency by restricting employees’ communications and relationships with other pimps.

## Quotas and Performance Incentives

In some cases, pimps imposed quotas on their employees or used performance incentives to encourage maximum earnings. Eighteen percent of respondents reported that they imposed a quota. Some respondents expressed strict quota guidelines: “I had a quota of \$600. If they came back with \$550, or \$599, she had to go back out. I mean, I don’t want you to think I’m really harsh or hard on them over a penny, but I just had to teach them they couldn’t be doing that, stashing away money” (A3). Another pimp expressed a higher quota: “They needed a thousand dollars a night. They would have to go back to work and get it. She would go anywhere to get it. We were open all day long” (D3). A bottom explained that her pimp also imposed a \$1,000 per night quota: “Each girl had to make \$1,000 a night. If they didn’t make it, they’d have to work until they got it. They couldn’t come in the house until they did” (E1). While

respondents with escort services did not generally enforce quotas, they did impose structured fee schedules (see text box).

### Escort Service Fees

Escort services functioned similarly to pimp-managed businesses in many ways, while carrying some significant distinctions. While prior research has found that indoor prostitution does not automatically equate to better working conditions (Raphael and Shapiro 2004), formalized contracts and set fee structures can mean that employees maintain control over a higher percentage of their earnings. While pimps often collect all earnings, escort service contracts required employees to only turn over a portion of their earnings. One respondent explained this distinction:

Working through the [escort] service you would only pay a fee, and working through [a pimp] they would give him all the money; he’d collect it all. The girls who worked for [pimps], they would always give all the money. But through the service, if the fee was \$300, then they would pay the escort service \$125, and keep \$175, plus tips. (A8)

At the same time, some respondents ran escort services while simultaneously pimping women who turned over all their earnings:

The thing about the escort service is I could have as many as 10 people on call, I just collect agency fees off the escort service. I actually had one or two [employees] where I was getting all their money. (D8)

Contracts allowed respondents to ensure themselves against business losses when an employee departed unexpectedly:

There was actually a contract where the first \$300 is considered escrow, an insurance program for me because the calls were issued over the phone. If you decided you weren’t going to turn in the agency fee, and they went on one or two calls, I would have this escrow. (D8)

Quotas could vary based on the time of week and anticipated demand. One respondent explained that the amount of his quota was \$700, but could go as high as \$2,000 or \$3,000 around special events that might increase demand (D5). For other pimps, quotas served as a target rather than strict requirement. A bottom explained that “[her pimp’s] goal was for a girl to bring in \$1,000. It could vary, some days a girl brought in \$600 or \$1,800—but the goal was always \$1,000” (D21). Quotas were not necessarily strictly enforced. As one respondent explained, “Normal nights were \$500. If they don’t make it, I’m not mad. I’m selling drugs every day” (G12). Additional sources of income could alleviate earning pressure.

Not all respondents imposed quotas. Some pimps simply believed that the demand would fluctuate, so imposing a quota was not necessary or fruitful. One respondent said, “I didn’t have a quota, nah. As long as you making money. Some days a girl’s phone may not be ringing as much as it was, got to take the bitter with the sweet” (B3). Another pimp noted that in his business, there was “No pressure. Every day is not going to be a good day in any business. That’s why a lot of different pimps put stress and strain. I don’t have a quota, what you make is what you make” (E2). One respondent stated his expectation was simply based on what each employee felt she could earn: “It’s what you feel you can do. If you start out feeling like I can’t do it, it’s a bad night, I’d say \$5[00]. If you know it’s a good night and can do something, no reason you can’t break \$1,000” (E13).

At least two respondents did not impose quotas at all, but incentivized earnings by starting each day with almost no cash on hand to support their employees. One pimp, who traveled frequently with his employees, explained, “I always used to keep \$500 in spending money. I keep everything else in the bank. They know once that \$500 goes, we done. Gas, food, rooming, I don’t care. I gon’ be alright, they got to find a way” (E10). Another pimp used a similar strategy to

encourage his employees to make money: “I didn’t really give [my employees] a quota. I just tell them when we make money one day, I put it all up ... We start from nothing each day. On a bad day, we make \$500. On a good day, [we make] \$800 or \$1,000” (B5).

## Other Rules

Some respondents reported additional rules regarding timeliness, condom use, general safety, and hygiene. Some rules were more synonymous to the basics of any office or business entity. Employees could not be late for work and were required to keep their appointments running on schedule. A respondent explained, “We had rules—they can’t come late, can’t come in their own car (had a driver pick them up—the girls paid him), and they can’t deny the customer ... If they violated, they weren’t called anymore. They were allowed one day off if they wanted to” (I2). Another respondent explained, “One rule was no staying longer than the appointment. A lot of times the guy would get there and want longer, but my [driver] was waiting on them so they can’t stay longer” (A1). A female respondent reported “Just show up on time. When they call me and say they are available, it was important that they can be reached. Treat clients nice and no stealing” (F1).

Condom use was also regulated by some pimps. A respondent reported that his employees were required to “always use their own condoms, and never use condoms that someone had on them” (E2). As some pimps had sex with their employees, rules regarding condom use were also imposed in self-interest. A respondent explained, “You got guys trying to pay \$700 or \$800 [to have sex without a condom], I’m like, ‘No, don’t do that.’ I’m having sex with them too. I use a condom. That’s the biggest red flag: a guy trying [to have] sex without a condom” (D13). According to one respondent, employees did not always follow rules around condom use, nor were they strictly enforced. He reported, “[Condom use] was one of my rules, but I don’t know. Girls are weird. They’d chuck the condom for an extra \$200” (A4).

Other rules related directly to employee safety on the job. One respondent imposed rules that also read as security guidelines: “Don’t go to nobody’s rooms, don’t get in vans, don’t get in cars with two people” (E1). Another interviewee explained a rule that he imposed to increase his employees’ capacity to respond quickly in a dangerous situation:

They can’t take all of their clothes off on a date. If they working the streets, they out there in tall leather boots, they don’t take everything off. They keep boots on, take off all the clothes. Skirt on, lift the skirt, don’t take it off. It’s basically to keep the trick in and out. If she need to get up and get away from him, she got some clothes on. She won’t be scrambling completely naked. (G3)

One respondent imposed rules regarding safety at the location of out-calls and would tell his employees “If there are drugs in the house when they come in, they need to turn around and go back out. If they see guns, they need to leave as well. If [there are] drunk people, they need to leave. The drivers did not have guns or weapons” (H5).

Rule-making was a tool of control for respondents, but some pimps also viewed rules as a means to protect employees who worked in a dangerous field. One respondent explained why he imposed some guidelines on his employees:

A lot of times because I care for my girls’ safety. Hey, we all we got. [It’s] one of those situations where I am going to protect you as much as I can. I put my life on the line for you, just as you put yours on the line for me. When a girl is prostituting, everybody knows that anything can happen. You [have to] be smart. It’s not really no rules, just giving them insight. Some people make it to be rules, but at the end of the day she is a woman, and she is going to determine what she do. (E3)

Pimps did not all apply the same rules to their employees, nor report the same philosophies on rule-making and enforcement. Some pimps did not enforce rules at all: “They just did what they wanted to. They were basically my girlfriends. I didn’t really set any rules or anything” (B4). For pimps who did enforce rules, they exerted control over employees by enforcing their demands as business regulations. Through rule-making and enforcement, respondents established themselves as authority figures that

controlled employee access to basic needs and desires ranging from daily shelter and meals to affection and intimacy. The section below explores the use of punishment to enforce dependency and control.

## Punishment

*I never used violence. I am not trying to break my nails. I can send you back to the projects. If you want to live a lavish life, I will put you there. The thrill kept them there.* (D3)

Pimps responded to rule violations in multiple ways, including physical violence, isolation, and confiscating possessions. Even in the absence of clearly articulated rules, pimps used discipline to exert control over employees and encourage dependency. One pimp reported that violence was necessary to keep his employees “in line.” He felt that their actions were a reflection of him:

My mom used to get beat. I’d watch my mom be with different dudes and they’d abuse her. I’m not going to sugarcoat anything and say I never put my hands on women. I slapped a few here and there ... Every woman out there is a reflection on you. Keeping them in line is important. Would you want them to reflect poorly on you? (G12)

While tactics varied, elements of coercion were present across the spectrum of responses. Focusing first on the use of physical violence, different methods of discipline and control are explored below.

## Use of Force

The role of violence in pimping has been a focus of media, popular culture, and research. Some scholars have found that pimps used violence and threats to intimidate, recruit, or control their workers (May and Hough 2000; Raphael and Shapiro 2004; Williamson and Prior 2009), and others used violence immediately after the violation of rules (Williamson and Cluse-Tolar 2002). The degree and type of violence varies, ranging from sexual violence such as rape to physical violence such as slapping and assault (May and Hough 2000; Raphael and Shapiro 2004). The use of threats has also been reported (May and Hough 2000). Norton-Hawk (2004) argues that the degree of pimp-initiated violence can be so great that it negates pimp protection for customer-initiated violence, which is assumed to be one of the primary benefits of working for a pimp.

Fifteen percent of respondents to this study reported using violence to control their employees. Study findings rely on self-reported information and it is possible that the use of violence was under-reported. While only eleven respondents discussed using violence, their reports indicated that physical violence was always used in conjunction with other forms of coercion. One respondent explained the role that violence played in control, highlighting the climate of fear it could produce among employees:

[I would at first] beat the girls, and then I was trying to get better ways of control. But sometimes you had to ... a lot of the time I would hit one in front of the others, and that’s all it took because they would be scared enough to stay in line, thinking “Oh, they didn’t tell me about this before I started.” (A3)

Another respondent explained his observations about the impact of violence on employees, expressing remorse for hitting an employee:

If a girl gets out of pocket, you have to draw the line, but I don’t beat her. I just yank on her hair. I slapped her once but I felt bad, really bad after that. One day I had went and got her to the hair salon, make up and all this shit. I never see her look this beautiful. I told her I gotta get her dressed, [she] looked good. I turned quickly and she got scared. It hurt me because she was looking so good that day and I was just going to kiss her and she went like this [respondent flinches]. I messed her head up. I only hit her one time, and she was scared. (B5)

Other pimps used less direct forms of physical violence. One pimp used the threat of a “discipline room” to punish his employees. He explained, “We had a cold room. In the house we had, we had a den that had no furniture and it was real cold. If you did anything wrong you had to strip and sit in there all night. Nobody ever had to go in there. They didn’t want to” (D7). Another respondent required his employees to



have sex with each other when a conflict arose between employees. He reported, “If they have a disagreement then I’d make them have sex. I’d say that’s the only way they’d be able to bond. They probably didn’t like it, but they did it” (G12).

Violence was also used when employees demonstrated a desire to leave a pimp. One respondent explained, “Well it’s accepted, it’s not force, it’s that a chick might be involved in it and she wants to quit. That’s when the force comes in. Because [the pimps are] addicted, they can’t accept the loss” (D13). A woman who worked as a bottom explained that force was usually not involved at the outset of a relationship with a pimp, but violence would often be used to keep women from leaving. She explained, “You’re not necessarily forced into it. You think it’s funny, it’s cute. Then you’re into it, but you don’t know how to get out. You can get into it without being forced, but you can’t get out” (D21).

Pimps’ perceptions of their employees’ attitudes toward violence illustrated the dominant role of psychological manipulation and coercion in controlling employees, even for pimps who used violence. Two respondents believed that their employees sought physical violence. One respondent suggested that his employees accepted violence because of his role as a father figure. He stated, “They like being beat up, under the gun, per se. They will accept that the guy who is forcing them or demanding that something get done, they’re accepting it because [he’s] a father figure” (D14). Another respondent reported, “The girls didn’t like when I didn’t hit them, they’d think something was wrong. Or I’d try to use their names instead of ‘bitch,’ but if I ever say ‘Yo, [name of girl],’ they thought something was wrong!” (A3).

### Escort Service Rules and Regulations

Some studies have concluded that managers of escort services are very different from pimps in street prostitution as they rely on contractual relationships with workers and serve a primarily administrative and management role. They are more concerned with maintaining a positive reputation with clients, and therefore rely heavily on rules for behavior rather than violence, intimidation, or threats (May et al. 2000). Other studies have found that escort agencies operating in seemingly legal venues does not automatically mean less violence or better working conditions (Raphael and Shapiro 2004).

Despite the legal structure provided through an escort license, many of the business-related practices reported were consistent with those employed by pimps. Escort service owners also imposed strict rules on their employees, similar to pimps who facilitate sex work without a legal structure in place. One respondent explained why he terminated contracts with employees that were unreliable:

Some girls were not dedicated to working strictly for me. They might make \$1,000 one night, and then I wouldn’t see them for three or four days. They show up trying to get on the list for calls. That’s a major infraction—no calls, no showing up. The more leniency you show, the more they think they can run you over. Pretty is as pretty does. I can’t take pretty down to the nearest Mercedes Benz and cash out on the new 550. I sure can’t take it to the mortgage company and bills center. (D8)

Other respondents implied a distinction between “business-related” violence against employees, and domestic violence against the same woman that also played the role of intimate partner. The role of violence in the administration of business was thus complicated by the intimate relationships that often developed between pimps and employees. Similarly, respondents noted the challenges of maintaining both business and intimate relationships:

It ain’t easy. On the streets. Pimpin’ ain’t easy. Got to know how to deal with a bitch’s emotions. You get paid for it. You got to be able to stomach the fact that your bitch can have sex with ten guys and treat her like an equal. It’s when a bitch don’t come with no money, that’s when you don’t treat her well. They are always working. (B3)

Not all pimps saw value in violence, and other respondents reflected that violence could be counterproductive to business interests. One respondent observed that resorting to violence with employees indicates a lack of other forms of control: “I have smacked a woman before. Yes, that has happened. But once you get physical with a ho, then that means you ran out of game. She beat you mentally and she beat you emotionally, so all you have is physical. You ran out of mental games to teach her a lesson” (C9). Another pimp explained the difference between his own business and the violence he had seen portrayed through the media regarding pimps: “Truthfully, it’s all about how you treat them. A lot of girls I been seeing on MSNBC, I don’t know who these guys are they meet. Don’t let them leave, cut them, all this and that. That’s not what it is about. You can’t keep any woman like

that” (E3). Describing pimping, another respondent reported, “It’s an easy job. Nothing that takes a lot of thought. You don’t have to force nobody to be no ho. Hoing is about choice not force. If you force it, how long do you think she is going to be there? Not long. How long a girl going to take an ass whooping and come back?” (D5).

Some respondents reported that using non-violent management methods was appealing to sex workers who had worked for violent pimps. Referring to pimps who used violence with their employees, another pimp stated, “I’m going to come give you some better game and she going to jump ship. Don’t be mad at me, be mad at yourself” (D5). Another pimp explained his hesitance to use physical force, particularly around new employees: “It depends on the situation. I usually do more talking. Some of these girls I barely knew, so I had too much to lose if I put my hands on them” (E2). Violence was thus avoided not simply on principle, but rather for business interests.

## **Use of Coercion**

The majority of respondents reported that they did not use violence, but employed other tactics to impose discipline and maintain control. One basic form of discipline equated to simply firing an employee. Respondents with escort services imposed similar practices (see text box). A pimp explained that if he felt the need to use violence with one of his employees, he would let the employee go:

If I have to beat a woman, I let her go. Too many problems in my household. I want a female who can follow instructions so I can get the proper production. A hard-headed female, somewhere down the line she is going to go to jail and that costs money and a pimp don’t want a woman going to jail, raped, getting diseases. If your broad going to jail, there is bail money, lawyer’s fee, and a pimp want to keep money to himself. Not give it away. (D5)

Another respondent also reported that employees that broke rules would simply be asked to leave. He stated, “Well I have my rules, you know. If they didn’t like it they could leave. I wouldn’t go around beating people, or anything, if it got really serious I would just tell them to leave ” (A7). Others reported similar practices: employees were not connected with clients if they did not follow the rules and regulations of the business. A pimp noted that “If they violated, they weren’t called anymore ... I won’t put them on the schedule” (D5).

Other pimps reported intermediate forms of discipline before firing an employee. One pimp reported first trying to understand the reasons that rules were broken in order to regain control: “My form of punishment is ... kind of like reprogramming. I am going to sit you down and find out why you did this” (D5). Other respondents took away material goods that employees regularly received as a means of discipline. One pimp explained, “The way I disciplined my girls was different. If they ain’t doin’ what they supposed to ... I know girls like to shop. If they ain’t trying to act right, they can’t go shopping” (G3). Other respondents confiscated material possessions prior to firing employees: “They don’t get fined because I get all their money anyway. Sometimes when they don’t follow rules, it depends on how severe the rule is that they broke, they got stuff taken away from them. Their car, they might have to take cabs. Sometimes they get fired. Zero tolerance” (E2).

Pimps applied rules and imposed discipline through both force and coercion. Interviewees acknowledged that psychological manipulation was a form of abuse, albeit often absent physical violence: “I don’t really like hitting women. I’ve never had to lay my hand on a woman. I am more of a mental person. At the same time, it is mental abuse. We glorify it by saying, ‘You can’t make anyone do anything’” (E13). For the small minority of respondents who reported physical force, use of violence always occurred in conjunction with multiple forms of manipulation and emotional abuse. While acknowledging the limitations of self-report data to collect information on violence, the management methods reported by respondents suggest that coercion was a more preeminent tool of control than physical force among respondents.

## Competition Between Employees

*We called it a rat race. They were always trying to make more to please me, they were competing with each other. I just had to shoot some bull that so and so was making more. (A3)*

Pimps also relied on competition between employees to both maintain control and drive earnings. One pimp explained, “I didn’t have rules. I have heard pimps say, ‘She has to bring in a certain amount.’ [My employees] wanted to bring in the most money. It was [a] competitive thing. If you send a girl to get this money and she only got \$200, it is the pimp’s fault. The pimp has to teach them how to make more money” (C9). Respondents reported that personal attention from the pimp was the primary source of competition and conflict between employees:

The girls fought—arguments were typical. There was jealousy amongst each other over me. I was pretty much dating all of them. Before you get in the lifestyle, I wouldn’t think of being with more than one girl. It would be arguing over the affection over me. Usually I would have to say this is crazy, you chose to live like this and there is no point in arguing. They could be best of friends and then I didn’t know what happened. (H4)

Exploiting employee competition and jealousy, respondents compelled workers to make money by rewarding the most profitable employees with attention. One pimp elaborated how earnings directly inform the amount of time a pimp spends with each employee: “Basically it is competition. They’re trying to earn their position. They start off as rookies, they trying to earn the bottom which is the veteran spot. The one that make the most money gets to sleep with the pimp that particular night. What they earn is part of their position” (G3). Another respondent explained how he also used personal attention to drive earnings:

**Interviewer:** Whoever brought in the most money got the most attention?

**Respondent:** Yeah. It alleviated some stuff. They’d go out there and just compete. (C5)

Competition served as its own incentive structure. Respondents reported that they maintained personal relationships with many of their employees, and jealousy between employees often drove business. Pimps sometimes deceived employees by convincing them that a strong romantic bond existed, and encouraged them to engage in sex work to demonstrate their commitment. Other pimps encouraged outward competition between employees by favoring sex workers who earned more money.

## Business Networks

While pimp and sex worker relationships are fundamental to realize profits within the UCSE, external relationships also shaped business success. As chapter 4 discussed, law enforcement reported that pimps use networks to share information with one another about cities’ markets and active law enforcement task forces. Law enforcement officials described pimp networks to be primarily social, rather than organized criminal rings. Law enforcement officers have observed that the social networks among pimps are a mechanism to compete with each other and to keep up on law enforcement activities and adjust their actions accordingly.

Offender interviews further enforced law enforcement findings regarding the use of business networks. Offender respondents indicated that while some pimps were highly networked, business relationships between pimps were largely informal and social. The section below explores both competitive and supportive networks that exist between pimps. We then consider the role of collaborating legal businesses and complicit law enforcement in facilitating the underground sex market.

## Competition Between Pimps

*Pimping isn't a team sport. I'm in competition with any other guy. I want your woman.*  
(G7)

Multiple respondents noted the independent nature of pimping; while 21 respondents worked alongside partners, the majority of respondents reportedly worked alone. From the perspective of one pimp, "The pimp business—you the most lonely man in the world. You don't have too many male friends" (G3). Respondents who reported working independently observed that pimping was a "solo" sport and avoided partnerships. One respondent noted, "It is safer to work alone so if you are caught by police, you don't bring others down. I worked alone for ten years" (G5).

More often than concerns over safety and incrimination, respondents were deterred from developing business relationships with other pimps by concerns that they would steal their employees. From one pimp's perspective, "Pimps are like eagles; they soar by themselves. They don't hang around in groups. It is a territory type of atmosphere ... Other eagles are going to take birds out of your nest. It is a non-contact sport" (G9).

Stealing employees was a common form of competition between pimps. One respondent explained it was better not to maintain friendships with other pimps, because "You could be my friend, but if your ho slippin' up and choosing, it's over man" (D13). Another respondent reported less amiable relationships between pimps when employees departed one business for another. A woman who worked as a bottom reported on how many of her pimp's relationships with other pimps fell apart over employees: "Once he was on the Internet, Myspace was big, maybe 20–30 guys [other pimps] he was talking to. They knew each other, [and would] call each other up. But, he burned a lot of bridges. He'd make someone think they're friends, then he'd try and get their girls. [He was a] mass manipulator" (D21).

Pimps also explained that they frequently knew when their employees left to work for another pimp, because the pimp might move in the same social circles. One pimp believed that employees who left him would go to someone else "9 times out of 10" (A7). He went on to explain, "The social ring of it, you know who is who, and you know all the people involved. [There is] no fighting over a girl. If she chose another guy over me, then that's fine. If another girl wants to go, then she pays<sup>61</sup> and goes to work for them" (A7). Respondents did explain that relationships between pimps, while competitive, were generally not violent or antagonistic: "It was always a healthy competition, always talk trash, talk game, like two guys betting on basketball game. We'd clown on each other" (A1). At times, pimps maintained close friendships or even partnerships, while simultaneously remaining competitive with one another.

Yet, competition could turn violent at times. One pimp explained how a competitive relationship with another pimp escalated, to his own surprise:

It's all in good fun, good competition. We weren't trying to hurt each other. One incident, this guy and I were competing hard. I had five hos. We was both getting money. He had five or six hos, also. Me and him, we got in a heated competition ... It was competition. I met his hos. Pimps don't argue with each other. It was competition like I am trying to win his female, he's trying to win mine.

When I'm on the X-pill [ecstasy], my conversation and swagger is just through the roof. I am shopping at Neiman Marcus, first class everything, when I'm on X, smoking 'dro [marijuana], drinking Hennessy, my swag is through the roof. So I am out there like that, and I see one of his chicks. You learn certain things 'cause your hos kick it with his hos.

One point I was smashing so hard, by me trying to cop his bitches, he not liking what I am saying. He had a little protégé, dude with him, enforcer. Once he found out something I said ... So he got mad about some things I was saying about him, like, "Y'all living in a hotel, motel, my hos stay in a house." I was renting a house. So [it] end up that he had his

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<sup>61</sup> Choosing fees are discussed in the above section regarding employee recruitment.

little partner pull a gun on me. I thought it was over. I realized how serious this shit is. I stopped being out in the open, so flamboyant. (D40)

Other respondents felt they did not engage in direct competition with other pimps. One respondent explained, “I really didn’t compete. We use another term. If you stay down, you come up. As long as you pimp properly, you are entitled to have the things that these guys up here are having. They didn’t get it overnight. It is going to take some work, by playing by the rules, not breaking the rules” (E2). Another interviewee believed that pimps who compete are largely doing so to support drug habits or lavish lifestyles: “The ones that were [competing], they had habits. Drinking, smoking, buying jewelry, cars and rings. I wasn’t doing that. I was trying to open a business” (E10).

Whether or not respondents perceived themselves as in a competition with other pimps, there was one general shared sentiment: as long as there are individuals selling sex, there will be individuals engaged in pimping:

**Respondent:** You got to understand, there is always plenty of us. And newcomers coming out getting their feet wet. It’s about what broad will choose who at the end of the night.

**Interviewer:** How many competitors were making the same amount as you in your home city?

**Respondent:** I’ll be honest. I couldn’t give you a number on that, because if I said 100 I’d be lying. 1,000 would be lying. It’s so many. Dow Jones couldn’t keep up with that stock. (G15)

Competition is an essential piece of the UCSE, both between employees and across businesses. From the perspective of one respondent, there is “Always someone who wants to get the torch. Two or three fall, two or three jump in line” (D4). While internal competition between employees produced a constant incentive for employees to continue working (among other forces that compelled individuals to work in the sex market), competition between pimps similarly encouraged respondents to expand and strengthen their business. As one respondent explained regarding his relationship with other pimps, “It’s a game. They’ll help you out, come down, have dinner. Then they try to steal your girl. You have to stay on top” (C5).

## Networks and Associations of Pimps

*Pimps help each other out a lot. That’s something that I learned. It was nothing for me to give him \$500 at a time and not want it back. Pimps believe in each other. Don’t ask me why or how. You want to see the next pimp do good ... If he know you don’t have a ho, he know you need help. If you don’t have a ho, you’re not doing too good. (D13)*

Relationships between pimps could also foster business growth and expansion. Full partnerships between pimps were rare among respondents, but they did exist. One transgender respondent reported of his partner, “He was my life partner. I was the administrative side, he was the physical side. He helped girls and guys get ready. [He’d] map out on cell phones the best routes. He did most of the driving, sometimes I’d drive. I managed websites and the phone. I’d send him info. From there, we made it more efficient. He was the caretaker and got them where they needed to go” (G13). Another respondent explained, “I partnered with the one guy who started me ... because two brains are always better than one” (D7).

Beyond business partnerships, some respondents described the existence of a supportive pimp community. As chapter 4 explored from the perspective of law enforcement, pimps sometimes network with one another to maximize profits and minimize risk of law enforcement detection. To one respondent, networks were born in part from the perceived isolation pimps experience as managers of an illegal economy that exists apart from the drug trade. The respondent explained, “We see ourselves as outcasts. We are not drug dealers, we can’t go to a drug dealer and say, ‘Hey, I’m down on my luck, give me this.’ We are our own community; we take care of our own. Teach [our own] ... Some play by the rules, some don’t” (E2). Another respondent reported a similar sentiment: a supportive community is produced by pimps’ isolation from both the legal and illegal business worlds. He explained:

Pimpin' is not no competition sport ... [We] always network and help each other out. We are the masses and everyone is against the pimp. A lot of people think we are bad people. I may have a better idea than the next man, think different, but that don't make me a bad person. (D5)

Respondents who networked with other pimps often opined that they received more loyalty from their male counterparts than female employees. One respondent explained that he never attempted to recruit employees from his pimp friends: "If I mess with the pimp, I don't mess with the ho. I would rather have a good pimp friend for life than a prostitute for two years. Because they do leave" (E2).

In addition, prior studies have revealed that some pimps trade, exchange, or sell and buy women among themselves (Hughes 2000; Raphael and Myers-Powell 2009; Wilson and Dalton 2007). These findings were corroborated by a few respondents who traded or sold employees with other pimps.<sup>62</sup> The exchange of employees could benefit the business interests of both pimps involved and was used at times to discourage employee independence. Pimps were able to solidify supportive relationships with one another by trading or lending employees. A respondent noted, "If a guy don't have a girl he can always borrow one, give it to him she's yours" (E2).

At other times, a financial transaction would take place between pimps. One pimp explained: "I would sell girls [to other pimps], too. Say he needs someone and then they come to me, I'd find them for him ... He'd give me \$5,000 dollars for a girl" (A4). Another respondent reported that he would occasionally purchase employees from other competitors:

**Interviewer:** Did you work with competitors?

**Respondent:** No, not really. Sometimes I would talk to them and if they were going to fire one girl, I'd hire them. Sometimes I'd pay money for them, \$500 to \$1,000. Every three or four months. Three times a year, not real often. I'd do the same. If I had a problem with a girl, I'd call someone up to maybe work it out. (A1)

One interviewee reported a code of conduct surrounding the trade and purchase of employees between pimps:

The code of the streets is if she's already involved with somebody, at that point if she choose to be with me, with all the money she got on her then, it's his. I respect that. She has to turn it over to me anyway, so I am going to give him all that prior to being with me. I'm going to call him and let him know. (D13)

As law enforcement has also observed, pimps trade employees with one another or even "give" an employee to another pimp. A respondent explained, "A pimp partner is going to last way longer [than an employee]. Before I put a partner on the floor, the bitch is on the floor. If he is really good, you might shoot him a bitch" (B3). Trades were not always permanent, and pimps described a process of "sharing employees." When asked if he worked with business partners, one pimp responded, "For a while. I wouldn't even call them business partners. Just associates. They just help out a little bit, show you the ins and outs. Whatever you make you keep to yourself. Take her for a couple days, share her for a couple days" (E15). Sharing employees could also provide means to remove employees from their support systems and force them to rely more fully on the pimp:

They trade girls [without paying fees]. It just be like trading match cards, the girls have no say so. Or it can get to the point, "I know the runaway is running away from here, so she can't work here. Do you want to trade so she can work somewhere else?" Also cause she'll have someone to run back to. If you take someone away from their support, now they have no one to depend on. They wake up and have no one else, so they're stuck. (G8)

When trades occurred, they were usually used coercively to extract individuals from their support systems or remove employees who presented management difficulties for the pimp.

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<sup>62</sup> While this study's interview protocol did not focus explicitly on the trade and purchase of employees from other pimps, it did ask pimps to report how new employees were found.

Beyond employees, pimps shared other resources as well. One bottom explained, “They didn’t share money, but they shared hotel rooms and the guys would hang out and drive around. Go to the strip club after and gamble, etc.” (E1). Some pimps would also provide each other with monetary support when they fell on hardships. One respondent reported that pimps would lend each other money when necessary: “If my money is not right and I got a couple girls locked up, I call and say, ‘Hey, I need some money.’ [My pimp partner] is going to put it on the wire and I am going to get the girls out” (D5).

Relationships between pimps proved particularly important when pimps travelled. Partnership networks enabled pimps to promptly engage in the local UCSE upon arrival in a new city.

## Travel

Travel proved to be an essential business practice for some respondents. Seventy-one percent of respondents reported working in more than one city. In one interviewee’s experience, “I always wanted to be on top of my game. I might have to be in one place today. Then I get a phone call, and I have to be in Texas tomorrow” (G15). Respondents cited multiple reasons for work-related travel, employed different tactics to incentivize earning money while in transit, and used networks to facilitate movement around the country.

## Reasons

Reported reasons for travel included recruitment, police crackdowns, special events, tragedy, and employee appeal.

Police crackdowns incentivized some pimps to travel to new locations; they reported that law enforcement attention to prostitution waxed and waned in different cities, and respondents avoided areas where crackdowns were occurring and police attention was high. A respondent explained his reasons for travel:

It’s kind of seasonal. At one time—a lot of things determine [travel], it doesn’t have to be the season—it could be in certain cities vice is cracking down and the bonds on prostitution is a lot higher in some cities than others and you got to weigh a lot of things. I was quick to travel. [It was] nothing for me to just pack up and be gone for three months or six months at a time. (D8)

Demand also peaked around major events, and pimps travelled to cities where crowds were promised. One respondent reported the locations where he travelled: “I’ve been to Dallas, Memphis, Birmingham, Myrtle Beach, and South Beach, Florida. Basically for events: NBA playoffs, NFL playoffs. Daytona Beach and Myrtle Beach for bike week” (G12). Another interviewee similarly explained why pimps would sometimes travel to Miami: “Downtown Miami, you have times when people crowd up on South Beach. [During the] NBA championships a whole lot of money is made. Special events these people have, they’ll leave from here and go to Miami” (D14). A pimp who worked in Washington, DC during a presidential election observed the impact that major events had on the local UCSE:

Demand would change, like in Washington, DC in 2004, [with] the election. The summer of 2004, the election with Kerry and Bush, the market skyrocketed. If Congress is in session and there are more people around ... Around big sporting events, [demand] increased 100 percent. In DC around election time, [demand increased] around 50 percent. (D21)

Las Vegas was regularly reported as a travel destination, and competition in Las Vegas between pimps was reportedly high. A respondent explained, “Your bitch has to know how to ho when you take her to Vegas. She got to know how to play the carpet. [In Las Vegas,] a bitch can play the concrete, she can play the carpet, she can play the Internet, and she can play the strip club” (B3).

While special events drew customers to specific cities, lucrative business opportunity could also be borne from disaster or tragedy:

If you see police come through, you know it’s time to go. When Katrina hit in New Orleans, basically a lot of hos in New Orleans. When the hurricane hit Houston, best believe there are going to be a lot of hos in Houston. Every time something devastating

happens, you going to send hos there. When New York City went down, best believe there was a whole new squad of hos in NYC. (D5)

Work opportunities were present everywhere, and some pimps chose to drive in order to maximize profits while en route to a work destination: “It’s better to drive because you get to stop and see so much. When you pull into a small town with no hos or prostitution, you get you a hotel where construction is going on, or a store is being built” (D5). Travelling with few belongings also incentivized work for one respondent: “I have a tendency to travel with no luggage, no clothes, and buy everything when I get there. I used it as motivation. It was a mind thing. We go with no clothes, so we gotta get some money” (D8).

Travel also allowed pimps to capitalize on the “newness” of their employees in a given area. One respondent explained, “After a female is doing it for a while, the clients can tell this person has been doing it for a while. It’s a reason to move around” (E10).

## Travel Networks

Networks were particularly important to pimps who regularly travelled or sent employees on work-related travel as a routine business practice. Local pimps could instruct visiting pimps on local operations: “If I go to New York City, I bump into this pimp in New York City and he tells me how New York operates. And then he comes to [my city], I am going to show him. And then we might meet a guy from California. After traveling, you have a network ... The seasons change where people move and how police are going down” (C9). Other respondents also reported using networks to inform their travel decisions, with a particular emphasis on police enforcement. One pimp explained, “Pimps got a hotline. And they’ll be like ‘They [law enforcement] are letting them hos get at their money.’ ‘You on such and such street?’ They’ll converge ... Lots [of pimps] from Washington, DC; Memphis; a lot from California. The biggest market for pimping is Las Vegas or Miami, but it rarely breeds pimp” (D13). Another respondent shared a similar report:

Before I go to a city, I call one of my partners, run down if y’all have any money, letting girls work or [if the vice] task force is out. “What’s going on in the city?” If they say “Getting up, come on down,” or “No, rounding troops up.” We get in the car and are on our way. I say get on Craigslist, get on to see how many girls are already on the site, and get on there and post the ad. (D5)

Advance conversations with local pimps also helped respondents plan travel logistics. One pimp explained how pimp networks could inform his hotel choice: “I travel to network with other pimps. I get their numbers, I go to their area ... Me and my girls pull into town, we know the hotel we’re going to use, the hotel known for prostitution. The pimps hang out in the parking lot, they see me” (G12). Networks with other pimps figured prominently into travel planning:

**Interviewer:** How many guys were in your circle?

**Respondent:** That I had their phone numbers? A lot. I knew a lot of them, but as far as talking to them on the phone, only a couple. About ten. Different states. California. Some of them were from Texas, DC. Different areas.

**Interviewer:** These were guys you would tell when you were coming to town?

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Would you talk to them about business?

**Respondent:** Yeah, sometimes we would kick it and I would slide a question in. I would ask where he’s at in the country. He would say, “I am here, just got here.” If I needed to know anything I would ask, “Where all the girls at? Where you shopping? Where you staying?” If he had a house, “How much was he paying? What was the down payment?” I would only ask if I was on the way there. Sometimes I wouldn’t have to ask; they would just brag, “Oh I have this, I am getting this.” (B4)

While business networks certainly existed for some pimps nationwide, not all respondents reported supportive relationships between pimps in different parts of the country. Instead, some pimps remained within specific travel circuits and described hostile relationships with pimps outside of their circuit. One



pimp reported, “Usually you stay in your circuit. Northerners stay up north. Once in a while a northerner comes south, but they aren’t welcomed. If you’re from the same place, it’s a friendly competition. You’re both trying to make it” (G8). Respondents also made observations about their competitors from different cities. One pimp stated, “Some of these guys come from other places. Couple of guys from Memphis, some from LA, some from Detroit. They were kind of ruthless. They were some special cats. They were kind of violent” (D10). Another respondent believed that pimps out of Washington, DC were the most violent: “DC—them dudes there, this one dude came down and he was like in the middle of the street directing traffic, saying, ‘Bitch, you looking at me?’ [I was thinking,] ‘Man, what’s wrong with that cat? Someone get him, call the police’ ... They call it gorilla pimps; [it’s a] different social circle” (D13). Another respondent reported, “Vegas fools are intense. Memphis fools must have ran really tight game. I met some cats from Denver, but I’ve never had no problems with them. I met one cat from Alaska. There’s big pimping out there, he ran a really tight game” (A3). While respondents expressed little agreement on the regional characteristics of different pimps, their observations indicated the extent to which they travelled and networked in cities beyond their hometowns.

Whether supportive or antagonistic, relationships with local pimps informed respondents’ desire to travel and success on the road.

## **Sending Employees “Automatic”**

*I would get rental cars and they would go out of town ... I never went with them nowhere ... they would go by themselves. (E10)*

Multiple respondents reported sending employees on work-related trips without accompanying them. Pimps shared different rationales for this practice. One respondent explained the convenience of sending employees alone, particularly at a time when he wanted to be home with his family:

You just pick a spot you want to live in. Times I don’t even come outside. Just book flights for girls to different cities. Get on flights, check in to a hotel near the airport, they come back a month later with money. They check in. Yeah, it’s called automatic. I just had my newborn so I wanted to spend a lot of time with him and be at home with my son. Sometimes I would fly in to see my mom, fly into this city for a couple days, go out with the girls, get their money, fly to another city, do the same thing, and then fly home. (E2)

Another pimp sent employees on travel alone in an attempt to avoid crossing state lines with them, citing concerns over prosecution. As he explained:

I didn’t take them to work in other cities because it was crossing state lines. To keep from interstate crossing state lines for practices of prostitution, we’d go from Georgia to Florida and stop the car at the state line and let them walk across the state line so we didn’t transport them. The girls would travel for the Super Bowl in Miami. Two or three of my best girls go there and work in the club, [but they go by themselves]. (G7)

Money transfer was particularly important to pimps with employees out on business travel. One bottom explained that her pimp would send her funds by either mailing a money order or by wire. Another respondent noted, “We started doing cash with overnight mail at the post office. We put insurance on it. Big bills only—20s, 50s, and 100s” (D18).

Whether for convenience or risk prevention, pimps did not always accompany their employees on work travel. As pimps were not physically present, they maintained control and management over employees when they were on travel, often through the methods of coercion discussed above.

## **Lucrative Relationships with Legal Businesses**

While respondents maintained underground businesses, some pimps enjoyed lucrative relationships with legal businesses. Hotel employees and managers often turned a blind eye to prostitution occurring within their establishment. In some cases, hotel employees would actively support a pimp in order to earn additional income. One pimp explained, “Some Holiday Inns, stuff like that. They were involved in the activity. Some hotels, they don’t know what’s going on, but they have employees that like to make a little money on the side” (E13). A female pimp reported that she maintained a lucrative personal relationship

with a hotel manager: “I was seeing the Red Roof Inn general manager and getting a room for free seven days a week” (F1). Another pimp reported how his relationship with a hotel manager evolved from suspicion and distrust to a lucrative relationship for both parties:

[The manager] scared me at first ... [he] said, “You making a lot of money in my hotels.” I said, “I don’t know what you are talking about.” He said, “Man, just leave me your card.” He wanted me to stay there because I was making him money. He scared me. I didn’t know if he was trying to set me up, so I didn’t leave my card [at first]. But me and him had an understanding. He was okay with what I was doing. (B5)

Hotel employees also tipped off pimps to law enforcement inquiries; at times, hotel employees intentionally concealed the presence of sex workers and pimps at their businesses. One pimp explained:

Well the hotel where I’d stay, they showed me love. I brought them stuff, paid them a lot, and they let me stay there in an unregistered room ... The cops, they would follow girls in and ask, “Where did they go?” And they would say, “I don’t know, I didn’t see anything.” Because they passed a law saying that the police could come in with a warrant and look at the registry, and then they would say, “Well, okay, who’s in Room 17?” That’s where I was, but they would say that room’s not registered to no one. (A3)

Relationships with employees of other legal companies also helped pimps recruit and advertise. For example, clubs reportedly provided pimps with special deals. One pimp explained: “Well, if I go to clubs with my girls, the club owners want to know me. I get drinks on the house and VIP at that particular club.

When you a pimp, you get a lot of respect. You walk in with four or five girls. People look at you and think you famous. You get discounts on clothes” (G3). Another respondent reported, “I had relationships at the club ... I had a couple relationships with rappers. They would buy some girls when they came to town” (A4). One interviewee explained:

When girls work in a club, the owner would know what was going on. He knew the deal. I’d have to pay him off. He’d say he knew how much my girls made there. At one club I paid him \$15,000 a month. He’d ask how much the girls made. I’d lie and say that they made \$50,000 a month. He was like, ‘Ok.’” (H8)

Another respondent reported receiving deals from a photographer:

Professional photos, but that is more for Eros. You really want to put professional [photos]—you can’t get on without ID and professional pictures ... This dude I know would give you a deal. Know you got some hos. I just don’t pay him. We didn’t exchange business. He did a real nice, real professional job. Photoshop them up, make them look really glamorous. You want to get more money out of a female then you put in. (B3)

Retail shops were yet another source of special deals for respondents. Pimps reported lucrative relationships with car dealerships. One respondent stated, “The car dealership—they would hook you up. Used car dealership. They knew I was shopping for me but they would let me put it in someone else’s name”

### Massage Parlors

Other legal structures were also reportedly conducive to underground prostitution. A female respondent explained how a legal massage parlor allowed for an underground prostitution business:

I ran into a friend and we started talking and stuff and she told me about this massage parlor in town and that it was an underground prostitution house. She told me that I could probably make lots of money and it was a way out of the situation. This was in 1999—November. I knocked on the door and there were 7 girls in there, the boss took me into a room and made sure that I knew what she did there. She told me the rules and how it worked and that I could start that night. The rules included: No cell phones, had to work nine hour shifts, if worked a day shift had to be there by 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. for evening shift. Nine hours was required, and you could take breaks in between clients. We used to do each other’s hair and makeup ... The client paid \$40 to the house. He picked a girl out of the lineup, and could tip \$40 for a hand job, \$60 for oral sex, \$80 for full service (20 minutes), \$100 was for 35–45 minutes (full service). We had to give \$5 to the madam, since she supplied lotion and laundry soap, air freshener, etc. That place made \$2 million a year. I made \$2,000 a week. (F1)

(D13). Another respondent reported a business that rented cars without requiring a license:

It wasn't a legitimate business, but this dude rented out cars to people without showing a license. As long as he felt you were cool and responsible enough. You paid the money to rent it out and he gave you the keys. Like a tow yard with a whole bunch of cars. At first I was paying him for the cheapest cars I could, but then I started making more money, and wanted the nicest ones. For a week, you would pay like \$300 or \$350. You're making that money back easy though. Go back and forth, girls drive. (B5)

Car dealerships were not the only retail locations offering discounted prices to pimps. One respondent reported receiving discounts on a different business expense—condoms:

Well I was getting a deal at this—they knew what I was doing. They would sell me like two—the big box, 24 or something like that. I would get two of those for ten dollars. Normally I would go buy the three that come in a box. That was like \$2.99. I would buy five boxes of those, to start the night off. Depending on how many tricks I had I would buy more. Some nights I would buy like 15. (D13)

Another respondent similarly reported, “I had deals at a sex shop [as a] permanent customer. Deals on everything they sell. It was a percentage off” (D3).

Travel deals and legal services were also offered at discount rates. Travel was a lucrative business practice for some pimps, and a respondent explained, “I knew there was a lady who everyone knew to get airplane tickets to fly from” (B4). Another respondent reported that a lawyer cut deals for him. He stated, “My buddy introduced me [to the lawyer]. One time I had got arrested and I called him and he was like ‘Yeah, I got you.’ He told me if I give him some clients, every client I give him, he would give me \$500. That’s how we became partners. I had made him \$15,000. He done good” (D4).

Finally, maintaining relationships with bail bondsmen was important to some respondents. One respondent explained that there was “Never more than one [employee that] was in jail at a time. I’d always send a bail bondsman” (G15). Another respondent who once worked in Atlanta noted the importance of bail bondsmen in different cities: “Well, in Atlanta you have to know somebody who knows somebody [in order to post bond]. I knew a bondsman who would get girls out. If you don’t know someone, they are not bonding the girls out because they knew they were flight risks” (G3).

## Relationships with Law Enforcement

*They're the biggest ones that buy. The same people locking me up are the ones breaking the law. (C4)*

Police officers reportedly developed relationships with pimps because they were customers. One respondent explained, “Maybe 5–10 percent of the client base is law enforcement” (D18). The same respondent went on to explain that relationships between law enforcement and sex workers could involve force, manipulation, and rape. He stated, “We called them dicks in uniform. Several officers would tell girls to sleep with them or go to jail” (D18).

Business relationships with law enforcement could provide pimps with a sense of immunity to the law. One respondent explained, “I felt I wasn’t going to get caught. I had a lot of law enforcement [who] knew me, a lot of them used to date my girls. I had contact with them. I thought I wasn’t doing nothing wrong, I couldn’t be stopped” (G3). The same respondent later noted: “[The] police officers I had—that was a good thing. He would come through and date my girl and then look out for me. Let me know when stings were going on. He gave me a heads up” (G3).

Not all interactions remained positive, and pimps resented their relationships with law enforcement following their incarceration, noting the hypocrisy of being locked up by one-time customers. A pimp explained, “I had lawyers, police officers, all kinds. I had so many officers that came” (H7). After he was incarcerated, the same pimp explained: “I went through the county [jail] and some of the men working at the jail ducked. I said ‘Yeah, put your head down. I won’t see you this weekend’” (H7).

## Chapter Summary

Pimps built their businesses by developing relationships with multiple actors, including employees engaged in sex work, non-sex worker employees, other pimps, legal businesses, lawyers, and law enforcement.

Extant research has emphasized the role of violence in pimping to recruit and control employees. However, respondents stressed the central role of coercion, manipulation, and the exploitation of vulnerabilities to control employees and compel them to engage in sex work. Respondents reported multiple forms of coercion, fraud, and manipulation, including feigning romantic interest, emphasizing mutual dependency between pimp and employee, discouraging women from “having sex for free,” promises of material comforts, and establishing a reputation as a “good” pimp. Sixty-one percent of respondents further exerted control over employees by enforcing their demands as business rules. If rules were broken, pimps enforced different forms of discipline, ranging from physical violence to isolation to dismissal.

Pimps also established relationships with other pimps within the UCSE. While some pimps were highly networked, business relationships between pimps were largely informal and social. Networks helped pimps recruit employees, travel to new business destinations, identify law enforcement activity, and even advertise services.

Finally, lucrative relationships with legal businesses and the complicity of participating law enforcement helped some pimps maintain underground businesses. Despite the underground nature of sex work and its related economy, respondents reported that employees at legal businesses were supportive of or complicit with their underground activities. Pimps also reported that their clientele included law enforcement officers, a fact that made some pimps feel immune to prosecution.

# Chapter 7

## Business Practices and Operational Tools of Pimping

### Introduction

Due to the business-like nature of the underground commercial sex economy, pimps and traffickers engage in conventional business practices, such as advertising, renting business locations, the transportation of workers, communication, internal business structure organization, and financial transactions and recordkeeping (Bales and Lize 2005; Raphael and Myers-Powell 2010). Understandably, it is these business characteristics that can aid law enforcement in potentially bringing down underground commercial sex trades. Bales and Lize (2005) refer to pimps' and traffickers' financial and commercial transaction records as the "Achilles' heel" of prostitution and trafficking offenders. Despite these observations, not much is known at present about the day-to-day occurrences in underground commercial sex markets. While research based on the experiences and perspectives of law enforcement, service providers, sex workers, and formerly trafficked persons has revealed the nature of sex-for-money transactions on an individual basis, few studies have shown how these transactions fit into larger sex markets.

Pimps in this study rarely expressed a formalized business plan that drove business practices, though some respondents felt guided by certain strategies or principles. When asked if they had a business plan, respondents spoke to general hopes and aspirations. Most commonly, the strategy was to simply make money:

I don't believe I really had a business model in that sense, but I always had a plan. What I did was make a plan and execute it as cleanly as possible. My main goal was always to make one million dollars. I always had that sort of goal to aim for. It'd be one million dollars, then 100 million dollars, then a billion ... I never got *there*, obviously, but I got to a million, in about the first six months. (A4)

Other respondents shared the intention to "go legitimate" and invest money into creating a legal business structure to support their work. One offender explained that he pimped to have fun in the short term:

That was to just have fun while I was young. Experience it, just to get the things I wanted like materialistic stuff like laptops, big screen TVs, clothes, provide for my daughter, kids and stuff. If it was to get where I was able to just quit, or right now I got locked up, I wanted to just get out and go back to getting a job. Finishing school. (E16)

Other respondents felt their business plan was even less intentional. A respondent reported that he relied on learned experience to inform his actions as a business manager: "I didn't have a strategy, I was going off of live and learn. Living off experience, trial, and error" (B3). Another pimp felt he prescribed to no intentional business model, stating simply, "I was just getting high and having sex" (C8).

Despite a lack of formal business plans, pimps cultivated networks and business-related relationships, repeated practices to maintain and grow their market reach, and followed pricing plans (albeit flexible) to determine profits. Similarly, pimps routinely invested money back into business operations. As a result, pimps developed commercial entities within the underground sex market that functioned as competing businesses.

As the preceding chapter discussed, relationships with employees,<sup>63</sup> sometimes governed by rules maintained through management and discipline, enable pimps to control sex workers within the underground economy. Similarly, networks between pimps, as well as relationships with law enforcement and legal businesses, facilitate business growth and endurance. The following chapter considers the operational side of pimping, emphasizing the tools and practices that enable businesses to function and reach clients on a day-to-day basis. The central role of advertisement is first considered. Next, methods of communication, between employees as well as with clients, are explored. We then report respondent practices regarding business size, hours of operation, frequency of transactions, rates and pricing structures, forms of payment, legal business fronts, operational costs, and money laundering practices. We conclude with an exploration of respondents' perceptions on changes within the underground sex market over the course of their involvement.

#### **Main Findings from this Chapter Include:**

**Advertisement:** Pimps employed multiple tools to advertise the sex trade. Common methods and venues of advertisement included online advertisement, walking on the stroll, word of mouth, local print newspapers and phonebooks, business cards, and directly approaching customers in business establishments.

**Communication:** Pimps maintained frequent communication with their employees by phone, text, and in-person conversation. Communications were intended to ensure employee safety, maintain control and oversight, and provide updates on business operations. Written communications, particularly texts, can make pimps susceptible to law enforcement detection, and many pimps utilized code or avoid written communication altogether to mitigate risks and evade the police.

**Rates and pricing structures:** Rates varied dramatically across respondents. Price was most commonly determined by amount of time, single date, and/or sex act.

**Forms of payment:** While some respondents reported accepting credit cards, drugs, and merchandise as payment, sex work remains a primarily cash economy. Sixty-six percent of respondents reported accepting cash only.

**Operational costs:** The costs of operating and facilitating sex work varied greatly across pimps, though this study identifies some common costs. Pimps routinely covered costs associated with employee housing, transportation, employee appearance and personal appearance, advertisements, and hotels and motels. Other business-related legal expenses included bail, and costs associated with arrests and prosecution on charges related to pimping.

## **Advertisement**

*It could be every kind of situation. It could be online, it could be at a club or bar. I knew a friend of mine, she met a guy when we were in the line for financial aid. (E16)*

Advertisement is essential to pimps in order to gain clientele, and respondents employed different methods to attract customers. With the growth of Internet advertising and social media, methods to connect with customers have become increasingly diverse. One pimp explained, "Everywhere has a stroll. Online, offline, at the store" (C8).

Given the wide-ranging clientele reportedly engaging in the UCSE, a number of different methods of advertisement were employed by pimps. Preference was largely shaped by notions of where the most money could be made, which methods lessened the likelihood of law enforcement detection and prosecution, and what outlets provided the most safety for employees. Popular methods of advertisement included online advertisements, local newspapers, business cards, social media, as well as pandering at physical locations such as bars, dance clubs, strip clubs, and the "stroll" to meet potential clients. While some offenders reported preferences for different advertising arenas, many worked through multiple venues: "Even if you're on the Internet, you still go through the blade and sweat some bitches" (B3). Table

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<sup>63</sup> Throughout this chapter, the men and women who were compelled to sell commercial sex acts for respondents are referred to as "employees" based on the format of the study's interview protocol, which approached pimping and its related structure and networks as a business.

7.1 presents the percentage of respondents that reported using each advertising medium (they are not mutually exclusive).

**Table 7.1 Advertisement Methods**

Method	Frequency	Key Features
Online advertisement	49% (n = 36)	Attract higher-paying clients; enable customers to be screened; greater risk of law enforcement stings
Online classifieds	49% (n = 36)	Common sites include Backpage.com, Eros.com, Redbook.com, Craigslist.com, CityVibe.com, SoWet.com, and SeekingArrangements.com
Personal/business websites	10% (n = 7)	Allow pimps to build a customer base, network with other pimps, and charge a fee to advertise other businesses
Social media or discussion boards	11% (n = 8)	Used to recruit sex workers and solicit customers; more difficult for law enforcement to monitor or infiltrate
Stroll	40% (n = 29)	Areas where pimps, sex workers, and johns can find one another with relative ease; constant demand; higher security risk
Word of mouth and referrals	40% (n = 29)	Information regarding the employees, prices, and location is spread through social networks as a way of screening potential clients; reduces the risk of law enforcement detection
Local newspapers, alternative newspapers, phonebooks	23% (n = 17)	Similar to online advertisements; allows interaction with clients prior to initiating a transaction
Business cards	23% (n = 17)	Offer fake services as a cover; used as a networking tool; useful when traveling to new cities
Establishments	23% (n = 17)	Employees approach possible clients in bars, hotels, clubs, malls, parking lots, and schools

## Online Advertisement

Online advertisement have substantially impacted the field of sex trafficking. Forty-nine percent of respondents reported using some form of Internet platform to connect with clients, whether through advertisements, personal or business websites, or social media outlets. Online advertisements were reportedly more lucrative than other methods because they connected businesses with higher-paying clients. Respondents also referenced the high visitor traffic on social media and advertisement websites.

Respondents noted that the Internet made the UCSE significantly safer for its participants. The Internet allowed pimps and employees to interact with prospective clients before committing to a transaction, providing opportunities to verify identity and ask additional questions. It also removed some of the physical dangers associated with street work:

Over the years, the Internet became an easier way to get money without having to take so many chances as far as injury or assholes on the outside. You never know what happens at night—a lot of creeps come out. The Internet was a safe haven for everybody. A guy calls and comes to a location where the girl and you are comfortable. Or you go to a location where he gives you an address and you know where to go to. It's modern day.  
(E3)

While respondents noted that the Internet made the UCSE significantly safer, pimps also recognized trade-offs with online classified advertisements. By providing an easy route for anonymous communication between pimps, sex workers, and customers, the Internet also presents ample opportunity for law enforcement to track advertisements and set up stings. In an effort to elude law enforcement, pimps used code words like “roses, clean your apartment, or donations” to communicate

with clients (B3). One respondent directed his employees to use Instant Messenger (IM) chats to minimize physical evidence: “The only thing not recorded is the IM chat. Take everything from email to IM. I don’t use the cell phone too much ... 15 minutes of talk on the website, a couple minutes on the phone, then move to IM. That’s where I’d do the negotiating—because when the chat was closed, it was gone” (G13). Some respondents reported that staying offline altogether was one of the best ways to avoid arrest: “If we’re online, I’m taking a chance taking her [to the date]. Because police do set up stings. They might look on the Internet and call” (G12).

Despite the noted risks, online advertisement opened up new business opportunities for pimps. Typical online venues included classifieds, personal or business websites, and social media or discussion boards.

## Online Classifieds

Classified websites are a popular venue of online advertisement for pimps. Websites such as Backpage have been used to advertise commercial sex transactions to johns (Kunze 2010; Latonero et al. 2011; Latonero et al. 2012; Smith et al. 2009). Respondents employed various advertising sites, including Backpage.com, Eros.com, Redbook.com, Craigslist.com, CityVibe.com, SoWet.com, and SeekingArrangements.com, as well as locally-based advertisement websites.<sup>64</sup> Pimps reported that some websites were more competitive or catered to specific client interests. Additionally, some respondents noted that paid websites that required pictures were preferable, despite the added costs: “Wherever you at, use professional pictures and pay \$150 a month” (E10).

Respondents frequently updated and reposted classified advertisements, as posts were quickly bumped from the front page by competitors or flagged as inappropriate and removed by host websites. A pimp explained, “Craigslist would remove the post. I would say, ‘18 year-old looking for sugar daddy.’ Everyone knows a sugar daddy is a john. The john pays for everything. Craigslist would remove the post” (G14). As a result, pimps posted multiple times a day:

Post every day, two times a day, three times a day. Postings go down, so you post throughout the day. Get you a prepaid visa, put some money on there, and let the girls do their thing. I post, [my] bottom posts. If my girl is in the shower, I post it for her. So easy to do it. I got pictures already on the laptop. Make a little ad, make the title. Say, “I am in town, looking to have a great time if you are interested, show me some experiences.” (B3)

In some cases, employees took full responsibility for posting advertisements: “I never set up no page, they would do it. Like I said, they would always do extra just to do what they wanted to do” (E10). Other pimps reported that they had full ownership over the advertisements, and would post advertisements for their employees daily. For some interviewees, constructing and posting advertisements was a collaborative process between pimps and employees:

**Interviewer:** Did the girls post the ads?

**Respondent:** I helped them. I’m a man, I helped them with what to say. I know what I would look for. A pretty girl, nice body, I know she wants money. (G12)

While uncommon among our respondents, at least one pimp automated his advertisement posts for efficient and constant dissemination across websites: “I built websites and everyone had a Gmail account. I would pay for access to this website and we’d use about 15 engines or sites. If I had four girls working, I’d evenly disperse ads over the sites. I used an ad generator and pop ups” (G13).

## Websites

Pimps also used their own websites to advertise. Business websites could be expensive to build, and multiple respondents cited websites as a business aspiration. One respondent who worked in over twenty separate cities explained, “Once my business got streamlined and I had really high-class escorts, I got me a website. I got a web designer to build it for me for like \$5,000” (D18). A woman who worked as a bottom

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64 As chapter 6 explored, online classified advertisements are also used by pimps to recruit employees.



reported the costs of maintaining her pimp's website: "Maintenance was like \$40 or \$50 a month to keep it going. It wasn't real extensive. He spent \$1,500 to build it, [and the company] did the hosting" (D21).

Websites allowed pimps to not only post their own employees, but also network with other pimps and charge a fee to advertise other businesses. One respondent explained how his business evolved after he launched his own website:

Well, actually I paid [the web designer] with two pounds of weed. So he charged me about \$12,000. The reason I invested so much money was that I wanted to expand. I wanted it to expand to another level. I treated everyone's client equally because I wanted everyone to get paid. These [pimps] that were paying me, I helped them with posting the right pictures. I knew how to do that. (A4)

While less common among respondents than other online advertisement methods, websites were a platform for pimps to engage clientele and build a customer base. They also provided a less detectible tool for pimps to advertise their employees than online classified advertisements, which were regularly audited by law enforcement.

## **Social Media and Discussion Boards**

Increasingly, social media has gained attention as a tool to both recruit sex workers and solicit customers. As chapter 6 explored, traffickers and pimps sometimes recruit individuals through online chat rooms, dating websites, and social networking websites (Latonero et al. 2011; Latonero et al. 2012). Respondents also reported that social media is also used as a marketing tool to connect pimps and sex workers with clientele. As a result, an employee's social media presence had to serve as an advertisement. One respondent explained, "Basically, you have to sell yourself. You want to have a pretty profile" (G12). Another respondent explained how websites like Facebook and Myspace are used for sex work:

There are so many ways to sell [sex] and they are thinking of new things now. Facebook, you wouldn't think. 'Hi, my name is Suzy and I'm from CA. Looking to have a good time. Friend them, once you make a connection, you let them know what the deal is. It's [sex] for sale. Myspace, all that, it's just a disguise. You might say, "Hey man, I'm looking to have a good time tonight." GFE—girlfriend experience. Codes mean, "Hey man, money." (D5)

As noted above, codes were used on social media as a means to elude law enforcement detection. One respondent also used a discussion board for advertisement, which originated as a john board:

It used to be a john board, but then females started posting ads. Now it's mainly a female board. [Johns can] make sure that she is nice to the trick, not mean, don't got no attitude. Got reviews like "stomach flat," "no good attitude." They will really slaughter your bitch on there and [mess] up her reputation. You don't have to pay, but you should. If I was them, I would charge. It helps you stay away from police, too. Girls would say, "Yeah, I've seen that john, he's cool." Girls got to interact on there, too. Say "Hey, I'm going out at this time." (B3)

Social media and online discussion boards allowed for communication between customers, pimps, and employees. As the presence of law enforcement on online advertising space increases, social media and discussion boards may offer a more underground, clandestine environment for employees, pimps, and clients to communicate and post advertisements. Social media accounts and discussion boards are more difficult for law enforcement to monitor or infiltrate, and may not be as tightly regulated as online classified websites.

## **Word of Mouth and Referrals**

Word of mouth referrals were cited by 40 percent of respondents as one of the ways in which they identified clients. Pimps felt they were able to better vet clients, while also reducing law enforcement detection, by relying on others to spread the word about their services. Respondents felt that law enforcement was less likely to discover their business if they avoided advertising online, in print, or even

on the stroll. That said, as one respondent pointed out, if one is solely relying on word of mouth, business could easily fluctuate depending on the strength of the economy:

Sometimes business was so busy and sometimes it wasn't it. It depends on word of mouth and weather. Many of the guys who worked in construction, if it was raining, they didn't have money and didn't pay. (H5)

Another respondent, who relied solely on referrals, felt that this allowed him to attract a higher profile clientele:

My spot was word of mouth. Everybody who came I knew personally or the person who referred you I knew. Knew not to refer anybody, had to be of a certain caliber. I am a gentleman and like to deal with gentleman. No matter what you do, can still conduct yourself accordingly. These are the people who were referred. At one point I had to trim it down by upping the price. (H1)

## **Stroll**

Respondents reported that every major city contained a "stroll"—a street or location where prostitution was widespread and where pimps, sex workers, and johns could go to find one another. Some respondents reported a preference for working on the stroll (also referred to as the track or blade) because it was constant and guaranteed: "I am a track guy. I would only go to a city without a track if I was breezing by. A track is guaranteed. With online, you have to hope there is a call that comes in. I am going online when I get there, but that is not the foundation. The foundation is the track" (C9). Another respondent similarly preferred the stroll because he believed the continuous demand made it remain more lucrative than the Internet: "The streets are still able to make money more than the Internet. People are coming to look for that as opposed to waiting for a phone call" (E12).

Pimps also continued to work on the stroll for reasons that were not strictly tied to demand. Despite his perception that the Internet provided more lucrative business opportunities, one respondent worked a city's stroll because it garnered him respect from other pimps:

Internet is crushing [the stroll]. But the respect you get from your partners. A bitch ain't a real ho if she is just sitting in a hotel waiting on a trick. You're just a call girl, you ain't no ho. A stomp down pimp, keep a bitch strictly on the concrete. You got real hos who really going to do some hoing. But me, I break every bitch in with the blade. However, I don't really play the blade as much, since the Internet is way more lucrative. (B3)

Working the stroll could also be instrumental to maintaining the dependency of the pimp-employee relationship:

I always worked street. I worked Internet too but not too much. I would always want the person to feel that I needed her and she needed me. If you work the streets, they need you, they have to call for directions. Sitting in a hotel, on the computer, they have too much time to think about what they want to do. They can just pack up and leave. I would be around. I would drive up and down the boulevard. On the streets, [sex workers] got to worry about johns pulling up, undercovers, regular police, pimps jumping out and sweating you to get you to come. (E2)

The streets introduce a host of hazards for employees. As the respondent observed above, women working on the streets may in turn feel more of a need to have a pimp for security and companionship.

## **Local Newspapers, Alternative Lifestyle Classifieds, and Phonebooks**

Local newspaper classifieds were also used by pimps for advertisement. In some respects, print advertisement was comparable to online advertisement. Both forms afforded many of the same benefits, while also exposing pimps to many of the same hazards. One bottom explained how she used a local newspaper:

One of my pimps introduced me to [a local newspaper]. It's like \$75 (per ad), depending on how big you want the ads. I paid like \$75, no picture. I put "White Female. \$80 half-

hour special. In-calls only.” You put it up under the massage heading. You have your ho take certain precautions ... Tell him to bring ID, ask, “Where do you work?” Ask questions. Try to get a vibe for who you dealing with. Feds go through there a lot and it’s easy to get busted in the paper. (D13)

Similar to online advertisements, newspaper advertisements allowed pimps the opportunity to interact with clients prior to initiating a transaction, impose requirements (such as identification), and advertise without exposure to the dangers of working on the streets. The type of newspaper advertisement could also impact the rates charged. One respondent explained, “You have alternative lifestyle newspapers where you can place ads. Depending on the ad, you can charge up to \$2,300 an hour” (D10).

Phonebook classifieds were also used, and had to be updated and reposted far less frequently than newspaper advertisements or online classifieds. Phonebooks afforded many of the same opportunities:

We would only have to do Yellow Pages ads once a year and then they would be in them all year. We had the links to our website on Craigslist and backpage. And I don’t know if you’ve ever looked in the Yellow Pages, you can see all the pictures back there so they could see what they wanted. And when new girls would come along, I would always take them to go shopping and have a photo shoot. The guys that call through the Yellow Pages, they spend more money. The guys who come into town on business for a couple days, they can find the Yellow Pages in the hotel room, and the thing is that through them you know exactly who you’re getting. There is more than one girl—a couple or a whole bunch—you can call. So they know exactly who they’re getting. (A8)

Print advertisement such as newspapers, alternative lifestyle papers, and phones books also provided a detection tool for law enforcement, and pimps attempted to maintain discretion by posting under sections such as “Massage Services.” One respondent reflected, “The biggest undercover thing that pimps do is call a masseuse. We call that legalized prostitution. Send girls to get a masseuse license, and that’s legal. You go and then get a happy ending” (D5).

## **Business Cards**

Pimps also used business cards for advertisement; 23 percent of respondents reported handing out business cards to connect with customers. In some cases, each employee had their own business card which listed a fake business, rather than overtly advertised sex: “I had cards on the streets—each girl had a card with their information. It might be Sharon’s Catering Service” (D3).

Unlike print advertisements or online classifieds, which allowed for little control over audience, business cards could be passed out to targeted clientele. One respondent observed that a particular date house primarily served a Latino clientele, and business cards were used to perpetuate this policy: “The date houses had cards that were handed out. The cards would say it was for another type of business like cleaning but people knew what it was for. Mainly people would hand out the cards to only Latinos, but sometimes to white people” (G5). However, business cards required pimps and employees to take a more proactive role in engaging and soliciting customers, a task that could decrease their anonymity. Pimps sometimes hired non-sex work employees to hand out cards: “I mainly got a lot of calls from word of mouth or my guys would go to a strip club. They had cards. You print them out yourself” (F6).

Business cards were also an important networking tool and provided a means for pimps to connect possible customers with other methods of advertisement. Business cards were useful for pimps when they travelled to new cities. One respondent explained, “[I] had cards. At one time, I had flyers advertising the escort company. The girls would go through hotels in the city. Walk up, put flyers under the door. Go to the Hard Rock and pass out the flyers” (G10). Pimps also used cards to refer customers to websites: “The girls had Vegas style business cards with their picture, number, my website and the girl’s name” (D18).

## Establishments

Beyond the stroll, brick and mortar businesses remained an important location to solicit customers in-person. Twenty-three percent of respondents reported that employees approached and met clients at a multitude of different establishments such as bars, hotels, clubs, malls, parking lots, and schools.

Regardless of preferred method, advertising was universally essential because it allowed pimps and their employees to connect to clients. While some pimps took a behind-the-scenes approach to advertisement, other interviewees were often heavily involved in the design and facilitation of advertisement strategies. Once clients were aware of the business, pimps also governed communications between employees and customers.

## Communications

Orchestrating lines of communication was an important business practice for respondents; it allowed pimps to act as the middleman between employees and clients and kept pimps aware of employee activities. At the same time, communication had to be approached carefully, because it could evidence illegal activity if detected by law enforcement. Pimps used various means to interact with both customers and employees.

### Communications with Employees

*Everyone has to check in. I knew everything: when they get a call, when they go into a call, and when they leave a call. (A5)*

With few exceptions, respondents maintained frequent internal business communication. Check-ins served as a means for pimps to control employees, ensure their workers' safety, and coordinate dates. Respondents used various tactics to maintain communication with their employees. Methods included group meetings, one-on-one in-person meetings, walkie talkies/booster phones, phone conversations, and text messages. While particular methods varied, one respondent offered a clear description of how pimps used management over communication to ensure oversight and control:

I would pay for everything. I'd hand the phone to a driver and say, "Ok, here's your phone for the day." The girls would get a phone too. Everything was through the driver. The girls would tell the driver where to take them ... give the money—which they collected first thing—to the driver, the driver took it to [me], [I] put it all in the books, and the next day I would pay everyone. I never communicated with the girls directly [via phone]. I'd show my face here and there, check into the apartment where they were staying, maybe bring them some weed. (A4)

Creating efficient lines of communication between pimps, drivers, and employees was also enforced as a safety measure. A respondent explained, "The girls would hit a number on speed dial. You tell them to keep the phone in their hand. Give them a designated area to be in, so people would know where they at ... If you hit the number by accident, they are coming." (C5) Similarly, respondents reported that their employees would communicate occasional updates to their pimp to assure him that the date was going smoothly. One pimp explained, "We used to chirp—like walkie talkies—to say when the girl went out. When they came out, [my] cousin would watch just to see when they went in, [he would know they are] there for an hour, [and he'd] make sure they are safe" (A1). Other pimps reported similar tactics: "[We] used walkie talkie boost phones. Checked in every 15 minutes. Even in the middle of doing something with a date, it'd be like, 'What you doing?' to make sure everything was ok" (E1). Another respondent relied on brief text messages to maintain security and respond quickly when a date became threatening. He explained, "I would tell them if they are going on a date, text color of car and kind. I have a conscience ... Text me if it's not good, I'll come knock on door. I knew where they were" (E10). Respondents reported quick action when an employee communicated a dangerous situation.

While communication was important for safety and control, it also made pimps vulnerable to law enforcement detection. As a result, pimps and employees used codes to communicate. One respondent explained his use of code to maintain security: "The girls would tell the driver where to take them, and then text him pink if everything was good and black if it was all bad" (A4). Codes were also sometimes

used because respondents feared that text messages or calls from a pimp would discourage customer interest.

I would text and call them. I wouldn't text her "Hey bitch," etc. If she was working, she would ask me something and I would respond to her normally. I would have them respond to me as another female. I would be a girl name in their phone and in the texts to me they would say "Hey girl." The john doesn't want to know they have pimps. They don't want to date them if there is a pimp. The girls play it that they are trying to pay their rent or pay their bills. (C9)

Other pimps avoided the trail created by text communications, but were willing to use phones and walkie talkies for quick conversations. A respondent stated, "A lot of times I would call. Texting is dangerous. You don't know who you texting. That's how I caught my first case. Well, my experience, I don't really do too much talking over the phone. If she has questions or whatever we can meet up and talk" (E3). One respondent also noted the need to change methods when law enforcement detected particular types of use: "Cell phones, Boost mobile, that is all figured out [by law enforcement]. We used prepaid phones ... Burnouts, [so we could] could get rid of the phone" (B3).

Respondents stressed the importance of face-to-face business discussions with employees as the safest method. One pimp explained, "We had meetings each night, at 9:30 p.m., which I ran, and I asked the girls what problems they had, who they talked to" (A1). Most pimps did not maintain such regular schedules to meet with employees, but another respondent believed, "It had to be face-to-face communication. I didn't want to leave a paper trail. It is common sense" (D3). In-person meetings provided a venue free of documentation.

Regardless of the method employed, ongoing and frequent communication provided pimps with a tool to ensure control and management over their businesses. Communication enabled pimps to maintain a facilitator role and enforce their position as employees' first contact when their personal safety was threatened. In turn, pimps could establish themselves as an essential resource and critical actor for individuals working within the underground sex economy.

### Escort Call Centers

Respondents with escort licenses reported the use of call centers. One respondent explained that he maintained clear delineations between his call center staff and escort staff, and maintained strict guidelines for both:

There was the initial interview and the orientation to the script with the appointment center, which went hand in hand with actual escort script when go on calls. Escorts can never be appointment setters and appointment setters can't be escorts. That's the whole trick: you don't have to worry about them stealing your cars [and you can] keep them on their toes. Escorts don't even hang around the office or anything like that. Basically, [they're] just on call ...

As far as calls are dispersed, it was through the appointment center. It's their duty to check in and check out. They check you into the call and then they check you out of the call. The money is turned into the appointment center. [There's] no fraternizing at the office. I had 12 phone numbers, 12 lines ringing like an orchestra. (D8)

Organized call teams allowed respondents to not only control their employees, but also dictate the message that was conveyed to clients.

### Communications with Clients

Pimps also employed specific tactics to maintain control over communications between employees and customers. As with employee-to-pimp communications, code was important to avoid incrimination, and many pimps avoided documented conversations. One pimp noted that all business communications were conducted over the phone: "I don't like the computer. In my case, they had no physical evidence. It was all circumstantial" (F6).

Pimps could use a centralized phone number on advertisements so that all customer inquiries were controlled and owned by the pimp: "The numbers on the advertisements are numbers I own. If she left, I'd put the number on another girl's cell phone. The name of the game is control" (D18). While multiple advertisements were posted by the same pimp targeting different interests, they would often ring to the same phones: "[We had] three phones. It's all the same girls though [who answer the phones], but you would advertise them

differently.” (A1). Centralized oversight of customer inquiries also allowed for efficient operations:

The way we did it was a guy would call in, I’d ask what kind of lady he is looking for, give him the website, and then [ask for] the main intersection of where he is. And then I would give the girl the phone number and have her book the call. And the way I did that was that so the girl would know who she is getting, so that I didn’t promise full service or anything they didn’t want. That way she could get a feel for the guy ... she would know what she was getting. (A8)

To avoid incrimination during communications with customers, pimps identified certain methods to detect law enforcement involvement at the outset of contact with a prospective client. One respondent required employees to complete a “verification call,” which was simply a procedure by which an employee called the customer back at a provided number to verify their identity:

If they’re calling from a hotel, usually that’s what cops used, so that’s why we verified. And the other things would be that I would call their cell phone back and have them not answer, so I could see what their voicemail said. And so the other thing is I would call the hotel and ask for verification by making sure the room was in their name. If it was at their house, ask to see a bill. Hug the guys, make sure everything is alright. (A8)

While uncommon among respondents, some interviewees reported the use of call centers to manage client communications. Call centers allowed pimps even greater control over the message communicated to clients. While often connected to escort businesses, call centers were also run by respondents who had not acquired an escort license.

## Hours and Frequency of Transactions

*We worked anytime. Anytime she got up and feel like it, that’s when we would start.*  
(E12)

Work hours varied, and many respondents reported that their business operation was available to clients at any time that they called. As a result, employees could always be on the clock: “They worked 24 hours a day. There were four girls and they would work 7 days a week, they were real go-getters; they wanted to work. There were others who would work only on the weekends” (A4).

However, other pimps maintained more limited hours for employees. Particular hours and days tended to prove the most lucrative: “I had no set schedule. We had a meeting around 9:30 or 10:00 p.m. Business picked up then, and I wouldn’t send them out after 1 a.m. A lot of day business, business men on lunch, married men while their wife is at work” (A1). Another pimp stated, “Girls come in around 10:00 p.m. and get ready. We’d open around 11:30 p.m., 12:00 a.m. Then it was all up in the air when we closed, sometimes 5:30 or 6:00 a.m.” (H7). Night hours were common and weekends tended to be the busiest and most lucrative: “Friday and Saturday night you did a lot of calls between midnight and 6:00 in the morning” (A8). Another respondent reported, “We didn’t do much during the day because it was more profitable during certain hours of the night” (D8).

The number of transactions completed in a day or week also varied across respondents, and within businesses. Variations were in part due to fluctuations in demand over the course of the week: “It varies from day to day. Four or five johns a day [per girl] on Monday through Friday. And then Friday through Saturday, I’d say 10 to 15 [johns a day per girl]” (A4). Similarly, one interviewee explained that the number of transactions could range “anywhere from four to ten. On an average day, week day, probably about four or five dudes each” (B3). For another respondent, the routine number of transactions was “Probably about five. It just depends. Some days they would go without dates. Phone ain’t ringing, so the girls would say just drop us off on the track” (B5).

The number of transactions completed by each employee and each business was shaped in part by the rates charged for each sex act, and vice versa. As chapter 6 discussed, some pimps enforced monetary quotas that employees were expected to meet. Alongside the rates charged, quotas could also shape the frequency of transactions. While pimps reported some consistency to rates, prices fluctuated with market demand.

## Rates and Pricing Structures

Rates varied significantly across respondents and were closely tied to the number of transactions completed by the business and its employees. Respondents employed similar pricing structures, such as rates based on time and/or sex act. Other pimps set a price for dates, regardless of the time commitment and sex act. Business philosophy could impact a pimp's approach toward pricing:

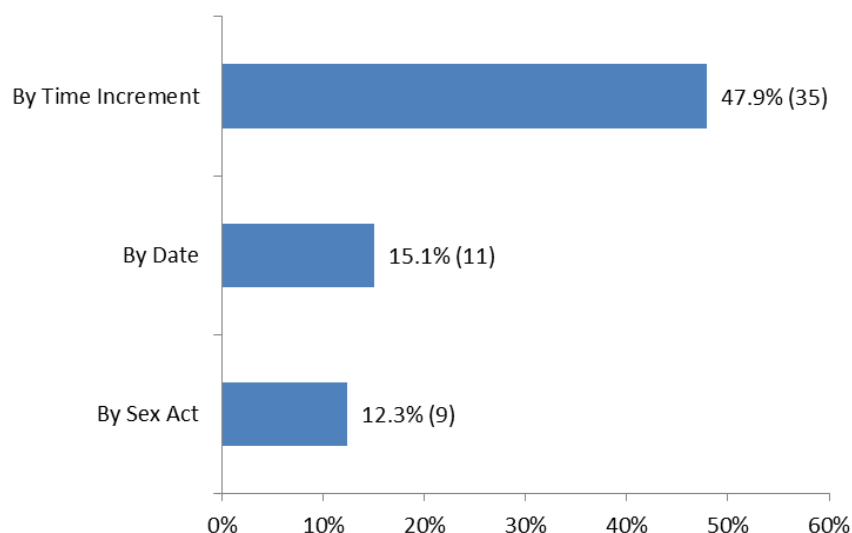
**Respondent:** In the ad, I would charge \$80 for a half-hour. My partners would charge \$350 [for in-calls], \$250 for out-calls. But who makes more money? Neiman Marcus or Walmart?

**Interviewer:** So you were the Walmart?

**Respondent:** Yes. (D13)

Other pimps tended toward higher rates and fewer transactions. Regardless of business philosophy, common pricing methods were reported across respondent interviews. Figure 7.1 illustrates the percentage of respondents reporting the use of time increment-, date-, and sex act-based pricing structures. Since some respondents used multiple different pricing structures, the categories below are not mutually exclusive.

**Figure 7.1 Pricing Structure**



## Time Increments

Charging by time increments was the most common pricing structure employed by respondents. As table 7.2 illustrates, respondents frequently charged transactions in 15-minute, 30-minute, and 1-hour increments.

**Table 7.2: Transaction Rate by Time Increment**

City	15 minutes	30 minutes	1 hour
Atlanta	\$350	\$500	\$1,000
Atlanta	\$60	\$80	\$150–175
Atlanta	\$40–100		\$50–150
Atlanta	\$80–100		
Atlanta			\$200
Atlanta			\$300
Atlanta			\$250–300
Dallas	\$20–60		
Dallas		\$80	
Dallas		\$100–300	\$200–500
Dallas		\$150–500	
Dallas			\$200
Denver		\$150	\$250
Denver		\$200–590	\$100–300
Denver			\$300
Denver			\$200–250
Miami	\$15–200		
Miami			\$200
Miami	\$30		
Miami		\$100	
Seattle		\$150	\$200
Seattle		\$250	\$300–250
Kansas City		\$30	\$40
Washington, DC			\$200
San Diego		\$60	\$120
San Diego		\$150	\$150
San Diego		\$150	\$200
San Diego		\$350	
San Diego		\$100–150	\$150–500
San Diego		\$100–250	\$200–500
San Diego		\$150–200	
San Diego			\$400
San Diego			\$100–300
City not recorded	\$25–40		



One respondent explained the evolution of his pricing structure and how weather and demand could influence prices:

When we started, it was \$200 for half an hour and \$300 for an hour. And in 2009, it was \$250 for the hour and \$150 for the half-hour ... And sometimes if the service was overbooked, then we would tell them that “Hey, if you’ll pay \$50 more, we will send them to you next.” And when the snow is really high here, we would charge more, because it was riskier. So the girls wouldn’t want to drive as much, so we would send them to whoever would pay the most. (A8)

Another respondent explained a time-based pricing structure: “I charged \$140 for 30 minutes and \$200 for a full hour. Eighty to eighty-five percent [of clients], it takes 5 minutes” (F1). As the quote indicates, respondents often assumed their employees would not be required to work for the full time committed.

## Date

Other respondents charged by the cost of a full date, and did not distinguish by time or sex act. For respondents reporting date-based pricing, costs are reported in table 7.3.

**Table 7.3 Cost by Date**

City	Date
Atlanta	\$500
Atlanta	\$300–400
Atlanta	\$80–200
Dallas	\$35
Dallas	\$60
Dallas	\$75
Dallas	\$175–200
Denver	\$200
Kansas City	\$200–300
San Diego	\$500
Washington, DC	\$150

## Sex Act

The sex act requested could also shape the price. Table 7.4 illustrates the costs reported by respondents based on sex act.

**Table 7.4 Cost by Sex Act**

City	Vaginal Sex	Oral Sex	Anal Sex
Atlanta		\$75	
Dallas	\$75		
Dallas	\$150	\$75	
Dallas		\$60	
Denver			\$200–300
Kansas City	\$1,000	\$750	\$2,500
San Diego	\$100	\$60	
San Diego	\$60–150	\$60–100	
Washington, DC	\$100–250	\$50–60	

## Other Factors Influencing Rates

While pricing structures shaped respondents' rates, other factors could heavily influence the price communicated to customers, including perceptions of the client, special events, location of the transaction, venue of advertisement, and the employee completing the transaction.

Perceptions regarding a client's wealth and willingness to pay a higher price figured prominently into cost determinations. One pimp explained that the price "depends on the john that picks them up. You can tell from talking what price they can get them for. There was no set price" (E2). One respondent directed his employees to assess wealth based on customer appearance to set rates: "Look at [the customers'] watches, their suits, how they're dressed. That's what you go off of [to set the price]" (H8). One interviewee explained that he would offer some services for a lower cost, but generally encouraged his employees to never refuse money from a client:

Don't turn down no money. If he got \$20, go and take care of him. If he has \$50, go ahead and take care of him. I wouldn't let them do less than \$20. That's a hand job or quickie. My request would probably be \$75. \$75 ... one position, no turning around or getting it from the back. If you start doggy style and you pay \$75, you better finish doggy style. One condom rule. Whatever he paid you, if he paid you \$60, condom busts, he tries to take the condom off, his money is gone. Period. (D13)

Other interviewees explained why a flexible price structure was important: some clients might be willing to pay more than the rate an employee usually charges "A john might come and be used to paying \$200. If she jumps in the car and says I will do it for \$60, she is short changing herself" (E2). A respondent who ran an escort service also described his pricing approach:

You call the escort service in the first place, and you might be thinking about doing it for a week or two weeks, and you build up nerve, and they get there and it's kind of like whatever you want. He's telling you the fantasy and he says how much it's going to cost? You can shoot yourself in the foot if you say \$200—he might have \$500 or \$1,000 he's planning to blow on the whole experience. It's sort of like, "Surprise me," and a lot if it has to do with presentation. If you pull up looking like a seven dollar store and have no bottom line, you can tell. The more class [you have], a big thing is conversation and being able to converse on different levels. A female that does not have knowledge of certain things, not well spoken, if you're scared and he's scared, you're all going to be in there looking real crazy. (D8)

Special events could also increase rates: "If it's an event the price range goes up" (G12). Another respondent reported "You can get more at an event" (C4). At the same time, a slow night could lead to lower prices:

**Respondent:** [Oral sex] is \$50, \$60. Everything is \$100.

**Interviewer:** Was that on the lower cost end?

**Respondent:** Yes, very low end. That's on a slow night. On a good night, \$250. (C4)

Some respondents also charged different rates for in-calls and out-calls.<sup>65</sup> Out-calls were generally more expensive. A respondent explained, "Each in-call was \$250, each out-call was \$300" (A1). Another respondent reported, "In-calls was \$200 an hour. \$150 for half-hour. \$100 for the quickie. Out-calls, \$250 for an hour, \$200 for the half-hour, and \$150 for the quickie. The hour was the most popular, for both in-calls and out-calls" (B3).

The venue of advertisement could also influence the price. One respondent reported that dates arranged online were more expensive than transactions made on the street. The respondent noted, "You might pay \$450–500 an hour [online]. The concrete, like \$200" (G11).

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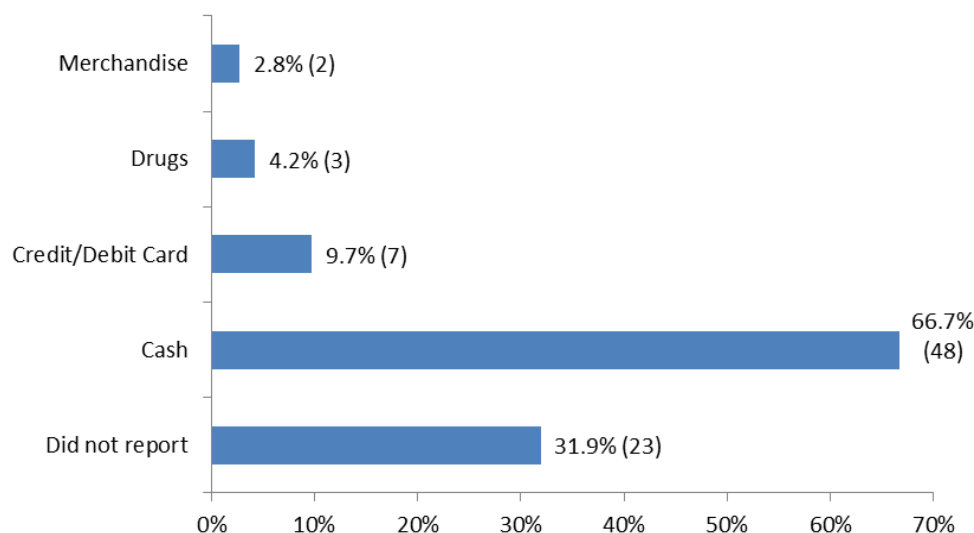
<sup>65</sup> In-calls required customers to come to a location chosen by the pimp—often a hotel room or apartment—to complete a transaction and have sex. Hotels were the most common location of in-calls for respondents. Out-calls required the sex worker (and based on business practice, the pimp at times as well) to travel to the location of the customer.

Finally, respondents also charged different amounts based on the employee completing the sex act. One respondent explained the perspective behind this price model: “People are willing to pay for what they think that you’re worth. Some girls make \$100 a trick, some make \$1,000 a trick, some make \$10,000 a trick. It’s the product” (G7).

## Forms of Payment

Respondents accepted different forms of payment, though cash was by far the most common. Figure 7.2 illustrates the percentage of employees that accepted cash, drugs, credit or debit cards, and objects or merchandise as a form of payment. Some pimps accepted more than one form of payment, therefore the categories below are not mutually exclusive.

**Figure 7.2 Forms of Payment Accepted**



The majority of respondents accepted cash, but some offenders also accepted alternative forms of payment. One interviewee shared that he was not particular regarding types of compensation: “Credit cards, gifts—I mean, if he wants to buy you a mink coat, then get a floor length mink coat and get the hat and purse. If he wants to buy you a fridge, get the stove and washer and dryer. [I had] a credit card machine and a PayPal account. The credit card linked straight to the PayPal” (D5). A woman who worked as a bottom also reported that “For a short period, [my pimp] accepted PayPal” (D21). Other less traditional forms of payment were permissible at times: “I’d accept payment in gold or silver” (A4). Employees also accepted additional gifts that were turned over to the pimp, though they were generally accompanied by a cash payment: “I take everything, diamonds from a trick before, laptops, digital cameras, a lot of weed. My girl came out from a dude who gave her two ounces of cocaine. They’re not going to have sex for that, they’ve got to have cash, too” (B3). Other pimps also reported additional earnings from employees who would rob clients while on the job. One pimp explained, “You’d be surprised how many of these watches these girls might accidentally pick up. Gotta sell them” (D8). Pawning stolen goods brought additional income.

While pimps collected significant earnings, some respondents also reported substantial costs to operating a business within the UCSE. The following section explores those costs.

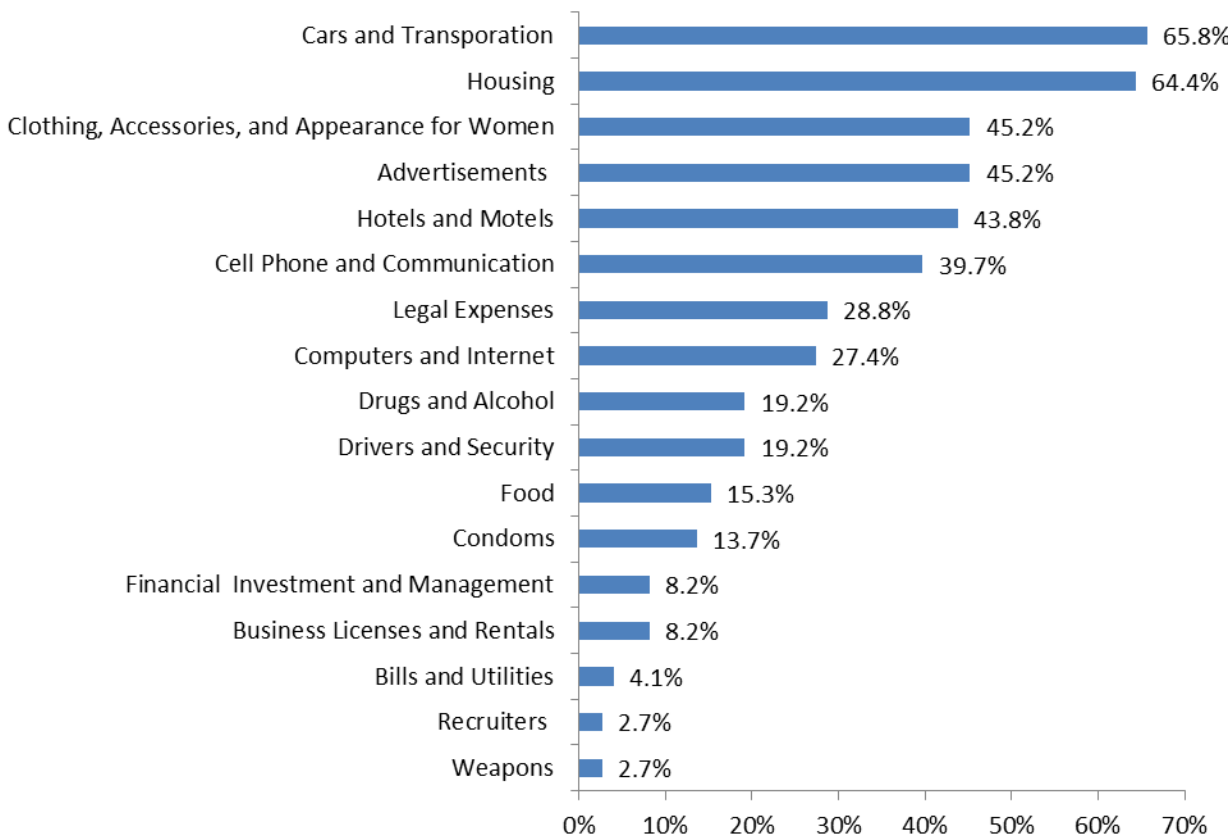
## Operational Costs

*A lot of money made was spent back—hotel rooms, hair, nails, tampons. (A1)*

*I invested into a trucking company, mortgaged the house, and financed the Mercedes Benz. Clothes, jewelry, clubs. (G1)*

Costs varied significantly across respondents; some pimps reported very low expenditures on operational costs, while others invested a high percentage of their earnings back into the business. Figure 7.3 provides a breakdown of the percentage of respondents who reported expenditures on specific costs.

**Figure 7.3 Business-Related Expenses**



While respondents documented their operational costs to varying degrees, some expenses were commonly reported across pimps. For many respondents, pimping was a lucrative business that allowed its participants to make purchases and investments beyond their own basic living expenses and the costs of maintaining a business. Still, other respondents felt that pimping was not a lucrative field that could support lavish lifestyles, given the operational expenses associated with the sex market. One respondent stated, “People thought you can make a lot of money in that lifestyle. About 65 percent [of pimps are] trying to support a drug habit. [The] other 45 percent [are] trying to make a living, period” (E5). The data below includes estimations provided by respondents regarding the costs of operating their business.

## Cars and Transportation

Transportation and cars were the most frequently cited business expense reported by respondents; 66 percent of interviewees reported incurring business expenses related to cars and employee transportation. Respondents explained that they maintained personal cars to both attract new employees and transport employees to call locations. Overall, transportation fees could add up significantly; respondents also reported business expenditures on gas money and car rentals. Depending on whether the majority of

transactions completed were in-calls or out-calls, the cost of local travel could add up quickly. One respondent noted, “Gas money was through the roof—I’d say about \$500 every two weeks” (A1). Respondents would at times rent cars for business travel rather than using personal cars.

**Interviewer:** Would you rent cars?

**Respondent:** Yeah, I don’t take my cars out most of the time. Cars in one of girls’ names who had a license.

**Interviewer:** What rental car company?

**Respondent:** Enterprise, Hertz, wherever had cars available. If I rent a car, I’d get a Cadillac truck or Charger. They had more room.

**Interviewer:** How much would they cost?

**Respondent:** About \$1,000 [per week]. (G12)

Reported rental car expenses ranged from \$40 a day to \$400 to \$500 a week.

## Housing

Sixty-five percent of employees also reported operational expenditures on apartments and homes to house their employees. Costs varied; one respondent reported paying only \$50 per week on housing costs, while another offender spent \$450 a week on a condominium in Las Vegas. Respondents also reported purchasing homes ranging from \$118,000 to \$580,000.

## Appearance

Employee appearance expenditures could be significant for the 45 percent of respondents who reported covering some or all of the costs of employee clothing, makeup, hair, nails, and accessories. Some interviewees reported spending \$3,000 to \$4,000 on employees’ shopping sprees each week, while other respondents did not pay for costs associated with employee appearance. Respondents also reported spending money on their own personal appearance, which they considered a business expense to attract new employees.

Purchasing clothing gave respondents the opportunity to control the appearance of their employees. One pimp explained how he used clothing to dictate his employees’ image:

I wanted them to look like they wasn’t trying to get in any trouble. I would put them in tight warm ups, tennis shoes, summertime put them in some short, short shorts. If we going out, and it’s a Friday or Saturday, I get them real sexy. Because I am going to be there with them and we are going to be in the party atmosphere. (D13).

A female pimp reported imposing significant control over the money she allocated to employee appearance, giving different amounts to her employees based on the amount of time they were with the business. She explained, “We would do nails every other week. And we tanned every day, and we would shop twice a month and spend \$500 to \$600. And then the other girls would get \$100 or \$200 a month ... and once they would get around for six months, they would get more money” (A8).

## Advertising Costs

Almost half of respondents (45 percent) reported expenses that were directly related to producing and disseminating advertisements. Expenses included both photographs to include in advertisements and the actual cost of posting the advertisements on a host website or in a print source.

Multiple respondents took photographs of their employees to post on advertisements. Others used fake photographs: “You might have some girl that you put up a fake pic. Or you might put up two girls and really just be working off one” (B3). Pimps who used actual photographs either took pictures themselves or hired professional photographers. Given the expense associated with producing photographs and advertisements, some pimps waited until they had a commitment from an employee to remain with the pimp:

So after a few weeks of a girl staying with us, we come and get a disk done. If the girl wanted to leave us, she would have to pay us \$300 dollars, and we had every picture on the disk. It would be the same photographer, and when we first went there he offered for me and another girl to be on the centerfold. He sent us to one guy, and they had the make-up but we just had to bring the outfits, so we kept sending the girls to them. Every year we did new photos, so the guy [the client] wasn't seeing the same thing. (A8)

Respondents also reported costs associated with posting advertisements to websites, phonebooks, or print newspapers. According to respondents, phonebook advertisements were the most costly. Local newspaper advertisements were less expensive, but did not have the same sustained exposure as phonebooks, and required more frequent posting. Online advertisements were even less expensive than print advertisements, but respondents posted multiple times a day. One respondent explained, "That's where a lot of money went to: posting. Each girl would post at least five times a day [on Backpage]. I think it was \$5–10 per post ... Craigslist was the best one to post. It was the same: \$5 or \$10" (G8). The frequency with which online advertisements were posted drove up costs.

Some respondents also reported equipment costs to allow for advertisement posting. Twenty-seven percent of respondents considered computer and Internet costs as business expenses. One respondent explained, "I had a laptop; that cost about \$2,000. I had a camera, a Canon that was expensive, to post pictures of the girls" (A3).

## **Hotels and Motels**

Forty-four percent of respondents reported spending money on renting hotel rooms or maintaining spaces for customer appointments. The cost of hotel rooms varied significantly across respondents: One respondent reported renting a hotel room for a month for \$1,000 while other respondents spent over \$1,000 on hotel rooms per week. Respondents would sometimes purchase hotel rooms for an extended period of time to receive discounted rates: "I'd talk to the clerk, sometimes buy a room for a week or month to get the right discount" (G15). Other respondents had employees share rooms to save money on rental costs.

## **Cell Phones and Plans**

Forty percent of respondents reported business-related charges for cell phones and plans. Many respondents chose to use prepaid phones, which allowed pimps to regulate the number of minutes available and the money invested into each phone. Prepaid phones could also be thrown away and replaced, and thus could not be as easily traced by law enforcement. Other respondents used monthly plans for their employees or simply used employees' personal phones for business transactions. The type of phone and plan varied by respondent, but several pimps stated that the longer an employee worked for him or her, the greater the likelihood that she would be placed on a phone plan.

## **Legal Fees**

Pimps reported expenditures on bond payments or lawyer fees resulting from employees' arrests or respondents' own cases relating to pimping. Twenty-nine percent of respondents reported some amount of legal expenditures. One pimp reported that he kept an attorney on retainer to address all legal matters that arose as a result of his business. He explained, "I would give him \$2,500 for me to cop out for something. If I go to trial, it's \$10,000. If I have a good day—I would say [to the lawyer,] 'Come pick up \$500, man'" (D4). Pimps also reported covering the cost of bail when their employees were arrested and booked. One respondent explained, "There was a couple times that girls got arrested, and we did go post their bond" (A8). Paying employee bond was a way to keep employees from leaving; it demonstrated a commitment to invest in an employee. One respondent explained, "There was a particular girl I had, she knew I would pay her bond, because I know a girl could leave any day" (G3).

Prosecution on pimping or sex trafficking charges was itself an unexpected business expense for many respondents. While some respondents were represented in court by a public defender, others retained private lawyers to defend their cases. Pimps reported spending from \$1,000 to \$720,000 on legal fees

associated with their charges, though the median amount spent on legal fees was \$20,000 for respondents who reported legal expenses.

## **Additional Costs**

Additional business related expenses reported by respondents included: drugs and alcohol (19 percent); payments to drivers and security staff (19 percent); food for employees (15 percent); condoms (14 percent); business licenses and office space rentals (8 percent); and weapons (3 percent).

Finally, two respondents (3 percent) hired additional employees to transport women from other countries into the United States to engage in sex work. “I would pay the coyote \$3,000 for each girl. They would go from Mexico to Atlanta or Mexico to Arizona. They would have to pay me back for that money. It would take one week. If she didn’t want to work, she could go. Some women left the work, some got married, but they would have to pay me back first. That was the deal” (G5). Another respondent reported payments to both recruiters and coyotes:

I was paying between \$7,000 and \$10,000 for the coyote, and paid the recruiter \$1,000 to \$1,500 for each girl. So they were going to find any women so they could get \$1,000. (H5)

While uncommon among respondents, recruiters and coyotes could charge high fees for their participation in the trafficking of individuals across borders for sex work.

## **Investments Outside the Business**

Investments in other businesses were not common among respondents, but were reported. Some pimps invested in both legal and illegal businesses, while others indicated that they had intended to start investing in other businesses. Respondents reported investing in trucking companies, restaurants, and music. One respondent reported that he was frequently contacted with investment opportunities:

You have people that are going to call you and say, “Hey man, I am trying to start a rap group.” I reach in my pocket, and maybe give \$2,000 or \$3,000. My partner had a nightclub. Might stock up, but I was always trying to find a way to help someone invest with a little bit of interest. That’s how I got my restaurant. (D5)

A commonality across multiple respondents was the desire to invest in a small business as an eventual transition into the legal economy. Some respondents invested in multiple opportunities. One respondent explained, “I had ideas to do certain things. I used to invest my money with the car guy I was buying cars from. I would front him to buy cars, bring them back to the lot. I did book shows for rappers, venues, stuff like that. It’s a quick flip. Anything that is a quick profit” (E2).

## **Summary of Operational Costs**

Tremendous variation existed across respondents regarding the costs of supporting a business operation in the underground sex market. Despite differences in the amount of business-related costs, the costs discussed above were reported by multiple pimps, suggesting some consistency in operational expenses.

## **Money Management, Laundering, and Storage**

Pimps employed different money management methods, ranging from “no management” to online money management services. Less than one quarter of respondents (16 percent) used a formal money management system to track their business expenses and profits. Some respondents believed that basic money management actually helped evade law enforcement detection and avoid suspicion: “I did the books once a month, as far as who I had to write checks to in order to see how much to put in the bank and how much [to put] in the safe” (A1). Accounting practices could evolve over time as business developed: “In the beginning, I didn’t have nothing, but in the end I kept track of it through books, a monthly calendar. How much I spent today, how much each girl [made], [over] weeks, months. I used books, not a computer” (D5). Exposure to legal accounting practices shaped at least one pimps’ business approach. Pimps also reported using banks, but chose their banks based on personal preference, convenience, or past experience. Business considerations largely did not factor into respondents’ bank

### **Laundering Money through Legal Businesses**

While most respondents did not maintain legal business structures, business licenses opened up new opportunities to launder and store money earned in the UCSE. Cash-based legal structures made it easier for respondents to conceal suspicious earnings. A respondent who ran a massage parlor explained that “You can’t tax the massage parlor. If I make \$100,000, I report \$20,000. Your records go by how you write them. You don’t do receipts until the end of the night. I would tally what I thought I made at the end of the night, not what I actually made” (D3).

Despite the benefits, respondents also reported basic business challenges to laundering money through a legal business. One respondent who ran an escort service explained that escort service fees that were paid via credit card had to be concealed in order for credit card companies to approve them: “The thing about the credit card is that most companies won’t give you a credit cards for an escort service, so they would be billed as a cleaning service—Elite Cleaning Service—or something like that” (A8). In addition to a providing a cover for credit card companies, respondents noted that being billed as a cleaning service also decreased the likelihood that the customer’s wife or girlfriend would become suspicious.

choice: “I had a couple of bank accounts, but it’s not like I had a certain one because it’s preferred by pimps ... Capital P on it or something. I did use Bank of America because they’re everywhere” (D8).

Other pimps intentionally avoided formal accounting because it produced a paper trail of their criminal enterprise. One female respondent who worked with a pimp partner explained, “There was no managing of money. We each got each other’s cut. Paperwork is bad. I did not use banks. I kept the money at home in a locked box” (F1). Another female offender who worked as a bottom explained that her pimp “got in some trouble in DC and he stopped keeping track, because he didn’t want it getting [linked] back to his computer” (D21).

Pimps sometimes sought methods to hide their money rather than storing it in traditional bank accounts. There were clear reasons for pimps to avoid banks: “Because they are going to wonder why and how I got all this money” (D7). Another respondent agreed: “You can’t explain to someone why you are depositing thirty grand in two days’ time; I learned that from the drug game” (A7). Other respondents started out using bank accounts, but stopped banking to avoid producing evidence that could incriminate them. A respondent explained, “I stopped messing with banks. Friends said it is cool to have a bank, but then it’s just a paper trail” (E3).

Pimps employed other methods to conceal earnings. Over one quarter of respondents (30 percent) reported the use of prepaid credit cards to store cash, pay bills, and move money around quickly. For respondents who did not

maintain credit cards or bank accounts, prepaid credit cards were essential to running a business. A respondent explained, “You have to have one of those Green Dot cards to do general business in society. I did have a Green Dot card, a prepaid card; you just have to have one of those” (H1). Another respondent reported, I used [Green Dot cards] for quick bill pays ... I kept cash, but as far as the card usage, I just kept a couple dollars on the card so I didn’t have a lot of cash on me at any time” (G1). Prepaid cards also helped pimps secure themselves against theft: “I’ve used prepaid credit cards. You don’t want to get robbed. I might have three or four cards with \$3,000–4,000 each” (D8).

Finally, family members played an important role in hiding and saving money for some respondents. A respondent explained, “Every time I get \$1,000, I drop it off to someone in my family who is working a real job” (B3). One pimp reported hiding money in his grandmother’s basement, while another respondent stored his money in a room he rented at his friend’s home: “I stacked my money in my honeycomb hide out. It was a duplex. It was my homeboy’s house, it was his extra room. No illegal activity ... Go there and chill ... I kept my money, clothes, and personal items there” (B5). A respondent with family abroad wired money to his relatives, but controlled the amount to avoid suspicion: “I would send the money back to [home country] by Western Union. I would send \$1,800 at a time, otherwise people would question the money. I would send money to my family every third day by Western Union. I would keep the rest of the money on myself or in the car” (G5).

The final section of this chapter explores the changes within the UCSE observed by respondents over the course of their involvement.

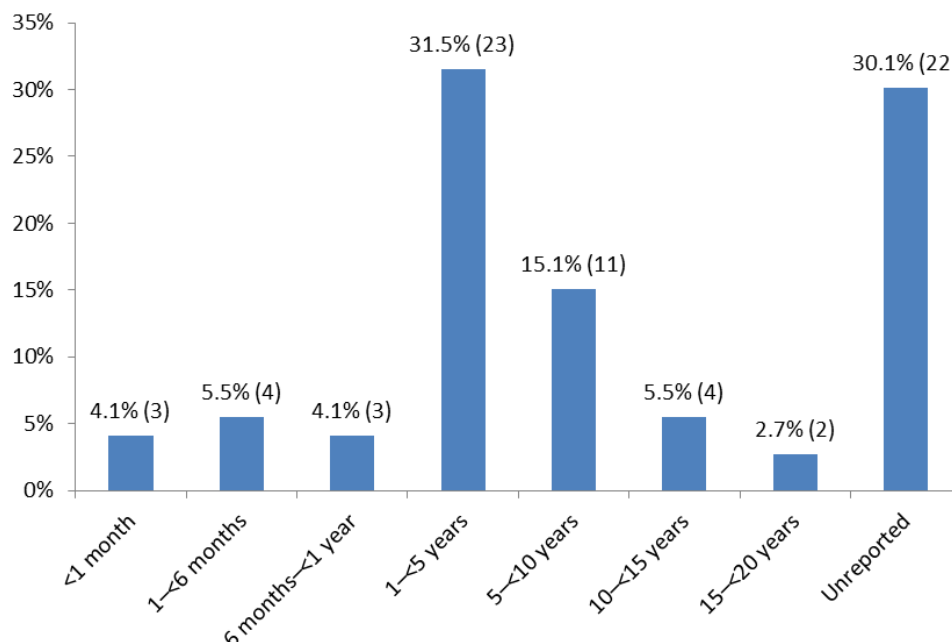


## Changes in the Field

*The field doesn't change, it just changes what's hot and what's not. Where the police are at changes. What the hot locations are, they change from time to time. And technology, the way you communicate changes. Other than that, everything stays the same. (G10)*

Researchers and law enforcement practitioners are interested in how pimps respond to fluctuations in the market and variations in law enforcement attention. Over half of this study's respondents worked in the UCSE for at least one year prior to incarceration and thus provided reflections on how the market changed over the course of their involvement. Figure 7.4 shows the lengths of time respondents reported engaging in the underground commercial sex economy as pimps.

**Figure 7.4 Length of Time Worked**



Over the course of their involvement, respondents observed changes in the market demand, available methods of advertisement, and the demographics of both the individuals who participated as sex workers and the customers who purchased sex. Their perceptions are discussed below.

## Market Changes

*One thing about prostitution—when you can't buy food, when you can't eat, there's one thing you can and will buy. It's like gold, platinum. (D18)*

For the most part, respondents shared the sentiment that a high market demand for sex always exists: "Sex has always sold. Never been a shortage of people willing to pay for sex" (D10). However, some respondents observed changes in the market demand for sex over the course of their involvement. One female pimp who worked in multiple cities throughout the United States suggested an increase in the overall demand from 2004 to 2009:

From 2004 to 2009, it definitely increased. Because we started advertising so much more, it probably increased by about 60 percent. And then from 2009 to 2010, it probable decreased by half of that, and guys weren't spending so much money. I believe it was in part because of the economy and part [because] of the competition. Because a girl would go online. If they saw you posted for \$200, they would charge \$150. \$50 might be a lot to that guy. (A8)

However, respondents did not agree on broader market changes over the years. Another interviewee reported a slump from 2003 to 2008:

**Respondent:** The pimp game slowed up between them years 2003 and 2008. Even the junkie girls out there prostitute, but the regular pimp game, it ain't nothing like it was in the 90s.

**Interviewer:** Why?

**Respondent:** I don't know. When I first started I was making \$1,000 a night. It was hard to make \$1,000 a night in late 2007, 2008. The money wasn't coming fast. The economy, I can't really say what. A lot of the tricks weren't spending a lot of money like they were back then. (G3)

Other respondents reported that the changes they perceived were largely the result of their own development and increasing expertise within the field. Pimps perceived changes in the market around them as they grew older and became more experienced, but acknowledged that these changes were largely an effect of their increased knowledge rather than external forces. One pimp explained, "As time went on and people did this for a living, they became more advanced" (D10). While these were perhaps not actual changes in the market themselves, pimps saw their own businesses change dramatically. One woman who engaged in the sex market as both a sex worker and facilitator spoke to the evolution of her business:

Everything changed when I got older. I got my own place, my own apartment, things started happening. [There were] more killings, more money to be made, and more opportunity to be imprisoned. We started getting known. People started knowing us. The laws knew what we was doing. We looked so innocent when we was younger. Wearing makeup and clothes. We could wear jeans and a shirt and a john would pick us up. [Over time,] we started revealing ourselves even more. (D16)

Also speaking to the development of his expertise, another interviewee explained: "The amount of money increased, my clients increased, and my knowledge of how it worked increased. I think that reaching the people who were interested was key. I was introduced to several [websites to post ads]: SoWet.com, Craigslist.com, and Adultfriendfinder.com—after those, business increased" (A1). While another pimp reported some change in the overall economy, he also felt that he ran his business more efficiently over time:

**Interviewer:** Did demand increase? Were there more guys looking to buy sex? Or did it change because you became more efficient?

**Respondent:** I would say a little bit of both. As the money starting increasing, the drive for it was increasing. Instead of two clubs in one night, I would try and go to three or four clubs in one night. Instead of working one gentlemen's club, I would work two or three. (G1)

Perceptions of the market size, and the methods that pimps employed to reach their target market, were somewhat codependent. Offender interpretations of the available market shaped the methods they employed to connect to that market. At the same time, tactics, such as online advertisement, influenced perceptions of the size of the available customer base.

## Internet

*You could tell that business has gone different. It's gone to the Internet; it's not on the strip. (C5)*

As discussed throughout preceding chapters, the Internet has had a substantial impact on sex work and pimping, and the rapid progression of Internet use was the most frequently identified systemic change reported by respondents. In one pimp's words, "The Internet was the only thing that changed over the years. There were no other trends that I can think of" (C9). Some respondents reported an increase in demand due to the growth of widespread Internet use: "The Internet really kicked it off. Demand increased by 60 percent" (D7). The Internet also removed some of the spatial limitations that historically constrained connections between individuals who sell sex and customers. One respondent explained,

“Years ago, a john, a certain guy from Northern Virginia, may never come to DC to the track. He could, but it was taboo. Now he can get on the Internet, she may be in Virginia or DC, and he can go straight to the hotel” (C4).

Respondents also noted how the Internet opened up a wealth of new marketing opportunities for pimps: “The economy is out of control now. Way bigger than the ’90s. We got Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, all this for pimps and for people, not just [for advertising] hos, but for merchandise. You got pimps that are making movies now. The same girl on that corner, put her on a DVD and send it around the world” (D5). Other respondents observed a marked increase in their own sales when they posted services on the Internet:

Out on the blade, young bitches and dudes don’t know about the Internet. I didn’t know about the Internet until about two years after I got on. First girl, it was all concrete. Then this dude, my homey’s brother, said he could put her somewhere, tricks would call her phone, [she could get] extra clientele. I would pay him some money. And then the girl said they just putting me on the Internet. That’s how I learned about the Internet. Young dudes do concrete because they don’t know about Backpage and Craigslist. (B3)

The Internet was not without new dangers for pimps, along with new competition and higher associated business costs. The Internet also entailed greater risk of detection. One pimp believed that advertising on the Internet was the primary reason for his incarceration:

Really, the Internet cost me my freedom. I would never have known. The Internet is a lot more dangerous than a girl working the street. There is more money, but you have to set up, and you can be tracked too hard on the Internet. Shit being exposed, she have to compete with the competition on the Internet. She been seen by a stranger before she get there, so a safety factor. Not only that, it [costs] more money and you can easily get tracked by the police. (G3)

Respondents indicated that the Internet controls some of the dangers of sex work: It allows for pimps to initiate communications with potential customers prior to a transaction (providing an additional filter), takes girls off the track, and allows for pimps to connect to a higher-paying clientele who they perceive as less risky. However, the Internet also introduces new possibilities for detection and prosecution, often unanticipated by respondents until they were arrested. Not only does Internet use create a paper path of communications and transactions, it opens up new opportunities for law enforcement to anonymously connect to suspected pimps.

## Demographics of Participants

Respondents perceived changes in the demographics of both sex workers and customers over time. One respondent noted that when he was incarcerated in 2008, he observed more youth engaging in the sex market as pimps and sex workers: “A lot of young girls, 17 years old, pimps too. It became a fad” (B3). Respondents also observed changes in the age of their customers. One interviewee reported, “The only thing that I saw change was that I saw more younger dudes willing to pay. When I started, mostly dirty old men wanted young women, but before I got locked up, it was everybody. I don’t know. It was just the mentality. [People have been] more exposed to this material. I don’t know what’s going on” (D10). Other respondents made similar observations. One respondent explained that there were “More younger dudes. The younger guys started getting on this. The younger the guys got, the younger the girls got. From when I first started, they got real young. I was like whoa. It’s clear they understand what’s going on. I don’t condone it; 18 and older are grown. A lot of young girls, so it’s easy to take advantage of them” (G11).

Respondents also noted that trends influenced youth involvement in different illegal economies. According to some offenders, pimping became increasingly popular among youth in the 2000s, a period when multiple respondents noted a shift from drug dealing to prostitution. One respondent remarked on the shift from drug dealing to pimping among adolescents. He explained that pimping became increasingly popular among youth because it provided a more lucrative path than drug dealing:

It’s like the 1980’s where 15, 16, 14, 20 year olds were selling drugs to get by. You understand the community, man. It’s this. It’s prostitution. Everybody. I got little cousins

right now. They didn't learn nothing from me, they are just going to the times and life. That's what it is. Because drugs is a dead end street. You get money from selling drugs but now I got to take 500 of that and take it to the other drug man who is the drug lord. If I am letting her do what she does, and I am a part of her life, everything she make we can go spend it. (E3)

Other interviewees observed how different illegal economies could go in and out of “fashion” with youth. One respondent explained his own childhood experience with crime:

In my generation, my age range, it's like there are fashions ... When I was 14, everyone wanted to be a gang member. I was past that, I didn't really care about that. Once I got past that, I wanted something new. Saw my brother pimping, and I wanted to try that out. Two years later, it was the new fashion. Everyone wanted to do the pimping thing ... it became a trend. Little by little, everyone was doing it. When everyone started doing it, it turned into girls talking about how they can't catch a date ... Prices decreased because there are so many people out there. ...

When I was still in high school at the time, I had a lot of older homies. I am leaving the school gate and all the older people were at the gate...

At first, I was doing robberies. I was into the robberies and that was another thing that everyone was into. It wasn't that it stopped, it's just that time increased for it. I got caught and I was like 14 years old, and I had been in juvenile hall a couple times, so if I got caught again it would be six years in [juvenile detention]. I was still young, so it was time for a new crime. (E13)

## Gang Involvement

The growing involvement of gangs in sex work has also been observed as an important change in sex market networks. Levitt and Venkatesh (2007) found that gang members were closely intertwined with sex work, but not as pimps. Rather, they served as protection for independent sex workers. The concept of hiring or paying gangs in return for protection during commercial sex was also present in Raphael and Myers-Powell's (2010) interviews with 25 ex-pimps: the female pimps in their sample made large payments to gangs in return for security, and several of the male pimps mentioned gang involvement, organization, or coercion into pimping.

Some respondents corroborated the movement of gang involvement into sex trafficking and sex work. Offenders observed that gang activity historically centered on the drug economy, rather than the sex market. One respondent explained that while he was working in sex trafficking, “I was part of a gang, but all the members were involved in selling dope, not pimping hos” (D16). Despite historical separations between pimping and gangs, respondents observed increasing direct gang involvement in the underground sex market: “Back in the '90s, '80s, they have their own separation. Back then it was pimps and girls; gangs do their own thing ... Gangs now, they tend to do whatever makes money. Whatever can contribute to the establishment” (E15).

Respondents suggested that increased gang involvement could change the tactics and rules commonly used in pimping: “Some places where people used to gang bang. They turned into pimps, but still used gang bang tactics. I know a few of them. They kind of operate differently. ... Frowned on the p(imp) world because they use gang member tactics when you're pimping. Use a pistol, make a girl drop off a sack” (B3). Another respondent similarly observed how gang involvement disrupts developed rules governing the UCSE:

You're not really supposed to be a gang member in [pimping]. It's supposed to be set aside because you are out there for one thing. Now, it doesn't really matter. It's supposed to be Blood or Crip, for instance I was a Blood, and there is a girl out there and it happens to be a Crips girl, she decides to come to me. ... When you out there [pimping], there's not supposed to be any gang-related activity. (E13)

A few offenders also reported that gang rivalries were sometimes set aside while pimping. A woman who worked as a bottom observed rival gang members working collaboratively as pimps: “We were all

connected through the same gang. There are more and more gang members involved in this, but I'm not sure why. Probably more money I guess. [There are] different gangs working together. Bloods and Crips were working together. That was weird. It was just around this that they got along, but when business was over, [it was] 'I hate you'" (E1). While new business relationships between gang rivals developed, old tensions remained outside of the sex market.

## **Law Enforcement Attention**

News stories within the past few years have focused on the shift from prosecuting sex workers to prosecuting the clients, pimps, and traffickers involved in the UCSE (Buettner 2012). Many of these reports provide anecdotal accounts from prosecutors, law enforcement, pimps, and sex workers about the disparity in punishing commercial sex that has traditionally fallen on the sex worker. Now, a reported shift in the priority of criminality has occurred across district attorney and lawmaking officers across the country, with the penalties for pimping and trafficking becoming harsher and the consequences for prostitution, especially that of minors, lessening (Grady 2008; Valley 2012).

Some study interviews corroborated these reports, and respondents observed a changing landscape of risk surrounding the facilitation of sex work. Pimps believed that law enforcement has ramped up efforts to arrest and prosecute offenders. When asked if he felt his work was risky, one pimp responded, "Now? Yeah. Back then? No" (E13). Respondents also took note of the fact that many pimps are being charged with sex trafficking, which interviewees had historically interpreted as a crime separate and apart from pimping. One respondent reported, "I felt that the [pimping] arrest was a misdemeanor. I never thought taking a chick from across the street [was sex trafficking]. All of us have the fear of trafficking [charges]. You didn't start seeing it until the 2000s" (C4). Other pimps also demonstrated an increasing familiarity with sex trafficking laws for pimps; one respondent would send his employees on work-related travel without him, another respondent reported that his greatest work-related fear was to "get caught taking girls across state lines" (D4). When asked how he knew that crossing state lines involved heightened punitive risk, he responded "I watch the news. People be talking, I listen" (D4). These findings suggest that media attention to sex trafficking has had some impact perpetrator interpretations of risk.

## **Chapter Summary**

Pimps employed multiple operational tools and business practices to manage and market their businesses on a day-to-day basis. Through the analysis of interview data with 73 respondents, this chapter provided insight into these daily operations. While respondents reported substantial variance, common advertising techniques, communication strategies, pricing structures, and operational costs were found. In addition, respondents shared similar strategies regarding money management and the use of legal business structures to bolster illegal and underground activities.

As previous chapters have observed, the widespread use of the Internet has triggered substantial changes in the ways that pimps manage their business operations. Advertisements have moved from the street to the Internet. Increasingly, pimps and their employees initially engage with customers online. In turn, many of the spatial limitations that once governed the UCSE have been lifted; customers that may not have ventured to their city's track for commercial sex are able to connect to pimps and their employees through the anonymity of Internet chat rooms and online classifieds. At the same time that the Internet has introduced new opportunities to connect pimps with customers, technological advancements have also brought new opportunities for law enforcement detection. As communications between pimps, their employees, and customers increasingly move online or through text message, each transaction is documented, becoming a possible piece of evidence. Some respondents thus saw the Internet as a double-edged sword, introducing both new opportunities and new hazards.

Beyond the increasing role of the Internet in recruiting employees and advertising sex, respondents observed other changes to the market over time. With few exceptions, respondents felt that law enforcement efforts surrounding pimping and sex trafficking have increased in recent years. In addition, respondents observed that more youth have become involved in the UCSE as both facilitators and sex workers. Finally, respondents noted the growing involvement of gangs in the facilitation and control of sex market activities.

## Chapter 8

# Changes in the UCSE from the Perspectives of Sex Workers

### Introduction

Sex work is a global phenomenon that varies across geographic areas and historical periods. This chapter focuses on the structure, operation, and condition of the underground, street-based commercial sex economy in the United States from the 1970s to the present day (2013). It was during this approximately forty year period that the street-based sex market underwent a significant transformation, in large part due to the dramatic effects of the crack cocaine epidemic in the mid-1980s through the 1990s. The concomitant influences of widespread crack use, changing law enforcement approaches to sex work, and the increasing use of the Internet to solicit sex work have shaped the modern-day sex market.

This study is one of the first to analyze the experiences of street-based sex workers, ages 18–56, who worked in a number of cities across the United States. This study also incorporates the experiences of sex workers who identified as transgender females,<sup>66</sup> although the majority of respondents in this study identified as cisgender women. Most of the 36 sex workers interviewed for this study had been in the trade for several years—and even decades—between the 1970s and the present day and worked in different regional markets. Although chapters 5–7 describe the women and girls that pimps targeted for recruitment and employment, the individuals interviewed for this chapter entered the commercial sex market in a variety of ways and only a small percentage worked for a pimp at some point during their involvement in the UCSE. This chapter documents a narrative of sex work that depicts how the market changed over the course of approximately four decades. Cross-time and cross-city comparisons allow for an understanding of how the current commercial sex market is operating in cities across the country.

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<sup>66</sup> As other researchers have found (see Thukral and Ditmore 2003), the experiences of transgender individuals in the street-based sex market are similar to those of cisgender individuals in many ways. For this reason, responses are weaved into this report without gender identifiers. However, certain aspects of this population's work differ from those of cisgender sex workers; gender identities are stated in those cases.

### Main Findings from this Chapter Include:

**Entry into commercial sex market:** Sex workers started trading sex on the street for a wide variety of reasons, including economic need; homelessness; the encouragement of family members, friends, and acquaintances; a desire for social and emotional acceptance; as a natural continuation of other forms of commercial sex work, such as stripping and dancing; and to support substance use. For many, a combination of these reasons served as the impetus to begin trading sex.

**Changes in commercial sex market over time:** The street-based sex market underwent a significant transformation between the 1970s and present day, in large part due to the dramatic effects that the crack epidemic in the mid-1980s through the 1990s had on the sex economy. In particular, the rates and earnings of sex work, the conditions of the street-based sex market, and the dates themselves changed substantially.

**Pricing:** There is evidence that broader economic trends affect the sex market's pricing structure; some sex workers described the impact of the 2007–2008 financial crisis on sex workers' earnings.

**Risks:** There are many risks to engaging in the commercial sex market, including: law enforcement and the threat of detection; client unpredictability; violence, rape, and death; sexually transmitted diseases and other health hazards; and the risks involved with drug use and dependency.

**Current UCSE:** The concomitant influences of widespread crack use, changing law enforcement approaches to sex work, and the increasing use of the Internet to solicit sex work have shaped the modern-day sex market. Today's street-based sex market consists of johns who pay less and are more violent; sex workers who either voluntarily or reluctantly charge less for their work; deeply rooted drug addictions; and law enforcement crackdowns that are pushing sex work off the streets, to new areas or online. Street-based sex work in particular has become more dangerous, more prone to detection, and less lucrative.

## Definitions

As discussed in the terminology section in chapter 2, we use the term sex worker in a manner consistent with Murphy and Venkatesh (2006), to denote anyone (female, male, or transgender) who exchanges sexual intercourse (including oral sex) for money or some other material good (e.g., food, shelter, drugs). This chapter focuses on street-based sex workers who traded sex acts primarily in the outdoor sex market—in places such as public spaces, cars, hotels and motel rooms—and a few who traded online, but who also worked in or with a number of other venues and establishments (such as strip clubs, massage parlors, and escort services) at some point in their careers. Of the 36 sex workers whose experiences inform this chapter, seven worked with a pimp for a short period of time. Pimp-sex worker relationships are discussed more in depth in chapters 5–7.

## Literature

Existing literature provides useful information on the operations of the street-based sex market and the experiences of those trading sex. Previous research has made important contributions to our understanding of sex workers who worked during particular periods of time and in specific cities across the United States, including Chicago (Raphael and Shapiro 2004), San Francisco (Farley and Barkan 1998), New York City (Fullilove, Lown, and Fullilove 1992; Maher and Daly 1996; Murphy and Venkatesh 2006; Thukral et al. 2005; Thukral and Ditmore 2003), Atlanta (Serk, Elifson, and German 2000), and Colorado Springs (Potterat et al. 2004). A small set of researchers has begun to explore the role of the Internet in the commercial sex market (e.g., Cunningham and Kendall 2011).

To date, few studies of transgender sex workers have been undertaken (Weitzer 2009). Extant literature reveals that transgender sex workers may be drawn to sex work because it offers an accepting community and a source of employment void of the discrimination these individuals frequently face in the mainstream job market. Transgender sex workers, however, are often subjected to harassment and mistreatment by law enforcement and exposed to heightened health risks, primarily HIV/AIDS infection and extreme physical violence (Boles and Elifson 1994; Prestage 1994; Thukral and Ditmore 2003; Valera, Sawyer, and Schiraldi 2001). Transgender sex workers are integrated in street-based sex markets and

confront risks that are similar—albeit perhaps amplified—to those faced by other streetwalking sex workers.

Street-based sex workers of all gender identities become involved and stay in sex work for a myriad of reasons, including: economic necessity, substance abuse, homelessness, family and peer pressure, coercion (by pimps, johns, or others), childhood trauma (leading to a heightened risk of running away and other risky behaviors), and social acceptance. Many individuals first start trading sex as a continuation of other forms of commercial sex work, such as stripping and dancing, and many work in a variety of venues and establishments (including online) in the sex industry throughout their careers, sometimes leaving it altogether for periods of time (Covenant House 2013; Jeal and Salisbury 2007; Murphy and Venkatesh 2006; Perkins and Lovejoy 2007; Shively et al. 2008; Thukral and Ditmore 2003; Thukral et al. 2005). Past research has found that many street workers, including many of those informing the discussion in this chapter, do not work with pimps at all or for substantial portions of their careers (Dalla 2000; Thukral and Ditmore 2003).<sup>67</sup>

Researchers have found that street work offers sex workers some desirable conditions. It allows non-pimp controlled sex workers, also referred to as independent sex workers, the relative freedom to shape their schedules and choose their dates. Independent sex workers may also experience less violence than pimp-controlled sex workers, who are pressured to date frequently to earn certain amounts of money for their pimps (Norton-Hawk 2004). Street work can also be a relatively stable source of income and present few health risks if proper contraception is used (Harcourt and Donovan 2005; Thukral and Ditmore 2003; Whelehan 2001).

Past research has shown that street-based sex workers are confronted with a unique set of challenges and hardships that their indoor counterparts do not face (Church et al. 2001; Harcourt and Donovan 2005; Jeal and Salisbury 2007; Plumridge and Abel 2001; Porter and Bonilla 2000; Seidlin et al. 1988; Weiner 1996; Whittaker and Hart 1996). Those who trade sex primarily on the street are considered to “occupy the lowest rung on the commercial sex ladder” because they “make the least money, are more likely to be drug-addicted, subjected to violence, and otherwise distressed” (Shively et al. 2008, 4; also see Sanders 2005 and Scott and Dedel 2006). In a study of 115 outdoor and 125 indoor sex workers in the late 1990s, Church, Henderson, Barnard, and Hart (2001) found that outdoor sex workers were younger; began sex work at younger ages; were more likely to have started sex work to pay for drugs (as opposed to basic economic needs); experienced much higher levels of physical violence from clients; and regularly used heroin, opiates, crack cocaine, and other illegal substances. These circumstances have led researchers to conclude that “street-based sex workers generally endure more marginal situations, including unstable housing and other problems related to substance dependency” (Thukral and Ditmore 2003, 28).

The relationship between street-based sex work and drug use has been well documented. In an ethnography of female drug users in low-income neighborhoods in New York City between 1989 and 1992, Maher and Daly (1996) found that women played a greater role in the underground drug economies in the late 1980s and early 1990s, as they graduated their drug use from heroin and powder cocaine to crack cocaine. Because this expanded drug market was still male-dominated, it did not provide these drug-addicted females with opportunities for substantial income generation. Instead, as the researchers found, sex work provided one of the few reliable sources of earning potential for these women.

Although not all sex workers sell sex to support drug addictions (Stern et al. 2000), a number of studies have found significant evidence of what Fullilove, Lown, and Fullilove (1992) deem the “sex-for-drugs bartering system” used by substance dependent sex workers (Barry 1996; Fullilove et al. 1992; Inciardi, Lockwood, and Potteger 1993; Maher and Curtis 1992; Stern and Elifson 1990; Thukral and Ditmore 2003; Thukral et al. 2005). As this chapter will discuss, it is not necessarily the case that crack cocaine (or other drug) addictions preceded sex work; for some sex workers, substance use began during dates with

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<sup>67</sup> It is important to note that it is unknown how many individuals currently work for a pimp or worked for one in the past. The goal of this study is not to estimate that number.



clients, served as a coping mechanism for the work and—once addicted—made it difficult for many to leave the trade (Dalla 2000; Graham and Wish 1994; Potterat et al. 1998; Thukral and Ditmore 2003).

Some studies have documented the effect that widespread crack cocaine use in the mid-1980s and 1990s had on the lives of low-income sex workers and the street-based sex market. Researchers have shown how the work became less lucrative, more violent, and more competitive and that sex workers and the johns became younger. Maher and Daly (1996, 484) summarize the impact of pervasive crack use: “The [sex] market became flooded with novice sex workers, the going rates for sexual transactions decreased, and ‘deviant’ sexual expectations by dates increased, as did the levels of violence and victimization.” The sex market also lured both younger and older individuals who were becoming, or had become, drug dependent (Cardwell 2002; Thukral and Ditmore 2003). As a result, these addictions ultimately depleted many sex workers’ earnings (Thukral and Ditmore 2003; Thukral et al. 2005). As this report will show, these trends persist to this day.

Previous research documents the especially egregious levels of violence experienced by sex workers. Such violence has led scholars to deem the work the “most dangerous occupational environment in the United States” for women (Potterat et al. 2004, 784). Potterat and colleagues derived this conclusion from the results of their 30-year study of nearly 2,000 sex workers; in that study, they identified the following most common causes of death among sex workers: homicide, suicide, substance-related problems, HIV infections, and accidents. In a separate study, Brewer and colleagues (2006, 1101) found that female sex workers have the “highest homicide victimization rate of any set of women ever studied,” and that homicide rates among sex workers, johns, and pimps increased between the late 1980s and early 1990s. It has been found that street-based sex workers are subjected to higher levels of physical violence by pimps, clients, and others than other types of sex workers (Farley and Kelly 2000; Raphael and Shapiro 2004), and that everyday street-based sex work presents constant threats of rape, assault, mental and verbal abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, and robbery (Campbell et al. 2003; Farley et al. 2004; Kurtz et al. 2004; Moses 2006; Shively et al. 2008; Thukral and Ditmore 2003; Wood et al. 2007).

Sex workers also face the threat of law enforcement detection, which grew in the 1990s and 2000s when law enforcement efforts to control street crime increased across the country (Ditmore 2009). In New York City, for example, efforts such as “Operation Clean Sweep” sought to improve quality of life by targeting, in part, street-based sex workers (Marzulli 2002). Jurisdictions across the country began to rely on police raids and undercover efforts to eradicate sex work. Because of these strategies, street-based sex workers faced—and continue to face—a heightened risk of arrest, summons, and tickets (Shively et al. 2008; Thukral and Ditmore 2003). As a result, sex workers cycle in and out of the criminal justice system with great frequency (Thukral and Ditmore 2003). These approaches have also displaced street-based sex work to indoor spaces, streets not as aggressively targeted by law enforcement, and online (Murphy and Venkatesh 2006).

The increasing use of Internet-based sex work in recent years on sites such as Backpage and Craigslist has altered the street-based sex market. The Internet has allowed sex workers to advertise services to a larger clientele and organize dates that are not as easily detected by law enforcement (Scott 2002; Soothill and Sanders 2005). Cunningham and Kendall (2009) found that in a single month in New York City, nearly 1,700 ads for sex services were posted online each day. Richtel (2008) found that within one month’s time, between 500,000 and 1,000,000 unique visitors viewed TheEroticReview.com, a website where clients review their experiences with sex workers. Beyond serving as a tool for establishing and reviewing dates, the Internet’s accessibility and ease of use in facilitating the sale of sex is luring sex workers into the sex trade who may otherwise have never entered; displacing streetwalking sex workers in their 30s and 40s (but not necessarily other age groups); causing the market for commercial sex to expand; and reducing the need for pimps (Cunningham and Kendall 2011; Kolker 2013). However, as Cunningham and Kendall found and as our study shows, not all who trade sex are using the Internet.

In drawing on the experiences of sex workers who traded sex in the street- and Internet-based sex markets in cities across the United States between the 1970s and present day, this study expands upon the trends explored in research studies, including the influence of substance use and dependence, the strategies of law enforcement, and the rise of the Internet. This study also creates a new focus on the operation and makeup of the underground commercial sex market over the course of three decades, with a particular emphasis on documenting the changes in the market over time.

## Findings

### Background and Demographic Information

The 36 sex workers interviewed for this study represent a diverse set of racial and ethnic backgrounds and gender identities. As illustrated in figure 8.1, twelve participants identified as African American or black (33 percent), six identified as white (17 percent), four identified as Latino/a (11 percent), and three identified as multiracial (8 percent). Eleven (30 percent) did not identify a race or ethnicity. Twenty-eight individuals (78 percent) identified as women, one (3 percent) identified as a man, and seven (19 percent) identified as transgender women (figure 8.2).<sup>68</sup>

Figure 8.1 Race/Ethnicity

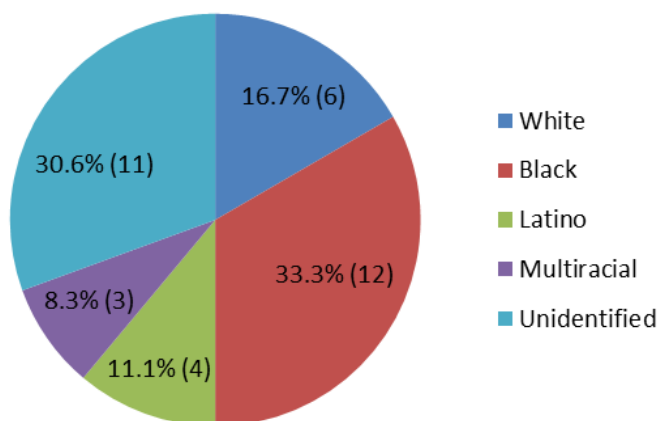
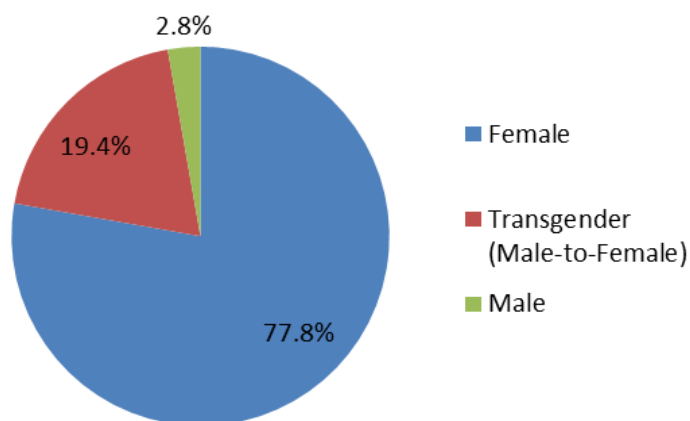


Figure 8.2 Gender



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<sup>68</sup> No transgender men were interviewed for this study.

Respondents worked in five of the eight cities examined in this study. Eight (22 percent) worked in Atlanta, six (17 percent) worked in Dallas, eleven (31 percent) worked in Denver, three (8 percent) worked in Seattle, and eight (22 percent) worked in Washington, DC (herein, the sex workers' "main cities"). Seventeen (47 percent) indicated that they worked in more than one city at some point—most of which were located close to their main cities—although no sex workers reported working in more than one of the cities included in this study. As was true in other studies (e.g., Potterat et al. 2004), sex workers in this study tended to conduct most of their work locally, in their main cities.

The sex workers in our sample were between the ages of 18 and 56. Those interviewed in Atlanta were 18–30 years of age; those from Washington, DC were 20–50 years of age; respondents from Denver were 20–53 years of age; those from Seattle were 36–41 years of age; and participants from Dallas were 37–56 years of age. Two (6 percent) of the respondents were younger than 20 years old, nine (25 percent) were 20–29 years old, eight (22 percent) were 30–39 years old, thirteen (36 percent) were 40–49 years old, and four (11 percent) were 50–56 years old.

Sex workers were as young as 11 years old and as old as thirty-nine when they first began trading sex. The majority of participants ( $n = 28$ , 78 percent) started sex work between the ages of 15–27. Four (11 percent) began trading sex before the age of 15, ten (28 percent) started between the ages of 15–17, eighteen (50 percent) began between the ages of 18–29, and four (11 percent) began in their 30s.

Many of the individuals in this study had been working in the sex industry for numerous years. The duration of their work ranged from a few days to over thirty years. Five had traded sex for a year or less, two for 2–3 years, seven for 5–9 years, ten for 10–20 years, eight for 21–29 years, and four for over 30 years. Two participants traded sex in the 1970s, eleven traded sex in the 1980s, twenty-two traded sex in the 1990s, and thirty traded sex in the 2000s. Respondents were asked to draw upon their many years working in the sex market when describing the street-based sex market and how it has changed over time.

Most of the sex workers had attained some high school or college education and/or received their GED. Of the twenty-seven individuals (75 percent) providing information on their educational background, obtainment ranged from some middle school education to some college education. Four had some college education, nine had their GEDs, five had high school diplomas, and nine had some middle school or high school education.

## Entry into Sex Work and Other Forms of Employment

Sex workers first started trading sex on the street for a wide variety of reasons, including economic need; homelessness; the encouragement of family members, friends, and acquaintances; a desire for social and emotional acceptance; as a natural continuation of work of other forms of commercial sex work, such as stripping and dancing and to support substance use. For many, a combination of these reasons served as the impetus to begin trading sex. Sex work was used to pay for essential needs and family expenses and ensure survival. Fifteen participants (42 percent) noted that they turned to sex work for these reasons. This was true of a 25-year-old sex worker from Atlanta who began trading sex in 2010 in part to support her family. She explained, "I was paying rent and the necessities. I had my first son at the time, so I needed to make sure he had clothes. It was necessity and need—no type of wants. It was a need really" (N7). Others cited homelessness as a driver for trading sex. One sex worker from Dallas started this work in the 1980s as a teenager after finding herself homeless: "I started at age 13. My mom put me out at age 13, so I had to [sell sex] in order to survive. The only way to survive is to make money" (J5). This type of "survival sex" helped individuals meet basic needs.<sup>69</sup>

Sex work was viewed as a viable alternative to traditional employment opportunities that were either not available or not sought out by sex workers. A 43-year-old sex worker from Dallas was drawn to the trade in the 1990s because she had no job and needed to support her children. She noted:

Actually my main decision [to start sex work] was based on my children. At the time—I didn't have a job. I couldn't find a job. And somebody had made the comment "You got a

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69 For more on survival sex, which is typically understood as sex traded to meet essential personal and financial needs, see Ditmore (2010), Flowers (2010), Lever and Dolnick (2000), Raphael and Shapiro (2004), and Thukral et al. (2005).

million dollars between your legs” and I was like “ok” and I just kind of fell into it, I guess you could say. (M3)

Sex workers who began selling sex in the late 2000s were more likely than those who started in earlier decades to cite the lack of a job as one of the main driving forces for starting this work. Six of the ten respondents who began trading sex between the mid-2000s to present day stated that they did so because they needed a job or were not interested in traditional employment opportunities.

Sex work served as a source of supplemental income for some sex workers who had other jobs; four (11 percent) noted that they had other forms of legitimate employment while they were trading sex. One respondent, a 35-year-old Dallas-based sex worker, began selling sex at age 27. At the time, she was a heavy heroin user and dealer. In addition to selling sex and drugs, she explained, she had two jobs—one at GM and one at Wendy’s—to support her children and her home. The jobs provided her with “good money, a good \$90,000 a year,” but it was the “other stuff”—the sex work and the drug sales—that provided extra income for other wants and needs: “I was doing the other stuff to pay for the habit,” she explained (J8).

Often, family members encouraged—or served as examples for—individuals to begin selling sex on the street. A Washington, DC-based trans-individual began trading sex in the 1980s at age 16, just as she was about to graduate from art school, after being pressured by her mother to make money off of sex:

I first started in 1982 at 16 years old ... I needed a way to make money for myself; summer jobs weren’t giving me enough money. My mother was a single mother on welfare. I needed a way to support myself. My mom ... gave me advice: “You stay out all weekend, out sleeping with men, I know you are, I know you are gay, you don’t come home with fifty cents. You don’t even have money for a cold soda. If you’re going to sleep with guys, get something out of them.” ... I [couldn’t] do this for free anymore because my mom [had] brainwashed me. I had to bring something home, even if it was seven or eight dollars. (L1)

As the work proved lucrative, one date led to many dates for this individual. She explained, “I just got caught up all the time—I was constantly out there. Because I was so used to the fast money. At that time, my mom lost her job, she was in car accident, and on welfare, and they had cut [the welfare payments] down and taken me off welfare because at this point I was over 18 years old” (L1).

Family members also frequently exposed the respondents to commercial sex at very young ages. A 41-year-old individual from Denver who started trading sex at age 26 first saw her mother working as a call girl when she was eight years old. When asked who first introduced her to sex work, she responded:

My mother. I was introduced to it when I was eight years old. [My mother] has ... been a call girl, [but she] just recently quit. I knew it was a good quick way to make money ... That was my mom’s main source of income. I got involved when I was 26. Actually, when I was 18 I worked for the same agency she worked for, answering calls ... And then I [started selling sex] at 26 [years old]. (J3)

A number of transgender individuals noted that their sex work grew out of relationships with others in the transgender community—a community that provided acceptance and comfort. Many were first exposed to sex work while in areas of cities where transgender individuals congregated. One 43-year-old trans-woman started trading sex at age 14 in 1985:

I first ... started going to [a particular area in one of the cities] which is where transgender women hung out. I could be comfortable there. I realized that it was also a place of business. I had two things in one: I was accepted and I could also make money. (L5)

Another trans-woman began selling sex in the 1970s at age 11. She described how her foray into the work grew out of her time with transgender individuals:

I was out walking, meeting friends. Boy hunting ... We saw a group of people leaving the club—transgender people at the time ... We followed them to ... the strip ... It was like a whole new world that opened up to me. I saw transgender men and women ... Something I had never experienced. I got hooked. Eventually I would sit on the outskirts and observe

gays being together, men treating them like women. I've been a prostitute all of my life ... [This] was where I could go and people would accept me. (L3)

For many, friends and acquaintances that were already engaged in this type of work introduced respondents to the trade. When asked how she first got started with the work at age 21 in the mid-1980s, a 49-year-old sex worker from Denver responded:

Meeting people, and you know, they said it's a quick way to get money, and I say okay, I'm down with that. I was meeting escorts, some pimps, other women ... At that time, I just needed money, no [drug] addiction at the time. On the streets, that's where I first met clients. (J10)

A 49-year-old sex worker from Washington, DC had a similar experience. She began trading sex in the late 1980s after spending time with individuals at clubs who were already selling sex. She explained,

After [clubbing], [I saw] girls were going somewhere else. I wanted to know where they were going—"curiosity killed the cat." I saw that they were being paid for things. I didn't need money [at the time] because my family was supporting me. I didn't know that the girls I was with were doing it at the time. I got closer to some of the girls. I wanted them to teach me what they were doing. (L2)

Friends and acquaintances taught each other about how the street-based sex market worked and even helped connect new sex workers to johns, as captured by the following exchange with a sex worker from Dallas:

**Respondent:** I was at a friend's house and they were like, "This is what we do and this is what we do and this what we do" and I am like, "That sounds cool."

**Interviewer:** [Were they] all women? Or?

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** And what did they tell you?

**Respondent:** Well, I don't know how you explain it ... They had customers. They had ... certain people that they seen every week. And, I didn't want to go out on the streets. So they were like, "We'll introduce you to this person, we can introduce you to this person, we know you need money for your kids and blah blah blah." That time I wasn't doing drugs. I did drugs on and off. But, at that time, I was straight. They introduced me to some people. (M3)

Another individual from Atlanta began trading sex when she was 17 after she and a friend approached a pimp she knew in their neighbourhood:<sup>70</sup>

This guy. You could tell he had a lot of money and nice stuff. We knew what he did. We were talking to him and then we started working for him. We worked for him a couple of years ... He didn't really know us. We knew him, because we heard about him on the streets. We talked to him about it. (N3)

Street-based sex work served as a natural continuation of involvement in other areas of the lawful and unlawful commercial sex economy. A 36-year-old individual from Seattle began dancing at strip clubs when she was 19 years old. A man approached her while she was dancing one night, and asked her, "You want to do something out back?" She ended up earning \$150 on this date, which became the first of many

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<sup>70</sup> Seven sex workers (19 percent) interviewed for this study worked with pimps at some point in their careers. Their experiences are described in subsequent sections of this chapter.

dates she had with men while dancing. She began selling sex services on the street when she turned 29 years old, but continued to dance and establish dates at clubs (K2).

Other respondents worked with escort companies before selling sex on the street. A Seattle-based sex worker, who began selling sex in the early 2000s, first started working with an escort service before going “back to the street” to become, in her words, “a fulltime ho—a prostitute.” She described how the escort service work operated:

The escort service would collect an agency fee. \$300 total was paid by the date and \$150 of that goes to me. Anything sexual was paid to me. The \$150 was just for the date [to be] set up. Ten times out of ten [the clients] would want sex, so [the client] paid about \$100 more for sex usually. I’d make about \$250 a date. I saw about three guys a day ... The escort service would pay for the hotel. The customer would call ... and ask for a certain girl and I’d get a [hotel] room somewhere and they’d tell the john where to go. (K1)

A substantial number of respondents began trading sex to support substance use and dependencies—a trend that will be explored extensively in this chapter. Twenty-four individuals (67 percent) noted that they sold sex for drugs (meaning that they received money and drugs or just drugs in exchange for performing sex activities) at some point in their careers. A 41-year-old sex worker from Denver explained that she started trading sex to support a drug habit. She noted, “I started a drug habit of my own. It got expensive and I needed money. I found out that I could make a lot of money fast [by selling sex]” (J3). An individual from Dallas was similarly drawn to sex work to finance a drug dependency. She described her foray into the work: “One day we was out talking, we was out in a group, and this man asked me, did I want a date, and I said yes. I was broke, and I wanted to continue smoking” (M2).

Despite their varying reasons for beginning sex work, many participants noted that sex work provided a reliable source of income throughout their lives. Many stopped trading sex for both short and long periods of time, returning to it for a number of reasons, including a desire to earn money. The following exchange with a sex worker from Dallas, who worked on and off the streets between the 1990s and present day, exemplifies this type of experience:

**Interviewer:** Can you tell me a little bit about how you started prostituting, how you got involved?

**Respondent:** First I started out with sugar daddies. I had like four or five sugar daddies. And then the money was good; being paid big money at a young age.

**Interviewer:** How old were you?

**Respondent:** I think I was like 16 or 17 years old. I was prostituting off and on. And sometimes I wouldn’t have to do anything for money, they would give it to me. And on down the line I started doing it off and on, off and on, off and on. I started having kids.

**Interviewer:** Was there a particular reason why you started doing this when you were 16 or 17?

**Respondent:** Because of the money. Because of the money. Then I got into the drugs. I was taking the money and buying drugs and clothes and had a baby. And I started doing it for the money, and the drugs, and my baby. (M1)

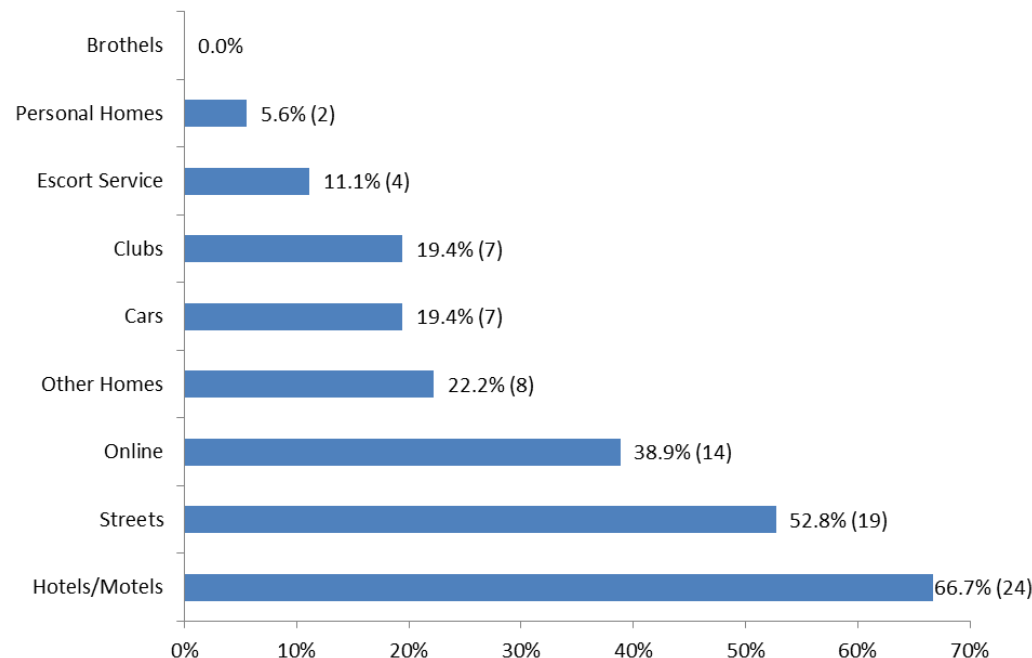
Study respondents were drawn to the sex trade, and continued to trade sex for a number of years, for varying reasons. They engaged in their work in a number of different locations (from cars to hotel and motel rooms to homes) and in a range of venues (from clubs to escort services to pimp-sex worker relationships) over the course of their careers. These locations and venues are the focus of the next section.

## Locations Worked and Venues Used Over the Years

Sex workers conducted their work in a variety of establishments throughout their careers. About half (19 of 36) of individuals specified that they had worked at some point in their lives on the streets or strolls. Some had worked in strip clubs (19 percent) or escort services (11 percent). Dates took place in a

multitude of environments including public spaces; cars; private homes and abandoned homes; hotel and motel rooms; and in establishments such as dance and strip clubs and casinos. As shown in figure 8.3, 24 (67 percent) of the 36 participants indicated that they traded sex acts in hotels and/or motels, two (6 percent) in their own homes, eight (22 percent) in other homes, seven (19 percent) in cars, and seven (19 percent) in clubs.

**Figure 8.3 Locations Worked**



Many sex workers reported bringing johns to hotel and motel rooms they rented for dates. Hotel and motel rooms were a primary expense for many sex workers; over the years, sex workers spent between \$25 to \$80 per day to rent these rooms. Sex workers noted that often, hotel and motel staff members and managers knew that sex was being traded in their venues but did not attempt to stop the work.

A 35-year-old sex worker from Denver noted that hotel and motel personnel did not interfere with her work, although they were aware of it. She explained, “I stayed in the hotel. They knew what I was doing. They turned a blind eye.” She went on to say that the personnel “did not really care because I got along with them, [and] never caused no problem” (J4). Instead, others noted, hotel and motel staff were primarily concerned with receiving payments and maintaining rules. A 46-year-old, Denver-based sex worker who began trading sex in the late 1980s explained this tendency: “Some hotels will work with you, some don’t, but they don’t know what you’re doing out there. They just care about their money. Some managers care about money, that’s all. They would say no visitors after 10 [p.m.]” (J2). Deliberate tactics were used to reduce the likelihood that hotel and motel staff would detect the sex work being traded. A 25-year-old from Atlanta spent between \$40 to \$50 a night on hotels, and “moved around a little bit” between hotels. She explained, “If you stay at one hotel, then people start to get familiar with your face. I kept to myself, especially doing what I was doing” (N7).

Despite the overwhelming use of hotels and motels, the majority of respondents (n = 25, 69%) reported trading sex in more than one location or venue over the course of their careers. A sex worker from Dallas, who began selling sex in the late 1990s, explained, “I would go out there [on the streets] and stop people [clients] and they would pay me or I would go to the room with them or I would go in the cars [and they would] park somewhere” (M4).

Certain locations provided benefits to conducting this work. A 43-year-old street-based sex worker from Washington, DC, who began engaging in this work in the 1980s, reported working in hotels, motels, cars,

and homes, and used the Internet to solicit dates. She noted the difference between working in a car and in a motel room in terms of pricing and preferences:

In a motel, you could spend more time, and you didn't have to worry about the police. In a car, you have to be faster. I wanted to stay in the car because I didn't want to leave the stroll. If I left, I could lose money. (L5)

As discussed below, participants explained that over the years, undercover law enforcement officers organized dates with sex workers at hotels and motels in order to make arrests; use of these venues for dates became more risky as a result, although they continued to serve as locations for many dates.

## **Internet**

Sex workers began to use the Internet to solicit sex work in the early 2000s. Fifteen individuals in this study stated that they used the Internet to meet johns on websites such as: Craigslist.com, Backpage.com, Adam4Adam.com, Eros.com, Adult Search.com, TheEroticReview.com, Cityvibe.com, Myspace.com; a variety of chat lines like Livelinks.com and video chat communities like LiveJasmin.com; and escort and other service websites. Participants noted that dates organized on these sites took place in locations similar to those used for dates solicited on the street: cars, clients' homes, and hotel and motel rooms. Some dates took place entirely online, through web cameras and chat lines.

In subsequent sections, this chapter explores the myriad of ways in which the Internet changed the operation of street-based sex work. However, even with the onset of Internet use, respondents indicated that they used similar types of methods to solicit dates (meeting johns on the street, in clubs, by word of mouth, and through social networks), and held dates in similar locations (hotels, motels, and cars) over the years.

## **Street-Based Sex Work in the 1970s and 1980s**

Thirteen individuals (35 percent) in our study traded sex in the 1970s and 1980s, and most continued to trade sex into the 1990s and 2000s. Sex workers who conducted street-based sex work in the 1970s and 1980s described the conditions of the underground commercial sex market during that time period as largely devoid of widespread competition, lucrative, and not as dangerous as in later years. This chapter draws on these participants' long careers in the trade to document how the street-based sex market operated during this time.

## **Street-Based Sex Market Operations**

A number of participants noted the camaraderie they felt with the many other sex workers on the streets in the 1970s and 1980s. Sex workers looked out for one another, partied with one another, and in some cases, considered each other family. A 46-year-old sex worker from Washington, DC, who began working in 1982, described the work:

Back then [in the 1980s], there were a lot of people on the stroll. Compared to now, there were way more back then. We all got along with each other. No animosity, competition, no competing. We were all out there for one purpose only: to get a dollar. We would all help each other out. We would go to restaurants in the morning. We would go to [an amusement park] on the weekend, stay in a motel, treat ourselves, get more drugs. (L1)

When asked about the market in the 1970s and 1980s, a 50-year-old sex worker who started trading sex in the mid-1970s described the work similarly:

When I first started tricking, there were more girls out there—blocks and blocks of girls. Everyone was making their money. 200 girls out there and every girl was going to make money. It was so plentiful. People were so into it. (L3)

One 49-year-old sex worker explained that in the early to mid-1980s, the work was “fabulous,” and that “we [the sex workers] all had our own little clique. We all got along.” She also noted that “back then, there were calls after calls,” and the calls were “safe” (L2). The calls were not only plentiful, but also profitable.



## Rates, Expenses, and Spending

Those who worked in the 1970s and 1980s described their sex work as profitable. Sex workers were in high demand and johns spent substantial amounts of money for services. In the words of an individual who traded sex in Washington, DC in the 1980s, “Guys were spending hundreds of dollars for ten minutes” (L2).

Prices for street-based sex work were typically service-based.<sup>71</sup> Based on information derived from the study respondents, oral sex cost between \$50 to \$100 and sex cost between \$60 to \$300 during the 1970s and 1980s. According to these individuals, special requests, such as fulfilling sexual fetishes or engaging in sex without a condom, were additional costs stacked on top of base rates for sex acts. Some explained that johns would pay \$20 or \$40 extra for sex without a condom (J8), while others stated that johns paid twice as much for this type of request (M4). The use of additional charges for extra requests on dates has persisted over time.

Rates also varied by location of the dates—a trend that has also remained true over time. One 43-year-old sex worker described the difference in pricing between working in a motel versus in a car: “If you went to a motel, if you had a place to go, [that] would cost more. In a car, it would be about \$75–100 [per date]. A motel was \$150–200 [per date]” (L5).

Sex workers frequently negotiated these rates with johns, adjusting rates based on what a particular john requested and could afford. As one individual who worked in Washington, DC stated, “The price range was \$50 at the lowest, and then it was about \$100 to \$300 for different [requests] ... It depends on what was requested. The price range would go up or down depending on what the person [the john] had ... We negotiated. I wouldn’t accept anything under \$50 back then [in the 1980s]” (L4). This type of bargaining over prices for street-based sex work has continued over time and across cities; as one sex worker, who had been working the street since the 1970s, explained, “One thing I learned first was never quote a price; it was about what you’re willing to accept and what they [the johns] offer (L3).

Although profits varied by day of the week, with weekends typically being more profitable than weekdays (a trend that remained true over time), these individuals made hundreds if not thousands of dollars per day during this time period. As one individual who began working in the 1980s put it, “In the beginning, when it was good, I was making anywhere from \$50 to \$100 a date ... Depending on my attitude—some days I wouldn’t be up to it and would stay home—but I could make \$900 a day.” (L8). As another explained, “Back then [in the 1980s], I used to go home with so much money ... This is why I got caught up with prostitution. \$300–400 a night, always” (L1).

Many sex workers indicated that trading sex provided them with enough money to support themselves during these years. They spent their earnings on everyday items including food, clothing, rent, their families and children, as well as on entertainment, nightlife, and costs associated with trading sex, including hotel and motel rooms. One sex worker from Denver provided her mother with \$2,000 to \$3,000 to care for her children on a regular basis. (J5). As another respondent stated, the money was “fast.” “That’s the thing,” this 53-year-old Denver-based sex worker explained, “we spent so much money, on clothes too. It was nothing to spend \$50” (J6).

The going rates and earnings of sex work, the conditions of the street-based sex market, and the dates themselves started to change substantially in the mid-1980s and 1990s with the onset of widespread crack cocaine use. Growing crack addictions made it difficult for individuals to pay for basic needs. In fact, many respondents differentiated between their spending habits before and after they developed dependencies on crack. For example, a Washington, DC-based sex worker noted, “Before crack cocaine, I spent money primarily on my lover who was working ... two jobs, [and who] would give both paychecks to me. At that time, I was taking care of the bills, doing a lot of shopping. I made sure he had everything he needed” (L2). After her drug addiction grew, her main expense became crack. Sex workers’ substance use and dependencies is the focus of the next section.

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<sup>71</sup> As will be discussed below, pricing schemes for sex work solicited online tend to be time based.

## Drug Use, Sex Work, and the Crack Epidemic of the Mid-1980s through the 1990s

The crack cocaine epidemic of the mid-1980s through the 1990s changed the landscape of the unlawful commercial sex market on the street. As explored in this chapter's literature review, researchers noted that during this time, street-based sex workers began to trade sex to support crack dependencies, developed addictions to this drug as they conducted their sex work, and played a significant role in the unlawful drug markets (Dalla 2000; Fullilove et al. 1992; Graham and Wish 1994; Inciardi et al. 1993; Potterat et al. 1998; Sterk et al. 2000; Thukral and Ditmore 2003; Thukral et al. 2005).

This study builds on previous studies' findings, using the information provided by individuals who traded sex in the years between 1970 and the present day to document just how transformative and lasting an effect crack cocaine use had on the street-based sex market. This section discusses participants' drug use prior to and during their careers as sex workers, and the following section explores the enduring effects that crack use had on the street-based sex market and those working in it.

### Drug Use and Sex Work

Sex workers were forthcoming about their drug use over the years. Twenty-six of the 36 sex workers (72 percent) indicated that they used crack cocaine at some point in their lives. Furthermore, twenty-four individuals (67 percent) noted that they sold sex in exchange for drugs at some point in their careers. Nine (25 percent) stated that they had clients who paid for sex acts in money and drugs. Nine (25 percent) sex workers dealt drugs once or on multiple occasions.

Drug use was quite extensive. One Denver-based sex worker noted that she was "getting high on anything." She explained that as drug addictions deepened, the need for fast money grew. She noted, "The thing is, the more strung out you get, the quicker you have to get your money" (J6).

Some of the respondents dealt drugs or served as middlemen for drug dealers during the time they traded sex. Ten of the 36 (28 percent) sex workers in this study noted they dealt drugs once or on multiple occasions. A 49-year-old respondent from Denver, who cycled in and out of jail and had a long-standing addiction to narcotics (including morphine, OxyContin, and heroin), described her involvement in the drug trade:

I had a regular guy [a john]. I would sell it too. Or I'd play middleman, because the person who I got my dope from, that was best around, so they would say, you know ["nickname"], that's what I went by. They'd go through me. They'd have to give me one bag per transaction, if it was more than \$50, every \$50 more, they'd need to give me a bag. (J8)

Similar to this sex worker from Denver, many sex workers reported that they used drugs like heroin, PCP, marijuana, and powder cocaine, as well as alcohol, throughout their lives. They further indicated that drug use was pervasive among sex workers even before crack use became rampant. One 49-year-old sex worker from Washington, DC described the trajectory of her drug use, which exemplifies those of other respondents for whom drugs played a central role in their lives:

I have always been doing marijuana. The next thing was PCP. I got tricked into doing that. I was going to the club all the time. Someone said, let's go to the park to smoke weed. I knew it wasn't burning the same ... I went back to the club, got hot flashes, delusions. I swore I would never do it again. The next night I did PCP again. [That] lasted for a while, maybe five years to about the time I was 26 years old. Then I moved on to crack cocaine in the mid-1990s. (L2)

This trajectory is a familiar one for many sex workers. In the mid-1980s and 1990s, study respondents started to use and rely heavily on crack, as well as other substances. They did so for a number of reasons, ranging from being influenced to do so by those in their social circle to being compelled to use it during sex work. Others started trading sex after they began using crack.

Some started consuming crack voluntarily; however, it was implied that it was their social environment that was the driving factor that initially compelled them to use. Sex workers reported witnessing

individuals in their social networks who were smoking crack, and it became almost a normative behavior in their social circles. When asked who introduced her to crack, an individual from Dallas responded: “Myself. I was so, I was curious, cause everybody’s talking about how good the drug was. Because I already smoked marijuana. Everybody’s telling me how good it make them feel, so I went and got my own stuff and started getting high on my own” (M1).

Others were introduced to the drug by lovers, acquaintances, and family members. This was the case for a 46-year-old from Washington, DC who had been dating a drug dealer before she became quite involved in sex work:

He [the lover] said if you love me, you’ll try it, so I did. So he got me hooked on it. He too was hooked on it. Then he got arrested and I had a habit and I didn’t know what to do. So I started dating drug dealers, which got dangerous because they wanted to pimp you out. I didn’t want to do the pimping. (L6)

For many, drug use preceded sex work, and sex work was used to finance drug addictions. A sex worker from Washington, DC noted that her brother encouraged her to begin trading sex and sex work served as a natural outgrowth of her drug use. She described how she came to trade sex,

I got involved because I got into drugs at an early age—mainly just weed, PCP. [Drug use] is in my family. My brother always said, don’t give your cookies away for free. Guys in the neighborhood would ask for sex, and I’d ask for money. At first, I started working my neighborhood. Guys would get my number and call me. Gradually I went out to the stroll. At first, I was doing it [sex work] for drugs and cash. (L8)

Sex work served as a quick and reliable source of income—and sometimes a last resort—for individuals who used crack and other substances. A 43-year-old from Dallas turned to sex work out of desperation after she started using crack: “Somebody took me to south Dallas and introduced me to crack. And soon after that I didn’t have no money so he showed me how to prostitute ... And [by] then I had run out of money after I had sold my car, my jewelry, everything I had. So I started prostituting” (M4).

For other respondents, crack use grew out of their sex work. Some, like a 43-year-old from Washington, DC, were not substance dependent when they first started to trade sex; this individual explained, “Three to four years into my sex work, I got into marijuana and drinking, which led to crack cocaine” (L5).

Crack began to play a central role in dates—a reality that will be explored more extensively below—as clients tried to cajole sex workers into using crack. As one sex worker explained,

Crack had come out in the 1990s. Clients wanted to introduce me to crack. Because I [had] my own place, [I would tell them,] you’ll have to pay a fee because you want to have sex; you’re going to have to buy the crack as a gift, a token. I would start smoking crack ... with them. Clients started giving me money, turned me on to [crack]. (L1)

Many turned to crack and other drugs as a coping mechanism for the psychological and physical difficulty of the work. As one individual from Denver who began working in the 1990s explained:

When I started [sex work], I was clean. When I first started, my friend said, here, take a line of coke, because it helps you get through it ... ‘Cause I didn’t really like doing it, being touched by strange men I didn’t know. I was making like \$800 a day, I started doing things I shouldn’t have, ‘cause I was so high all the time. (J9)

Crack and other drugs were used to help sex workers stay awake during late night, continuous dates with johns:

**Interviewer:** And what got you into drugs? Is there like something specific?

**Respondent:** Trying to stay awake. Stress, trying to mostly, well mostly when I started it was stress and trying to stay awake. And then it ended up ... cover[ing] my feelings because when I felt bad about something, when I get that guilty conscience, if I got high, I didn’t care. It kind of helped me ease my pain. I should tell you, it ended up causing me more pain.

**Interviewer:** And did you start using crack when you were 23 or 24?

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Any particular reason? Trying to stay awake?

**Respondent:** Well, there was, there was sometimes that the men that I was seeing couldn't see me till late at night ... I had two that worked night shift. I had to be awake at like four in the morning. (M3)

In sum, similar to other scholars' findings, we found that sex workers' paths to crack use varied, although most were introduced to the drug by their regular contacts, ranging from friends to acquaintances to clients. Although many had significant drug addictions throughout their lives, and even played a role in the drug trade itself, arguably no drug played more of a central role in the sex market than crack. The following section explores the effects that this drug had on sex workers' lives and on the street-based sex market.

### **The Impact of Crack Use on the Street-Based Sex Market in the 1990s and 2000s**

Widespread crack use in the mid-1980s and 1990s marked a turning point in the street-based sex market. In an exchange that exemplifies the experiences of many, a 48-year-old sex worker from Denver, who started trading sex as a teenager, described the impact of crack use on the work:

**Interviewer:** How much were you bringing in [in the 1980s]?

**Respondent:** I was making pretty good money. I charged, for [oral sex] it was \$60, back in the 1980s. For sex, it was \$60–100 ... I was bringing in about \$2,500 a day ... It was still cool until the drugs came ... the drugs hit at age 33 [in the late 1990s].

**Interviewer:** And so after you started doing drugs, you were still trading sex? How was business then?

**Respondent:** ... Late 1980s, 1990s, it was still good. It didn't really change until about 1995 to 2001.

**Interviewer:** And that's when the market changed?

**Respondent:** Because the girls out there were getting tricks, turning them out, and getting high. You know they want to say, "Hey, what are you doing?" And you say, "Getting high, want to try?" Then they would get high and the tricks would be done [they had no money left].

**Interviewer:** They would spend all their money?

**Respondent:** Yup, they'd spend their money and be down ... And they just wanted to get high. Then I was making about \$500 [a day]. (J5)

Research conducted in the mid-1990s and early 2000s on the impact of the crack epidemic on the underground commercial sex market confirms these trends. As researchers found, street-based sex work became less lucrative, more dangerous, more competitive, and increasingly pervaded by more and younger sex workers and johns in the years after crack use increased (Dalla 2000; Fullilove et al. 1992; Graham and Wish 1994; Inciardi et al. 1993; Potterat et al. 1998; Sterk et al. 2000). By drawing on interviews with individuals who traded sex before, during, and after this time period, this section expands upon previous research to document the lasting effects of crack use on the lives of streetwalking sex workers and the commercial sex market more broadly.

## The Makeup and Conditions of the Street-Based Sex Market

In cities across the country, more individuals came to the streets to sell sex in the mid- to late- 1980s and throughout the 1990s—the years that crack cocaine use was becoming widespread. Many of these newer sex workers were notably younger and drug-addicted.

Although individuals have, over the years, entered street-based sex work at young ages,<sup>72</sup> many sex workers noted that the new sex workers in the 1990s and 2000s were younger—some as young as thirteen years old. An individual in Washington, DC who had been trading sex since the 1980s described this trend:

Over time, now, [and] in 1990s and 2000s, the girls are like 16 and 17 years old. There weren't that many young girls when I first started. The older girls tried to get the younger girls off the block back in the day. They'd try to get [them] to school. But in 1990s, the girls started coming out to the stroll at a much younger age. There were only four to five young girls when I started. Today, there are so many young girls. (L5)

Other individuals described older sex workers' efforts to urge younger sex workers to leave the streets. This was true of a 43-year-old sex worker from Dallas who, when asked how young the sex workers on the street were in the 1990s, responded: "Oh goodness gracious. There was one that I tried to take under my wing and tell her that she needed to get out. She was 14. And I told her baby, you are in the wrong place" (M3).

Many speculated that crack use and dependence caused this surge in sex workers and that it continues to bring new sex workers into the trade in cities across the country. A respondent from Washington, DC, who began working in the 1980s, explained, "At one point in time, in the mid-1980s to the 1990s, I thought there was a surge of prostitution going on. New faces were always popping up. It was because of the drugs. The crack epidemic played a huge role in the prostitution in the city" (L4). A 49-year-old individual who worked in Denver described the market in the late 1990s similarly: "From 1998 to 2000, there were more girls out there, all addicted as well" (J10). When asked to consider those selling sex in the 2000s, a 43-year-old from Dallas similarly noted the youth and drug dependence of sex workers on the street:

**Interviewer:** So you said that most girls are doing this for the drugs?

**Respondent:** For the drugs.

**Interviewer:** Did you ever see any girls who were not doing drugs?

**Respondent:** Nope.

**Interviewer:** Never saw it?

**Respondent:** Nope.

**Interviewer:** And even when you were working with the young ... girls, you think that they were on drugs?

**Respondent:** They were on drugs. Most of them smoke crack or ... weed. Most of them were crackheads. (M4)

Beyond substance use, respondents identified other reasons for the increase in sex workers (and especially younger sex workers) they observed on the street. One noted that young, transgender individuals sought acceptance—a trend that has persisted over time: "Especially with the trans population, the girls are getting younger, because of the non-acceptance in the homes" (L8).

Younger individuals may have been drawn into the work by pimps, or at least spent some time working for pimps. Scholars have found that pimp-controlled sex workers tend to be younger than non-pimp-controlled sex workers when they first trade sex (Norton-Hawk 2004). Sex workers who worked in cities

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<sup>72</sup> As was detailed above, individuals interviewed for this study began their sex work as early as age 11.

across the country made note of this trend. One from Denver stated, “I saw it a lot [of pimps], but I’ve never been approached by one. Usually the younger girls get affiliated with that” (J11). Another sex worker from Dallas explained that a number of the younger girls she met in jail worked with a pimp, and “a lot of them were so afraid to leave [their pimps]” (M5).<sup>73</sup>

Young sex workers may have also been drawn to the lifestyle on their own volition. As one respondent from Washington, DC explained, “During this time, the 1990s and 2000s, a lot of young girls were coming [to the streets] because they thought they saw the glam life” (L2). Perhaps the environment they were drawn to was similar to the one described by a 46-year-old from Denver who started trading sex in the 1990s: “When I first started it was very different than it is now, people watched out for each other. We partied with each other. It was actually fun” (J3).

Few described the conditions on the street in the late 1990s and into the 2000s in positive terms. According to many sex workers, relationships among streetwalking sex workers became increasingly strained and competitive in these years as many began to rely more heavily on the work to support growing crack addictions. As an individual from Washington, DC described, sex workers started to become isolated from one another and the work became more dangerous<sup>74</sup>:

All the girls out there started smoking boat—PCP—at the same time and then we graduated to crack. Once we all started on drugs, we all started going out separate ways. We saw our best friends dying. We had no other choice but to turn to something to comfort the pain [drugs]” (L1)

Many compared the camaraderie prior to widespread crack use to the increased competition they experienced in the 1990s and 2000s, after the drug became prevalent. When asked whether the sex workers on the street took care of each other, a 37-year-old from Dallas, who began working in the 1990s, responded: “When I first got started, it was like that. But it seems like everyone is out for their self. You don’t really get close to anyone anymore” (D15).

Competition pervaded the streets in these years. As a 33-year-old individual working in Denver in the 2000s explained, “There was a lot of competition. People [were] looking to get high [and there was] competition from other addicts ...They were just looking for dope, so they would get in the car for dope” (J7). This was also true for transgender sex workers; one trans-woman working in the 1990s explained: “I realized I had to step up my game because there were younger girls coming out.” (L1).

Relations among sex workers on the street were not the only aspect of the street-based sex market affected by pervasive crack use. The dates themselves—in terms of seller-buyer relations, frequency of dates, rates charged, and money earned—also began to change.<sup>75</sup>

## How the Dates Changed in Number and Substance

The need to fuel ever-increasing crack addictions prompted a number of respondents to conduct sex work with more johns and go on more dates. In the following exchange, a 43-year-old individual from Dallas described how she went from seeing a few regulars each week to engaging in sex work with more johns on a consistent basis after she started using crack frequently:

**Interviewer:** How many regulars did you have at a time?

**Respondent:** Probably about four, five ...

**Interviewer:** Would you see them once a week?

**Respondent:** Yes, I would see them once a week.

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<sup>73</sup> Please see the last section of this chapter for a more in-depth discussion of pimp involvement in the sex trade.

<sup>74</sup> The violence and danger experienced by sex workers will be explored in depth below.

<sup>75</sup> Subsequent sections will discuss the way in which the johns themselves, law enforcement approaches to sex work, and the levels of violence experienced by sex workers also changed in these years.

**Interviewer:** You mentioned that what you did changed a lot once you started using drugs.

**Respondent:** Oh yeah. Well, once I started using drugs, I still see those certain people, but then the money wasn't enough because I had a drug habit to support.

**Interviewer:** Could they tell that you were using them?

**Respondent:** It took a while. It took a while and there was a couple that didn't really care. And then, there was a couple that were like ... And, then they quit seeing me ... Cause I was getting too needy. I was wanting more money. I was wanting to see them more often ... There was a couple that quit seeing me. So that's when I took to the streets ... That's when I started car hopping. (M3)

Drug-addicted sex workers in cities across the country experienced this impulse to see more clients to fund their habit. The experience of one individual who worked in Washington, DC exemplifies this:

The 1980s were more tragic for me. The drugs came and I became addicted to crack in 1985. It was more pushy then. I was really trying to get all I could because it was for a purpose ... I was flat backing—tricking for my addiction. I would make \$200 to \$300 in a matter of minutes on tricking and that would get me crack. My addiction grew, so I needed to do more. (L3)

Respondents interviewed for this study increasingly used and exchanged drugs with johns while on dates. Some felt that this made the dates better and more profitable because their desire for drugs could be fulfilled by clients who supplied drugs, and because johns could be coaxed into spending more for sex. A 49-year-old from Washington, DC described her tactics while on dates with johns who smoked:

When crack cocaine was introduced on the streets, the tricks actually got better because most of the tricks smoked too. [You] had to be a smart smoker. You smoke, stash some of his, and then when he leaves you smoke too. Half up and half away. When he leaves, you don't need him. (L2)

A woman from Dallas explained how she was able to increase the amount of money and drugs she earned and collected while with clients:

We would go to a hotel room and we would get high and he would trip so bad that I learned how to make extra money. Because when he was done smoking he would say, "You have another piece [of crack]?" He would then say, "I'll give you \$20 if you've got another piece," and the price would steadily go up ... "I'll give you \$50 if you've got another piece." So I learned from this, and I would always put the piece away so then—he'd already given me a hundred—he'd pay me fifty dollars for the little piece he had, then he'd give me another fifty dollars for the push off the pipe. I had him. I would walk away with at least \$200 every time I'd see him. (M3)

A number of participants indicated that they stole from drug using clients in the 1990s and 2000s—which was not as common in the 1980s. This was a tactic used by one Denver-based sex worker with a client who did not bring money to a date: "I stole, yeah. I stole the powder, crack cocaine. I would steal from a dope dealer, 'cause it was a date [with] me and another girl. But [the client] didn't have any money, so when he would sleep, we would look around and [find] a bag of dope and [say], see you" (J5). Another participant explained that she would seek out and steal from wealthier clients:

We would find rich men who knew where to get the crack, as well as spend time with them ... When they were high, they wouldn't pay attention. That's when we started stealing [their] cars. We sold them to the dope men ... we would take their car and sell them. (J3)

Stolen goods served to supplement dates that were, by the 1990s and 2000s, becoming less profitable. Even though this increased the risk of retaliation from the johns and in some cases the dope dealers—in addition to increasing the risk of law enforcement involvement—the respondents felt it was one of the only viable alternatives to obtain enough money to feed their drug habits.

## Rates, Expenses, and Spending

The rise of crack cocaine in the 1980s correlated with a notable decline in the rates and profitability of street-based sex work, and a change in sex worker spending habits, in the 1990s and 2000s. Many sex workers reported still being able to make hundreds and even thousands of dollars per day, but the work became more desperate, and the need to see more clients greater, as individuals increasingly used sex work to sustain crack addictions.

Just as more individuals were becoming addicted to crack, street-based sex workers began to lower the prices of their work. Compared to the rates in the 1970s and 1980s of \$50–100 for oral sex and \$60–300 for sex, the low end of the price range for street-based sex work dropped in the 1990s and through the present day. As reported by those in our sample, rates in the 1990s and 2000s ranged from \$5 to \$150 for oral sex and \$5 to \$250 for sex.

According to those interviewed for this study, the primary reason for this dramatic decline in prices was the influence of crack cocaine on the street-based commercial sex market. A sex worker from Washington, DC described this decrease:

In the 1990s, during the height of the crack epidemic, some people kept their prices high. But as time went on, people lowered prices to do anything they could to get high, so they'd drop their prices. When it was all about the drugs, it didn't matter how much they made—five or ten dollars—as long as they had money to get drugs. (L4)

As another sex worker stated, “Everything slowed down in 1995. Crack started coming into play, the economy was kind of low ... But you could still make money, just not as much as you wanted. [Clients] were paying \$30, \$35 for [any sexual request]” (J8). It became commonplace to trade sex for crack, and to determine prices for sex acts on the basis of street-based drug prices. A sex worker from Washington, DC made a note of this type of exchange: “When crack came out, crack messed everything up. The price[s] of oral sex, other sex ... all went down. People could buy you for a rock worth \$20 to \$50” (L5).

With johns developing their own addictions to crack and becoming less willing to pay higher rates, and with other street-based sex workers settling for reduced rates, sex workers lost substantial bargaining power when quoting prices. A sex worker from Seattle who began trading sex in the mid-1990s described this trend:

Dates were getting stingier over the years. There are a lot of girls out [there] that'll do a lot more because they're addicted to drugs. If I'd stayed on drugs longer I'd be more likely to do that. I had to negotiate for more because I needed to get money. (K2)

Spending patterns also changed significantly. According to many respondents, earnings from sex work were often not high enough to support everyday needs. While sex work sustained some or all daily expenses—including rent, food, and child care—in the years prior to crack addiction, individuals found it increasingly difficult to avoid spending most of their earnings on crack after becoming dependent on the drug. One Washington, DC-based sex worker described this change: “Before I started crack in 1990s, I spent on family, bills, shopping. After [in the mid-1990s], I'd spend on crack. On a weekly basis, I was making about \$6,000 to \$7,000. I was blowing it. As soon as [I'd] get it, I spent it” (L2). Another respondent had a similar experience: “Now it wasn't about getting money for clothes. Now it was about feeding my addiction ... The majority of my money was for drugs. Now that I was on drugs, I have johns on drugs, I would do things for drugs” (L5). And another from Washington, DC described similar spending habits: “In 1991, I started spending the money I was making on crack. Almost all of the money was going to crack. I would stop helping my mom out—only if she wanted \$40. I had to make sure I had enough money to buy my drugs and my things” (L1).

For many, the money came in and out of their hands quickly, as was true for a Denver-based sex worker in the late 1990s:

**Interviewer:** How often did you need to get high?

**Respondent:** All day, I would take a hit every twenty minutes, if that, [it was] hundreds to thousands a day [on drugs].



**Interviewer:** And was that in cash or crack?

**Respondent:** It would be both. There would be a time that I was picking up a trick that would pay a \$1,000, and I would spend that much on dope. It was common to find a trick that would pay \$1,000. (J3)

The spending was, in their words, fast and excessive. Two individuals captured this:

I couldn't even account for the money because a lot of it went into the fast life—partying and drugs. I had to be in the mindset to deal with so many guys. You have to have something to [be in the mindset.] (L1)

I spent more than enough on drugs. I should have a house, a car, a nice two to three bedroom from all that money. Sometimes I was selling and buying drugs; sometimes I would buy and use the drugs; sometimes I would buy then sell. (L4)

There is a clear correlation between increased crack use and a dramatic shift in the types and number of dates, the johns, the pricing structure of street-based sex work, and the spending habits of sex workers. The effects of these changes continue to pervade the market today and will be discussed at length below. The current market has been affected by a number of other factors, including the use of the Internet for sex work, a shift in the ages and expectations of johns, and law enforcement approaches to sex work. These are the focus of the next few sections.

## Internet-Based Sex Work

Since the rise of personal computer use in the mid-1980s (Cunningham and Kendall 2011), the Internet has transformed the street-based sex market. The overall sex market has expanded; some sex workers are able to solicit dates to a broader clientele and are displaced from the streets; johns are able to organize dates more covertly; and law enforcement detection has been reduced (Cunningham and Kendall 2009, 2011; Kolker 2013; Scott 2002; Soothill and Sanders 2005).

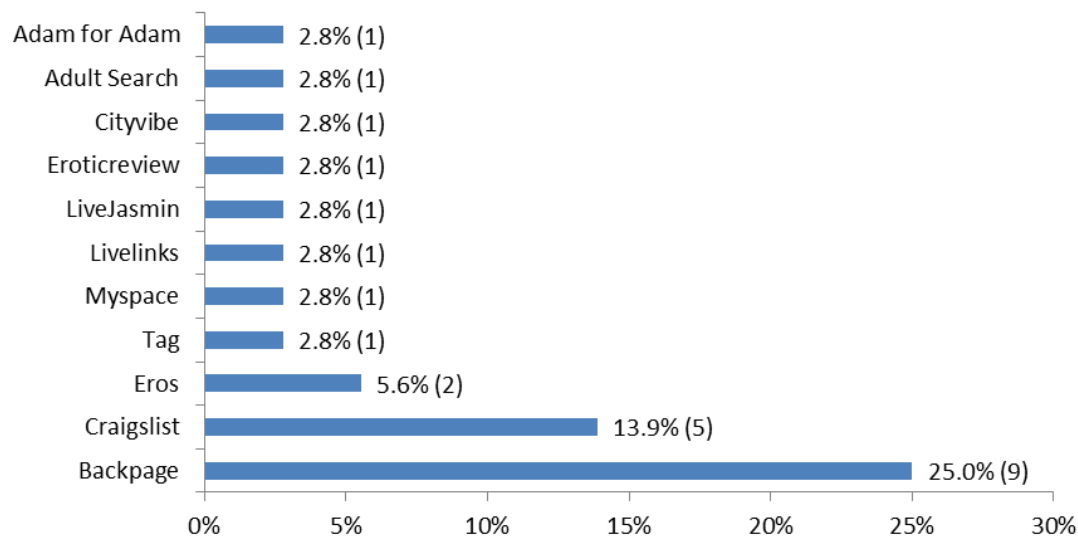
Fourteen (39 percent) of the 36 sex workers in this study reported using the Internet to solicit clients.<sup>76</sup> These individuals represent many different age groups, ranging from 18 to 49 years old, with the majority in their 20s. They also worked in different regional markets (Denver, Atlanta, Washington, DC, and Seattle). Two of the 14 online users (14 percent) were younger than 20 years old, seven (50 percent) were 20–29, two (14 percent) were 30–39, and three (21 percent) were 40–49.

The 14 participants who worked online used a number of different websites to conduct sex work and meet johns (figure 8.4). Websites included Craigslist.com, Backpage.com, Adam4Adam.com, Eros.com, Adult Search.com, TheEroticReview.com, Cityvibe.com, Myspace.com, and a variety of chat lines, escort service websites, and communities like Livelinks.com and LiveJasmin.com. Participants noted that dates organized on these sites took place in locations similar to those used for dates solicited on the street. Locations included: cars, clients' homes, and hotel and motel rooms. Some dates took place entirely online, through web cameras and chat lines.

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<sup>76</sup> It is possible that more than 15 of the 37 sex workers in this study used the Internet to conduct their work; however, only fifteen disclosed that they posted ads online soliciting sex work.

**Figure 8.4 Online Sites Used**



Respondents who worked online indicated that many of them did not engage in online work to the exclusion of street work, but rather solicited sex work in both venues. Only four of the fourteen respondents stated that they worked exclusively online.<sup>77</sup>

The experience of a 36-year-old respondent from Seattle illustrates the common experience of working both online and in other venues in the sex market. This woman started her career as a dancer at a club. After dating johns she met in clubs for a number of years, she began her street work at age 29. It was around this time that she began soliciting dates online. As she explained, she never abandoned her street work, in part because she found Internet-solicited sex work to be an unpredictable source of income: “That’s why you’d work the street. Because you’d get calls for online stuff, but many fall through and the money is not always in time to get high” (K2).

Although most sex workers worked online and on the streets, a number of respondents reported seeing fewer sex workers and johns on the streets in recent years. Some speculated that this has occurred as sex workers and johns have increasingly come to rely on the Internet to establish dates—a trend that will be explored in the final section of this chapter. A 36-year-old sex worker from Denver, who worked both the streets and online, observed a decline in johns soliciting sex on the streets. When asked where johns have gone to engage with sex workers, she responded: “I think online, chat lines. That’s what I was told when I was out there. That’s where a lot of them are” (J9).

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<sup>77</sup> It is of particular note that two of these four individuals were detected and arrested by undercover law enforcement officers during their first attempts to solicit sex work online.

## **Demand, Clients, and Establishing Dates**

Demand for sex work online was high. By virtue of the fact that online dates are scheduled in advance—as opposed to street work that may occur within minutes of a sex worker–john encounter—participants noted that organizing online dates can be a lengthy process. A respondent from Washington DC, who conducted both street and online work, explained that soliciting sex work online involved “more of a long process—an initiation process” than street work (L7).

In addition, the anonymity of online solicitations means that those selling sex work must discern between potential clients that will pay for the services provided and those that may not. As one respondent noted, “When you go online, you don’t know what you’re going to get. [There’s] a lot of misrepresentation” (L3). This has prompted online users to develop strategies to engage potential clients. A 48-year-old sex worker from Denver, who had been trading sex since the 1990s, described her tactics when using the site Livelinks.com:

You would go and pick and choose through the calls ... They [the potential client] had a little intro. If you felt like connecting, you pressed one. So you have [the potential clients] describe what they look like, you describe what you look like...There were kids playing around—18 and 19 year olds. You have to weed through the ones that want to pay. You would say, “I’m looking for a man who wants to be generous...” That was the main term, \$200 or \$300 was the standard, that was them being generous (J11).

Participants described how dates were established on various websites. The same woman from Denver described how the site, Livelinks.com, is used:

A lot of times, they [other sex workers] use Livelinks.com. I’ve been on there before, right before I caught this case. You just call Livelinks, you just say my name is X, looking for a good time, anyone who wants to get together and party ... and that goes online. So it [the website] will say, there are 78 men online who want a date. ... [Dates took place] in [the clients’] house mostly; they would pay for a cab. (J11)

A 43-year-old individual from Dallas described another site, SugarDaddie.com, that facilitates encounters between sex workers and clients:

They got this thing now, it’s called SugarDaddie.com ... And they pay the women to go out with them and buy ‘em gifts. There’s a lot of married men ... Somebody was telling me about them. I’m like, how are y’all getting all this money without hoeing? (M4)

Others described virtual dates. One woman from Atlanta used a site called LiveJasmin.com to conduct her work through video cameras. She explained,

I have done some web stuff, some web flicks. They [the clients] put money on your card. There’s a webcam on your computer, and you sign up for an account. All you need to do is set up a portfolio, [and] take a little video first. It’s not illegal either. You’re just on your computer; you do what you do. They [the clients] can request stuff. It’s up to you though; you can X them out. You do what you feel like doing, unless you feel like doing what they request. They [the clients] post money on there. (N1)

## **Fees, Pricing, and Competition**

An extensive pricing and fee structure dictates the online sex market and, according to those who worked online, Internet-solicited sex work can be quite profitable. Some sites, like Eros.com, TheEroticReview.com, Backpage.com, and AdultSearch.com, require individuals to pay membership and posting fees. One respondent explained that she paid \$150 a month for an Eros.com membership. When asked about fees for posting, an individual from Atlanta explained, “Eros.com was \$160, [but it] could go from \$140 on up, depending. AdultSearch.com was \$15 [per ad]. Backpage.com was \$10 [per ad]” (N6). On some sites like Backpage.com, sex workers list their prices in terms of roses or donations rather than dollar amounts. This strategy is used to reduce the risk that law enforcement would use ads as evidence to prove that sex work was solicited.

Internet-based sex work commands high rates, and online prices are advertised according to the duration of the date (compared to street prices, which are typically determined by the services offered). A 15-minute date typically costs about \$60, a 30-minute date ranges from \$60 and \$150, a 60-minute date ranges from \$120 to \$250, and a “full service” date (during which any number of sex acts may be performed for a predetermined fee) costing as much as \$300 to \$350, if not more. “Full service” dates are reportedly common with online work.

Online work is extremely lucrative but also physically and mentally exhausting. An Internet-based sex worker from Atlanta explained that she made “at least \$350 a call” and nearly one thousand dollars over the course of a few hours on Eros.com (N1). These high profits came at a cost; many noted that the length and demands of these types of dates. In the words of a 36-year-old individual from Seattle, online work is “guaranteed \$250 for an hour. But they [the clients] call the shots for the hour ... They can cum as many times as they want to. It’s a lot of work for that hour” (K2).

It is important to note that at least one respondent stated that online work was not as reliable as street work. This individual, from Washington, DC, explained that she did not quote prices online and found the money to be unpredictable. She explained, “Online, you can quote \$120, but [the client] might not necessarily bring it, whereas on the stroll, you can see the money and see what [the clients] have” (L7).

Although online prices are generally higher than street-based prices, online work is prone to similar externalities as street-based work. It was stated that sex workers selling services online are drug-addicted, which many speculate has compelled some sex workers to request low prices. One respondent explained, “Young girls have made things so cheap now selling \$50 [sexual acts] online. It’s because young girls are snorting powder, which is cheaper today, so they can charge less money” (L5).

These pricing dynamics have made the online sex market notably competitive. A sex worker from Atlanta described this trend:

**Interviewer:** Is there competition [today]?

**Respondent:** Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. There’s girls charging \$30, \$40.

**Interviewer:** Online?

**Respondent:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** So people started giving specials?

**Respondent:** Yeah. I saw one girl, she looked like a crackhead. That’s the type of people. She posted for \$20. I wanted to cry, she’s posting for \$20 and I’m posting for \$80. backpage. is always going to be heavy. Always a money type of thing. Women posting every day. (N1)

The Internet has also provided sex workers and their clients with venues to assess each other, which increases competition. One participant explained how sex workers used Craigslist.com to review each other:

Craigslist is really hot right now. Online, I flag girls, and they flag me. Someone said I was an old hag and then a guy didn’t want me. Another girl told the guy I was supposed to be with ... that I was lying about breast size. This is all on Craigslist using the flag feature. Other johns would post and say, no, I’ve been with this girl and she’s not lying. (L5)

A 43-year-old sex worker from Washington, DC explained the tactics that she and other sex workers used to compete with younger sex workers: “We put pictures, [but] we lied in our profiles online. That’s how older girls get their johns now, younger girls too, but police are cracking down” (L5). Sites like TheEroticReview.com similarly allow johns to review sex workers they have encountered.

Although online work can be financially rewarding, the Internet-based market presents unique challenges to sex workers, including the need to discern between potential clients, navigate a more complex initiation process, and handle the competitiveness of the venue. The results presented here corroborate Cunningham and Kendall’s (2011) findings that the use of the Internet is not necessarily displacing street-based sex work, but is likely helping to expand the underground commercial sex market by providing a

new venue to solicit sex work. A more extensive discussion of the supply, demand, and pricing structures of the street-based and Internet-based sex market is provided in a subsequent section of this chapter and further explores how these two markets differ.

## Clients Over Time

It has been well documented that the demand for sex work has persisted over time and that buyers of sex work come from a broad array of backgrounds (Malarek 2009). Sex workers interviewed for this study explained that their clientele remained relatively similar throughout their careers and that they preferred clients who were white, wealthy, and older. However, they reported that over the course of the 2000s, it became harder to solicit sex work with clients of this particular background; as a result, sex workers noted becoming willing to engage in sex work with a broader clientele.

## Average Number of Clients Seen and Regular Clients

Respondents were asked about the number of clients they saw per day. Responses varied greatly, ranging from an average of two clients to upwards of fifty in a single day. Individuals also noted that weekends typically brought more dates. One from Seattle explained that she saw 20–30 clients in a typical weekend (K1), while another from Denver saw 10–15 on a given weekend (J8).

Nineteen (53 percent) of the 36 respondents stated that they had regular clients. Fourteen of the nineteen had 2–5 regulars, one had 6–9 regulars, three had 10–12 regulars, one had 20, and one had 70 regulars.

Respondents traded sex with some of their clients over the course of long periods of time. These clients were dependable sources of income and other necessities and wants. A 41-year-old sex worker from Seattle described her regular clients in the 2000s:

I had some regulars and guys that paid even more back then—about 12 of them. I saw them every week [at the] same time, same place. Some of them were willing to pay more, up to \$160. I didn't have to spend the whole night with that guy; just had to have him cum twice. (K1)

Some clients became regulars after seeking out particular sex workers on a constant basis. This was true for a respondent who traded sex in Denver in the late 1990s and 2000s. She noted, “There would be regulars that would come down and see me. About five regulars—some that would be every week, [and] the rest when they came into town. It wasn't difficult for them to find me. Everyone knew” (J3).

Many sex workers developed close rapports with their clients. One individual from Washington, DC described a relationship with one of her regular clients: “I dated a regular for six years. He only wanted to see me in red shoes. He would buy me red shoes. He would masturbate seeing me in red shoes” (L5). Regular clients provided money, drugs, or other necessities when needed or desired. A 30-year-old sex worker from Washington, DC, who began trading sex in the late 1990s at age 15, described: “I built up a regular clientele. Three to four guys on average. These were guys I could call if I needed money or drugs. This went on for years” (L8). Another respondent from Seattle described the central role that some clients played in her life. In the following exchange, she explained that clients helped her meet her basic needs:

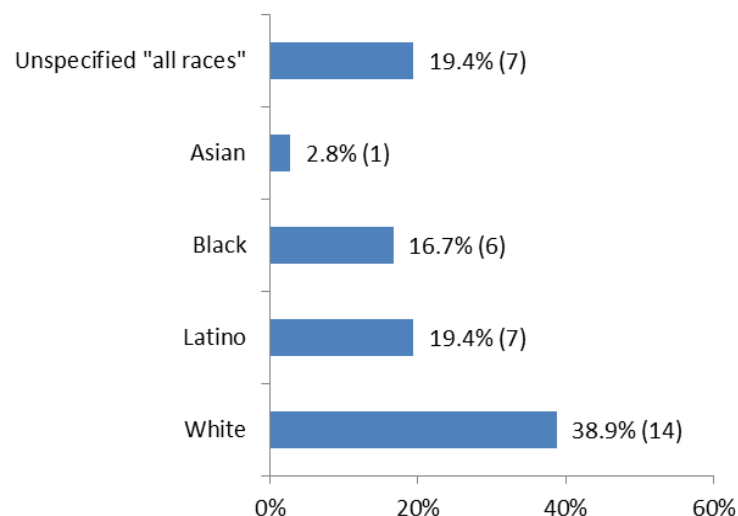
**Interviewer:** Did [clients] give you other things at any point, or were they always cash. Did they ever pay with different things?

**Respondent:** There was a few that would take me to get food and buy cigarettes and take me to little convenience stores ... or take me to purchase chicken and get some bucket of chicken, so that I could take home for the kids ... I had one that ... actually took my kids one time to buy clothes. So, they were actually pretty nice people. I don't know. I mean, if I think, what they did wasn't so nice ... There was, at that point in time, if it wasn't for those certain people, I don't think I would have made it ... They helped me buy clothes for my kids. They put food on my table and paid my bills. (M3)

## Racial and Ethnic Makeup and Personal Backgrounds of Clients

Individuals were asked to describe the races and ethnicities of their clientele. Fourteen stated that they worked with white clients, seven with Latino clients, six with African-American clients, and one with Asian clients. Seven did not provide the exact races and ethnicities of their clients, but rather stated that they had clients of various racial and ethnic backgrounds (figure 8.5).

**Figure 8.5 Race of Clients**



Respondents provided some details about their clients' financial backgrounds and family situations. A Denver-based sex worker, who traded sex in the late 1990s and 2000s, described her clientele: "Mainly the clients would be rich, common guys ... Some were just in town for work; some came from a rich area. All [were] married" (J3). Another sex worker stated, "The clients were the same ... rich white men" (J9). One respondent from Washington, DC described her clients as "lots of older white guys, I'm sure they were married" (L8).

Some sex workers were able to identify the professional backgrounds of their clients. A few stated that some or many of their clients were law enforcement. When prompted to describe her clientele, a 29-year-old from Atlanta stated the following: "Older gentlemen. That was my criteria—had to be older ... Mostly married, professional. A lot of law enforcement." She was asked how she knew clients were law enforcement, to which she responded, "They would tell me. [They would] call and ask for a massage. And you can kind of tell. A cop looks like a cop" (N6).

Some sex workers, especially those who worked in Dallas, described a clientele that was primarily Mexican. This was true of the 43-year-old from Dallas in the following exchange:

**Interviewer:** And were [your clients] of a particular race?

**Respondent:** Usually Mexican.

**Interviewer:** Do you know ... [if they were] married or anything like that?

**Respondent:** Usually married with children. But most of the time they would say that their wives were in Mexico, lived in Mexico. They were over here but their family was in Mexico.

**Interviewer:** Did you get a sense of if they were undocumented?

**Respondent:** Most of them were.

**Interviewer:** Undocumented?

**Respondent:** Yeah, illegal. They make a lot of money. They work in construction and make a lot of money. (M3)

Some felt that the number of Mexican clients increased over time. A 40-year-old respondent from Dallas stated, “You got more Mexicans out there. I’ve seen now, when I see the girls out there, I see most of them jumping the cars with mostly Hispanics” (M1).

Similar to the sentiments expressed by many of the pimps in chapters 5–7, some respondents described their preferences for certain clients. One individual from Washington, DC, who worked in the 1980s and 1990s, provided this information:

Back then, I would only date white guys. You get in the car with a white trick [who] gives you \$300 for ten minutes. You go with a black guy for \$50–60, with a black man for a long time. No! I’m not going to do that. Money isn’t good with black guys! (L2)

Another individual who began trading sex in the mid-1980s explained her clientele and preferences:

Most of my dates are with white guys. I don’t date black guys—there’s too much drama. Most white johns don’t want trouble. The black guys have all this drama—they want to rob you and they show up without the money that they say they have. Most white johns just want to have sex and go back to [their] wife ... White guys are fast. One white guy came so quickly. He just put the condom on and took my clothes off, and he was done. I love dating white guys. It’s not just the money, but they also wine and dine you. They don’t want to have any problems. (L5)

## Changes in Clients Over Time

Respondents were asked to describe any changes they noticed in the types of johns they saw over the years. Some noted that it became more difficult to engage their regular and preferred clients. In the following exchange, a 46-year-old individual, who worked in Denver, compared her earlier years in the sex trade (in the 1990s) to the present:

**Interviewer:** So if you need money, do you have men you go out to?

**Respondent:** Then, yeah. Now, no. God no. Now all I want is to get some stability. (J2)

Many others stated that it has become particularly difficult to find wealthier johns on the streets in the current market. When asked whether she purposely sought out johns with more money in recent years, a 53-year-old respondent stated, “They are very far and few between” (J6). The reasons for this include, but are not limited to, the effects of law enforcement crackdowns on sex work, worsening economies and tougher financial times, and the increasing use of online venues to solicit sex work—all of which will be explored more extensively in subsequent sections of this chapter.

It became harder for some sex workers to engage preferred clients because of the effects of drug addictions. This was true of one woman from Denver who began trading sex at age 17 as an escort and had a primarily “rich, white” clientele, but who later sought a broader client base after she started using crack at age 21. She described this point in her career,

The more I cracked out, the more I lost weight, my clothes didn’t look good, so I struggled to get those upper class white guys that I wanted. So then I had to go for anything ... And then I would do whoever. Not the black guys because they were scary. After a while, the Mexicans wanted to give me a little for nothing. (J1)

In addition to encountering fewer wealthy clients, sex workers noted that a noticeable number of buyers of street-based sex work have become younger, less reliable, more demanding, and more violent in recent years. A sex worker from Washington, DC stated that “As time goes on, it gets worse. The guys are younger and stupid. Back in the day, they were older and all they wanted was something they weren’t getting at home: affection, love, attention” (L1). Another noted that although the “johns are the same group of people since back in the day,” she has noticed a contingent of younger johns: “Today, [there are] tons of younger guys. They take their money back. I don’t deal with younger guys. There’s always some shit behind dating a young guy, 16–17-year-old guys” (L5). As a 46-year-old explained, “Today’s guys want

what you work so hard to get. They try to bring you down, and rob you and hurt you” (L1). Not all of the sex workers experienced these types of threats from clients, however, and some stated that they felt safe with johns. One sex worker from Denver, who traded sex since the 1990s, stated that johns were “non-threatening” throughout the course of her career (J9).

The demand for sex work has remained high across cities and time, and respondents indicated being able to rely on clients as sources of income or other necessities. However, it was also noted that changes in the street-based sex market caused sex workers to broaden their client base beyond those with preferred financial circumstances. As the following section explores, interactions with clients—and specifically the possibility of violence and abuse from clients—is one factor that make sex work particularly risky.

## **Risks and Violence Over Time**

Existing literature has documented many of the hazards and risks sex workers are exposed to in their work, and particularly those involving threats to their physical and emotional well-being (Brewer et al. 2006; Campbell et al. 2003; Farley and Kelly 2000; Farley et al. 2004; Kurtz et al. 2004; Maher and Daly 1996; Moses 2006; Potterat et al. 2004; Raphael and Shapiro 2004; Shively et al. 2008; Thukral and Ditmore 2003; Wood et al. 2007).

Sex workers in this study were asked to identify the riskiest aspects of their sex work. By order of frequency the following components were identified: law enforcement and the threat of detection; the unpredictability of clients; the possibility of violence, rape, and death; sexually transmitted diseases and other health hazards; and the risks involved with drug use and dependency.

Many sex workers felt that one particular risk was not more severe than others and instead pointed to a combination of factors. A 36-year-old from Denver was asked, “What was the scariest thing: STDs, police, violence or abuse?” She responded, “They are all the same—all risky—because you never know. I’ve had the guy take off the condom without telling me. And [law enforcement] stings, ‘cause I’ve had fourteen convictions. I’ve gotten caught fourteen times” (J9). To the same question, another sex worker responded, “It was the police and [the] tricks. One wasn’t scarier than another” (J3).

According to respondents, many of these risks have persisted over time. However, those working only in the 1990s and 2000s resoundingly pointed to the threat of exposure to and arrest by law enforcement, the unpredictability of clients, and the possibility of experiencing violence and abuse before, during, and after dates as the primary risks they faced.

## **Health Risks**

Respondents who worked in cities across the country discussed the health risks of their work, primarily the threat of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, particularly HIV/AIDS. Many witnessed the tragic effect that AIDS had on their fellow sex workers’ lives. One Washington, DC-based sex worker described: “I saw a lot of girls dying from AIDS, getting killed. The generation before me got sick and was dying. The only medicine they had [at the time] was [azidothymidine]. But they didn’t want to take it. It was rough” (L1).

Some individuals, including a 43-year-old from Dallas, attempted to intervene when she knew sex workers were trading sex while STD- and HIV-infected. She explained, “If [young girls on street] are spreading AIDS, then I would call the police on them. I saw a lot of girls spreading HIV and herpes and syphilis in south Dallas.” When asked whether these young girls were using condoms, she responded “no.” She added that these same sex workers “used IV drugs.” For this reason, she “[didn’t] really trick with someone they done tricks with” (M4).

Many respondents relied on condoms as a precaution against contracting transmittable diseases and viruses. As a 37-year-old sex worker from Seattle, who began trading sex in the 1990s, explained, “I feared catching AIDS. I always used condoms, except with my regulars. But then I started making [regular clients] do it [wear condoms], because of the AIDS epidemic. I never asked [clients] to see STD results; no one does that” (K3).

The temptation to conduct sex work without a condom was real for a number of participants, since johns typically paid more for sex acts in which no protection was used. As one participant from Denver



explained, “A lot of guys would give me \$60 for not using a condom;” another noted that clients paid “\$20 or \$40 more for no condom.”

Respondents varied with respect to whether they would accept these higher fares and the associated health risks for sex work without a condom. A 43-year-old from Dallas took the risk:

You get \$20, \$50. I mean it just depends on the guy, ‘cause it’s a lot of times somebody offered me \$20 and I run him off [refused to trade sex with him] cause they won’t wanna wear condoms. And there was a lot of times I did sex without condoms, I mean. I’m just glad I haven’t caught nothing yet. (M4)

Others were not willing to take this chance. Regarding sex acts without condoms, one respondent noted, “That wasn’t cool; I wouldn’t do that” (J8).

## Violence and Abuse

In interview after interview, sex workers described the violence they experienced or witnessed while conducting street-based sex work. Twenty-one (58 percent) of the 36 respondents stated that they faced some type of violence as a sex worker. Thirteen individuals (36 percent) described instances of having abusive or violent clients. Moreover, it was noted that this violence became worse over time.

A number of sex workers were robbed by clients. One individual from Washington, DC explained that over the course of her career, she “came into three robbery situations—with johns taking [my] money back” after the sex work was conducted (L8).

Many respondents experienced more egregious levels of violence from clients. A Denver-based sex worker was subjected to extreme physical violence in the 1990s, when she first started trading sex. She recounted one incident and other similar experiences:

When I first started out something bad happened. He had a machete. He pulled in the alley, and then pulled out the knife, and I cried, and prayed, and he took out the knife. He hit me with the fist. I got up, and I said “God, please help me,” and it was snowing outside that day ... God gave me the strength to fight for life and get out of the car. I’ve got raped a few times. (J2)

Another individual from Seattle described the effect of the death of her best friend, who also traded sex, had on her decision to leave street work and see only regular clients:

I ran into a girl on ... Amtrak ... and we got to talking. I had drugs on me and we went to the bathroom and—she was the same age—she called one of her tricks and he didn’t want her, he wanted me. Then we became best friends. Then she got killed. And I just went to regulars after that. I was working on the streets for two years before she got killed, but I stopped working on the street after she got killed. They don’t know how she got killed. (K3)

Sex workers who traded sex over the years noted that the sex work became even more dangerous in the 2000s, with more instances of client-induced violence. A 33-year-old respondent from Denver, who began working in 2001, explained that sex work is “always dangerous.” She extrapolated:

I have a knife, because I was raped ... once, and another guy tried. He had handcuffs, but I fought back. He beat me up really bad though. I didn’t go to the hospital because I was scared of my significant other finding out ... I was most scared of a rapist—of getting killed, or a serial rapist. (J7)

Another participant traded sex in Dallas throughout the 2000s. She was asked if she experienced instances of abuse with clients. She responded,

Yes. I’ve got stab wounds all over me. I’ve been stabbed in my head, all up my legs, in my kidney. I’ve been raped about 40 or 50 times. So I’ve been through all this stuff ... ‘cause a lot of times people will drive way out somewhere where you don’t know where you’re at.

And I've had people, I've had to jump out of the car going on the freeway before to get out. (M4)

Incidents like these led sex workers to conclude that sex work became more violent over the years. A sex worker from Washington, DC who traded sex from the 1980s–2000s reflected upon how the levels of violence have changed over time:

In 1990s, nobody was being killed. Back then, you were afraid of being beaten up and robbed, but now they shoot you. To me, it's much worse today. They used to throw bottles at you and beat you up, but today, they have guns. If you weren't afraid back then, you should be afraid today. Today you hear through word of mouth about the killings. (L6)

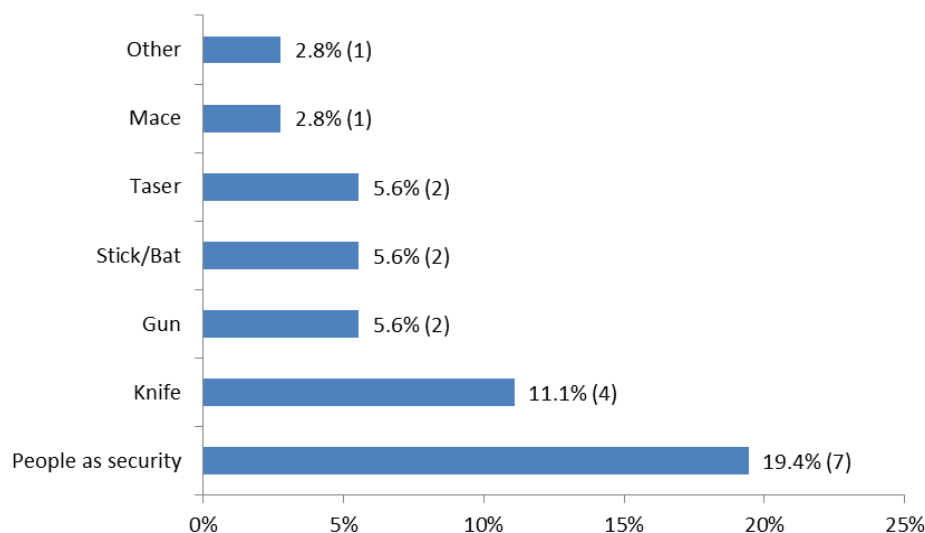
Another sex worker, who worked from the 1970s to the late 2000s, compared the conditions of her early work to the conditions of today's street-based sex market. She noted that incidents of physical violence grew over the years:

In my era, girls might get into a little fight. But lately, a lot of girls lose their life to the street. I've been to more than ten funerals in the past few years. Back when I was out, they were beat up maybe, but today there are girls getting murdered ... Today its more of a possibility that you'll be murdered than in past. (L3)

For these reasons and more, many sex workers concluded that clients and street-based violence posed the biggest threat to their well-being while trading sex. A 19-year-old individual who worked primarily in Atlanta was asked what she was most afraid of while conducting this work. She responded, "The client, really. I don't know what's coming through that door; I don't know what they have in their pocket. They can be nice and cool, and when done, flip out. I can't get away. I'm naked" (N2).

These conditions also compelled a number of—though not all—sex workers to carry weapons of some kind while on dates. Four had knives, two had guns, two had a taser, two had a stick or a bat, one had mace, and one used other forms of security (figure 8.6). Many of the respondents who reported having or stashing these weapons on dates also noted that they never had to use these weapons.

**Figure 8.6 Protection and Security Used**



Seven sex workers relied on other individuals to serve as security. A 22-year-old from Atlanta described the system she used: "I always had security. It could've been a friend, homeboy, or another female ... They'd wait outside." If a date was taking too long, she explained, the individual providing security would bang on the door (N1).

## **Substances**

Participants felt that the substances they used and came to rely on posed a threat to their well-being and their lives. One respondent from Dallas described a series of overdoses and a particularly traumatic incident involving drug use: “I’ve overdosed at least 20 or 30 times. My sister’s heart exploded off cocaine, so I stopped doing that” (M4). Others explained the threat posed by drugs with unknown components. A woman from Denver noticed that the drugs in the mid-to-late 2000s changed; she stated that the drugs’ quality “would go down” and that they were “mixed with stuff” (J3). One sex worker noted that the riskiest component of her work was the possibility of not having enough drugs to sustain her. She noted, “I’m going to tell you the truth. Not being able to have my drug was the scariest thing. That was what kept me doing what I was doing. I didn’t care if it was risky or not” (D15).

## **Law Enforcement Detection and Interactions**

For a substantial number of individuals, the threat of detection by law enforcement and law enforcement interactions was viewed as a key risk to their work. According to these respondents, this was especially true in the 2000s. Many described encounters with law enforcement officials, especially those working undercover. A respondent from Washington, DC described an incident with officials she believed to be undercover agents: “Three months ago, I went to a hotel room and saw an undercover outside in the car, so I didn’t go in the room; I left. This guy said he would pay \$200. When I pulled out, I got tons of phone calls—they were trying to get me!” (L5). Some, like a Denver-based sex worker who traded sex in the mid-1990s through the mid-2000s, viewed encounters with law enforcement officials as the primary risk while conducting sex work. This woman stated that law enforcement “treat you shitty.” She went on, “They would manhandle me a bit, put the cuffs on real tight. Last time wasn’t so bad. They just gave me a citation” (J11). The following section will explore and document changes in law enforcement efforts to discover and control sex work over time.

Sex workers face constant threats to their physical and emotional well-being while conducting their work. This section has explored these many risks, which include hazards to sex workers’ health, the possibility of violent interactions with clients and situations of robbery, dangers involved with substance use and dependency, and the potential of law enforcement detection and interactions.

## **The Effects of Law Enforcement Approaches to Sex Work Over Time**

In the 1990s and 2000s, street- and Internet-based sex work became a focus of law enforcement efforts to eradicate street crime (Ditmore 2009; Marzulli 2002). As a result, sex workers increasingly came into contact with the criminal justice system and some portion of street-based sex work was displaced to indoor or online spaces or to different areas in urban environments (Murphy and Venkatesh 2006; Shively et al. 2008; Thukral and Ditmore 2003). Interviews with sex workers in this study who worked in cities across the country confirmed these trends. Twenty individuals (56 percent) noted that they had been arrested and/or sentenced on charges related to their sex work. Fifteen respondents (42 percent) in our sample stated that they were caught, but not always arrested, by undercover law enforcement officers at some point in their lives.

## **Interactions with the Criminal Justice System and Law Enforcement Officers**

Sex workers cycle in and out of the criminal justice system numerous times throughout their careers. More than half (56 percent) of those in our sample stated that they had received a warrant, been warned, arrested, and/or sentenced on charges related to their sex work. A sex worker from Denver had been arrested three times for her sex work and served 30 days in jail after at least two of the three arrests. One respondent noted that she had at least 14 cases involving sex work. Another stated that at least 20 of the 30 felony convictions she received involved sex work charges; this woman had been to jail seven times and to prison nine times. A few sex workers explained that they had received a number of arrests and/or sentences involving both their sex work and drug use.

Sex workers were asked to describe their encounters with law enforcement. Many detailed neutral or positive experiences. A 33-year-old from Denver stated, “They [police officers] treat you okay. If you have

a good attitude, so do they. ‘Cause if you go in hollering ‘cause you get caught, they’re not going to be so nice” (J7). Another individual who traded sex in Washington, DC for over twenty years explained:

Cops [are] still the same way with me. As long as you show them respect, they give you respect. They give you a warning. They had a right to lock you up because they gave you a warning ... Cops gave you a warning to go home—but that’s all—they wouldn’t arrest. I’d go right back the next day. It’s okay until you get a new warning! (L2)

At least one respondent felt that police interventions were helpful when she needed a rest from the work. This is illustrated in the following interaction with a 41-year-old individual who traded sex:

**Respondent:** I worked seven days a week, until I fell out, ‘cause [the police] knew. They’d seen me walking around the streets for days and they’d pick me up.

**Interviewer:** So the police would notice you getting run down [physically] and they would arrest you as sort of a favor?

**Respondent:** Yeah, that’s what they would do. (J3)

The same respondent described less positive interactions involving abuse and mistreatment:

[Police] were abusive, they were mean, they would call you names. If they were to see me this day, they would treat me the same; they would see my record and still call me names. Even though I’m clean and sober and got my shit together, they would still see me as shit. (J3)

Transgender sex workers discussed similar instances. A trans-woman described the treatment she received when arrested for sex work: “They verbally abused me. When I was arrested, my wig was snatched off in the police car” (L7). A number of transgender women were upset that they were placed in cells with men rather than women. This was the case for a 46-year-old transgender woman from Washington, DC who stated, “I have been arrested, and they put me in a cell with men. The men wanted to masturbate on me, threaten me, fight and beat me ... When I tell the marshal or police that I’m a woman ... they put me in a male cell” (L1).

## Changes in Law Enforcement Approaches to Sex Work

Sex workers’ encounters with law enforcement officers changed over time. When a 53-year-old individual from Denver was asked to consider any changes she observed throughout the course of her career; she stated, “The ways the cops deal with the girls ... they talk and talk and talk and talk and then corral the girls. If they know what you do, they’ll get you” (J6). Another noted that although she traded sex since the 1990s, she was first caught by an undercover law enforcement agent in 2006, and then again in 2008 and in 2012 (M1).

Sex workers who worked between the 1970s and present day stated that law enforcement approaches to sex work were not as aggressive in the earlier years of their careers. A 48-year-old from Denver who began trading sex when she was 13 was asked to describe the market when she first started in her teenage years. She responded, “Back then, it was cool. The police didn’t really give you no problems, as long as you’re not killing nobody, hurting nobody, they don’t really care” (J5). Others, like an individual from Washington, DC, stated that she did not encounter police raids in the early part of her career, in the 1980s.

Police crackdowns and undercover sting operations on street-based sex work picked up in the 1990s and 2000s. One respondent noted, “I can’t take the chance of undercovers pulling up on me. They’re everywhere. The policy activity has increased” (L1). Others described the varying ways in which law enforcement officers attempted to intervene in their work in these years; a 49-year-old from Denver explained, “You would be walking down the street and they would call you names, harassing me ... they’d stop you for dumb reasons: jaywalking, stopping traffic” (J10). Some respondents noted that these types of efforts increased as drug use grew on the streets; a 43-year-old from Washington, DC, who had been trading sex since the mid-1980s, noted that when she first started sex work, “[there] were no police raids, but today there are raids only because of the drugs” (L5).

A number of sex workers were caught by undercover agents posing as johns. Many were caught in hotel and motel rooms and in cars while on dates with individuals they believed to be clients. A woman from Atlanta described one such instance: “I knocked on the door, went into the room. The guy introduced himself to me, asked what my name was. I sat down, talked to him. He asked if he could do anal. I said ‘No, that’s not what I came up to do.’” After her arrest, she explained, “[Officers] took me to another room, then they told me [they were] charging me for prostitution. It was more like entrapment. We didn’t discuss an amount” (N6). A 20-year-old from Denver described a similar experience:

It was so dumb. I ... got a call. I had to take it; it was \$225. When I got there, I didn’t tell him [the john] anything, I didn’t say I would do anything. He asked for a blowjob for \$50. I didn’t say anything. He put the money on the table, I got up to take my shoes off, and then the police came in. I personally think it was entrapment.

She went on to describe the arrest:

They questioned my brother—they thought it was my pimp or whatever, but he was in the car. I didn’t take [their] money, yet they took my phone, but gave it back, and tried to take my car. The deal was either probation or jail for a year ... obviously I took probation. (J1)

Other respondents were detected by law enforcement after posting ads online. An individual from Atlanta explained one such experience:

I was on Backpage for a long time. Then one day this guy called. He was asking questions about the price. He said he’s come when he got off of work. He knocked on the door, and he came on the inside. I was on the phone with my friend ... He went in the bathroom. Someone knocked on the door; it was a bunch of cops. But I didn’t take any money from him, we didn’t talk about money or anything when he was there—only on the phone. We didn’t say anything but “hi” when he came in. (N3)

Law enforcement crackdowns had varying impacts on sex workers’ careers and the street-based sex market. Some left the work entirely after they were arrested. This was the case of a 20-year-old individual who had been trading sex in Denver for about two years before she was arrested. After her arrest, she called her mother who was also trading sex. She explained: “When I called my mom, she and I decided to stop altogether. We took our ads off Backpage, and that was it. I deleted the email addresses that we made for our pages and our ads” (J1).

Others were not deterred by arrests and the threat of law enforcement detection. A 35-year-old sex worker observed this in the neighborhood in which she lives in Denver. She explained, “There’s a lot of girls out there now by my house, [and] they’re getting caught left and right, but then they go right back out there; I see it every day” (J4).

Law enforcement efforts have forced sex workers to relocate their work to other streets and neighborhoods. A 49-year-old participant from Washington, DC stated that the “areas of strolls have changed over time because police have forced us to relocate. They’re not pushing us into any areas; we just choose to put ourselves in an area where we want to hang out” (L2). Another sex worker explained that “with law enforcement crackdowns, the strolls are moving to more dangerous places, and to more residential areas, [which is causing] more complaints from neighbors” (L3). Other respondents felt that sex work has been displaced to online venues; a 46-year-old individual from Washington, DC noted that “people [are] turning to chat lines because [they provide] safer protection from law enforcement” (L1).

Heightened law enforcement operations and increased targeting of sex workers have had varying ramifications on the lives of those trading sex and on street- and Internet-based sex markets more broadly. Respondents resoundingly noted that law enforcement efforts to stop sex work grew over time. As a result, they took certain precautions to evade law enforcement detection, such as using certain code words in online ads and moving to different venues. Despite taking these cautionary steps, all of the study participants had some type of involvement with the criminal justice system.

## The Current Sex Market on the Streets and Online

The structure of the modern-day market for sex work reflects a confluence of factors that have shaped it over time. Today's street-based sex market consists of johns who are paying less and more violent; sex workers who are either voluntarily or reluctantly charging less for their work; deeply rooted drug addictions; and 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.

There is a strong likelihood that there has been a decline in buyers and sellers of sex on the streets, but an increase in other venues, particularly online. A 41-year-old sex worker who had been trading sex since the late 1990s felt that there are fewer sex workers, although still plenty of johns, on the street: "I think there are less girls out there now, there used to be more when I was out there. I see tricks out there all the time, but no girls I know" (J3). However, another sex worker from Denver speculated that there were fewer johns on the street, that "it's really hard to pick up tricks now," and that more buyers of sex services have turned to the Internet to engage sex workers (J9). Observations like these led some, including a 23-year-old sex worker from Washington, DC, to conclude that "the stroll used to be a hot spot, [but] now it's hardly used at all" (L7).

Some sex workers speculated that the individuals still trading sex on the street tend to be younger. A 50-year-old from Washington, DC, who started trading sex in the early 1980s, stated, "I see a lot of young girls coming out now, ages 13–14. [They're] coming out to the streets in groups of girls, not by themselves" (L6). However, sex workers interviewed for this study who engaged in street work at some point between the mid-2000s and the present day were between the ages of 11–54 when they traded sex during those years, precluding conclusions that those trading sex on the streets in recent years are of a particular age group.

What is clear, however, is that the pricing structure of the market shifted significantly in recent years. The street-based prices and the dating-spending pattern described above persisted through the 2000s and into present day, with individuals trading street-based sexual acts for as little as a few dollars and/or small amounts of drugs. Johns are playing a key role in the price drop; a sex worker explained, "Someone even offered me \$5. I got really upset, so I got out. They [johns] know it's really hard [to make money on the street], so they try to take advantage" (J9). In other words, buyers of street-based sex are demanding more for less. One Denver-based sex worker described this recent trend: "Now, I'll see people [that] want you to date two times for \$20 ... like having sex twice for only \$20. The economy is so bad ... I mean, it would take a long time to get your price. You could do it, but you'd be tired by the time you got it" (J6).

One of the most notable shifts has been the drop in prices on the low end of the price range for street-based sex work and the persistent ability to garner higher earnings online. It was stated that street-based rates in the 1990s and 2000s ranged from \$5 to \$150 for oral sex and \$5 to \$250 for sex, compared to the going rates in the 1970s and 1980s of \$50–100 for oral sex and \$60–300 for sex. Internet-based rates are much higher: Based on the information provided, a 15 minute date typically costs about \$60, a 30 minute date ranges from \$60 and \$150, a 60 minute date ranges from \$120 to \$250, and a "full service" date (during which any number of sex acts may be performed for a predetermined fee) costing as much as \$300 to \$350, if not more.

Sex workers on the street continue to engage in significant price negotiation with johns who are paying less. As a Seattle-based sex worker selling sex in the 2000s explained, "[The johns] start with a low price for [oral sex] and then I have to bring the price up" (K1). The overall effect of this market is significantly lower profits for the sex workers, in the form of money or drugs. In the words of one Washington, DC worker, "[You'd] be lucky if you make \$100 a night today. It's just that bad now" (L2).

In part because of this, many sex workers in today's market are using the Internet to advertise services and arrange dates, allowing them to reach clients that are willing to pay more than street sex work rates. Of the many sex workers in our study who reported engaging in or being familiar with online work, nearly all indicated that prices online were consistently higher than street prices. For example,

I hear [other sex workers] talking about the Internet when they're on the stroll. They claim they make \$2,000–3,000 on the Internet, but [they're] out here where [the johns] only pay \$10? That doesn't make any sense. Why would they be out here? (L2)

The reasons that Internet-solicited sex garners higher earnings vary, but likely have to do with the lasting impact of crack use on the market and law enforcement approaches to sex work, as well as the structure of street- and online-based dates themselves. As described above, sex workers on the streets are more prone to drug addictions and more willing to take less money for sex work. Street-based dates are also more opportunistic and service-based, which tends to involve lower prices. Online dates, in contrast, garner higher prices in part because sex workers advertise their prices ahead of time, which forces johns to more or less accept the requested prices and precludes substantial on-the-spot negotiation; because sex workers are not as likely as street-based workers to be trading sex solely for drugs; because prices are often duration-based rather than service-based; and because scheduling dates is more of a process during which expectations can be set.

There is evidence that broader economic trends also affect the sex market's pricing structure. Some sex workers described the impact of the 2007–2008 financial crisis on sex workers' earnings:

**Interviewer:** Prior to 2008, was there a peak in that there was so much demand—you said it was out of control?

**Respondent:** Well yeah, before the economy fell in 2008 ... before that things were always real good. (J4)

Moreover, six of the ten sex workers who began trading sex between the mid-2000s and present day—a period of significant economic weakness across the country—stated that they did so because they did not have, needed, or wanted a job. When asked to explain the decline in prices, a sex worker who worked in Denver touched upon this reality:

Because the laws were getting so strict, and the economy, because a lot of the guys who weren't looking for work, because the girls were willing to do less, and [the sex workers] would say well I don't have a job, if I did I would pay more. But people were charging less, even if they looked nice and smelled good. (J9)

Despite the ebbs and flows in pricing over time, demand for sex has always—and continues to be—lucrative. Reflecting on their work over several years, the sex workers in our study described a persistent ability to earn significant sums with certain—and sometimes regular—clients. One Denver-based street worker, who began working in the late 1990s, described the spending habits of some of her wealthy clients: “They were spending thousands, it would go for three, four, five nights. A bender. They would just empty their wallets ... Some were just in town for work; some came from a rich area” (J3). Although harder to come by, clients continue to serve as reliable and lucrative sources of income for sex workers, making sex work a viable vocation for many.

## **A Lifelong Career: Why Sex Workers Leave, Stay or Return to the Sex Trade**

Murphy and Venkatesh (2006), in their study of street-based sex workers in Chicago, found that many sex workers now view their work as a profession and career rather than a temporary status in their lives and are staying in sex work indefinitely as a result. While the authors found this was true mostly of sex workers who transitioned from street work to indoor work, this study found that viewing sex work as a career is true for some of the sex workers on the street, but certainly not all. Indeed, there are a variety of reasons why sex workers either stay in the sex trade or leave.

### **Why They Stay**

Sex workers stay in or return to the sex trade for largely economic reasons. Several of the sex workers reported returning to the work even after leaving, primarily because they needed money: “[I] stopped in 2001. Put myself in a program ... After 2001, I was still going out [to trade] and working” (K1). One sex worker described it as her “only way to survive; I didn't know how to have a job after that” (J3). Another

respondent explained that her dependence on sex work was not only for money, but even basic necessities, such as food and clothing for her children, highlighting how difficult it is for some sex workers to stay away from a dependable source of income, even if they have been absent for some time. Other respondents returned to sex work because they needed to support their drug purchases or found it difficult to refuse regular clients since it was steady and reliable income.

## **Why They Leave**

The reasons for leaving sex work were more varied than the reasons for staying, with sex workers citing age, value, life events, health, and exit programs and services as factors that prompted their exit. A few older, experienced sex workers cited “getting old” (J10) or needing to “get out of this game” (L1) as reasons why the dangerous business was no longer appealing. Other sex workers mentioned how the sex trade was no longer “worth it” as prices decreased and clients changed for the worse (J4). The danger and risks of sex work as a reason for exiting the trade also manifested itself in terms of ill health, with one respondent explaining that HIV infection ultimately caused her to leave (L6).

Other sex workers left the sex trade for less negative reasons. Important life events, such as having a child, losing a family member, or committing to a relationship, were also important reasons to stop trading sex. One respondent exited sex work when she had her second daughter while another left sex work when her boyfriend requested that she exit. Another sex worker cited her mother’s death and wanting to honor her late mother’s wishes as her reason for finally exiting sex work.

Programing and services designed to help sex workers achieve alternate and legal career options also served as an important catalyst for exiting sex work. One respondent described her program very positively, explaining:

Working here, I’m able to be me. I’ve been doing trainings, testing, counseling, so I’m doing it less and less. I’ve been here at [Program] for 1.5 here. It’s the best thing that’s happened to me to be here in [Program] because I’m facilitating my own groups here at [Program] now. (L5)

Another respondent described her program as a “lifesaver” (M1), illustrating the positivity of these prostitution exit programs and services.

## **Pimp Involvement in the Sex Trade**

While the presence of pimps still exists, many sex workers expressed how the perceptions of pimps and using pimps to facilitate their work has now changed. One respondent described how the presence of pimps had become ubiquitous and that clients were no longer afraid of sex workers with pimps for that reason (J6). Another respondent explained how pimps were no longer intimidating in how they dressed, the material wealth they displayed, and their level of success as a pimp: “Things have changed drastically from the times of the flashy pimps to the tennis shoe pimps” (M5).

The sex workers in this sample tended to work independently instead of working with pimps. No respondent who worked in the sex trade in the 1980s worked with pimps regularly—the only sex workers who did regularly work with pimps had worked in the 1990s and 2000s. Respondents provided several reasons for choosing to work independently, with the most common ones being the lack of necessity for a pimp and fear of pimps’ abuse, control, and rules. One respondent explained that she stopped working for a pimp once her pimp “put a hand on [her]” (J10), while another respondent described the type of extensive rules and intimidation she witnessed pimps using on sex workers:

They’ll snatch you up and put you in the trunk if you don’t watch yourself. They’d watch you, they’d pay attention to what’s going on with you, might get at you a little. They get more aggressive the more they see you ... they got rules ... Don’t make eye contact. (K2)

Pimps inflicting abuse on and control over sex workers served as a large reason why many sex workers did not want to work with pimps, especially since a pimp could potentially try to control the amount of hours the women worked and how much they paid. One respondent described working independently as “it’s all about how you feel, what’s your goal for the day” (J2) when it came to earning a certain amount of money,



while another respondent described how her pimp would attempt to keep her working strenuous hours in order to make himself money (J1).

Sex workers who decided not to use pimps explained that they were not necessary to make lucrative returns from the sex trade, with one respondent explaining “[Pimps] can’t do anything I can’t do for myself” (J4). Several respondents report being approached or recruited by pimps, but ultimately turning them down.

None of the transgender respondents in our sample had ever been approached by a pimp, which the respondents attributed to their gender identity. As one respondent explained, “They never tried to recruit me to work for them. I never had anyone [pimps] ask me to work for them because they knew that transgenders don’t put up with nonsense, foolishness; we’re more mature than that” (L1). Many of these respondents discussed the presence of “sponsors” in their lives, who were their regular clients and ultimately made pimping irrelevant to their work.

## Summary

The 36 respondents represented in this study provide an in-depth understanding of the diversity of sex worker experiences in the United States’ underground commercial sex market. The respondents came from a variety of demographic backgrounds, worked in a diverse set of commercial sex locations, and engaged in sex work at different points in their lives and for different reasons. The respondents shared several commonalities, including their dependence on sex work for economic reasons and their perspective on potential health, client, and law enforcement risks. Two greater trends—the emergence of crack cocaine in the mid-1980s and the Internet in the late 1990s—significantly changed the nature and structure of sex work in the United States. Respondents described the emergence of crack cocaine as an epidemic during the 1980s and 1990s as negatively impacting working conditions, prices, and interactions with clients and law enforcements.

The emergence of the Internet as a tool to arrange dates was a significant development—the experiences of online- and street-based sex workers diverged in terms of client engagement, perceived risks, and pricing structures, although few sex workers worked exclusively online. Ultimately, while the experiences of sex workers over the past several decades have been varied in nature, the emergence of larger structural forces impacted the majority of respondents.

# Chapter 9

## Child Pornography Offenses in the Digital Age

### Introduction

Over the last 20 years, the popularization of the Internet has profoundly increased the availability and accessibility of child pornography, in addition to fostering the establishment of a child pornography subculture. Technological advancements have facilitated the production of child pornography and increased image and video storage capacity. Concurrently, online communities have increasingly normalized producing and possessing child pornography for members in these communities.

This study is based on interviews with 21 incarcerated male offenders who used the Internet to collect child pornography and 35 local and federal investigators and prosecutors who have experience investigating and prosecuting child pornography cases. We document how offenders use technology to access, store, and share child pornography, as well as the social networks that develop through online communities. In addition to providing insight on the behavior of online child pornography offenders, this chapter describes how offenders perceive and justify their behavior, as well as their impressions of how the market has changed over time. Stakeholders were asked to describe the structure of the market for child pornography, trends in the nature of the crime, and characteristics of offenders and victims.

#### Main Findings from this Chapter Include:

**Background and Demographic Information:** Consistent with extant research, child pornography offenders are primarily white, highly-educated males.

**Technology:** The Internet and other technological advances have facilitated the dissemination of child pornography, making it widely accessible and enabling offenders to obtain material for free, thereby shrinking the commercial market within the United States.

**Networking:** Online child pornography communities normalize behavior, provide networks for offenders to share materials and strategies to evade detection, and encourage production of child pornography in exchange for newer videos and images.

**Trends:** Over time, offenders have observed increased availability, changes in location of production, and progressively graphic content of child pornography.

**Perceptions:** Most offenders perceived child pornography possession to be a victimless crime and expressed surprise about penalties associated with child pornography offenses.

**Outliers:** Though the majority of child pornography offenders used the Internet to acquire and share child pornography, some respondents do not fall within that mold.

### Definitions

Difficulties arise in establishing a global definition of child pornography, as legal definitions, including the age of consent, vary across countries. Within the United States penal code, Title 18 § 2256 defines child pornography as any visual depiction of a minor engaging in sexually explicit conduct, with a minor defined as anyone under the age of 18. Sexually explicit conduct is not limited to sexual intercourse and masturbation, but also lascivious and sexually suggestive behavior, which can include images focused on

the genital regions of clothed children (Wortley and Smallbone 2012). Images that do not involve actual children, such as computer-generated images or adults who appear to be minors, are not considered child pornography by US courts (Wortley and Smallbone 2006).

Possession and receipt of child pornography, in addition to distribution and production, are federal crimes. Possession does not require an individual to save or store an image, but simply to view or access the material. All 50 US states have child pornography laws, though these statutes may differ slightly from the federal code, particularly in equating viewing child pornography with possession.

Law enforcement and researchers frequently distinguish between contact and non-contact sexual offenses. As defined by the United States Sentencing Commission's 2012 report on child pornography, contact sex offenses are "any illegal sexually abusive, exploitative, or predatory conduct involving actual or attempted physical contact between the offender and a victim." Non-contact sex offenses do not involve actual or attempted physical contact.

Though this report uses the term child pornography, this term may be misleading, as it can be interpreted to diminish the severity of the crime. To avoid this misrepresentation, certain researchers, media sources, and law enforcement agencies prefer the terms child abuse material, child exploitation material, or child abuse images.

## Literature

Though researchers agree on the Internet's vast impact on escalating the availability of child pornography, it is nevertheless difficult to estimate the size of the problem. Due to the inherent challenges in calculating the number of offenders downloading online child pornography, there is no agreed upon figure to underscore the extent of the problem. Estimates to the number of child pornography offenders range from 50,000 to 100,000 pedophiles in organized rings (Jenkins 2001) to 750,000 Internet offenders at any one time (Maalla 2009). Though most US child pornography offenders engage in distribution for non-commercial purposes (United States Sentencing Commission 2012), there is a global commercial market. However, there is little existing research regarding its structure and scope. Speculation to the size of the commercial child pornography economy ranges from \$3 to \$20 billion (Bialik 2006), and the Internet Watch Foundation found that 27 percent of the webpages hosting child pornography in 2012 were on commercial websites (Internet Watch Foundation 2012).

Much of the existing literature focuses on the characteristics of Internet sex offenders, who tend to be white, male, and educated (Wolak, Finkelhor, and Mitchell 2011; Wortley and Smallbone 2012). The bulk of studies are based upon samples of individuals arrested for child pornography offenses, therefore findings may be somewhat biased and reflect the types of offenders detected or targeted by law enforcement, rather than a representative sample of all child pornography offenders (Wortley and Smallbone 2012).

In order to identify variations in offender behavior, researchers have attempted to categorize offenders by their motives and behavior (Alexy, Burgess, and Baker 2005; Lanning 2010; Merdian et al. 2013b; Sullivan and Beech 2004). Krone (2004, 4) developed a typology of child pornography offenders with categories that take into consideration an offender's intent, engagement in networking, and security measures (table 9.1). As the typology indicates, involvement can range from a browser, who inadvertently views material, but intentionally saves it, to groomers, physical abusers, and producers, all of whom directly abuse children.

**Table 9.1 Child Pornography Offending Typology**

Type of involvement	Features	Level of networking by offender	Security	Nature of abuse
Browser	Response to spam, accidental hit on suspect site—material knowingly saved	Nil	Nil	Indirect
Private Fantasy	Conscious creation of online text or digital images for private use	Nil	Nil	Indirect
Trawler	Actively seeking child pornography using openly available browsers	Low	Nil	Indirect
Non-secure collector	Actively seeking material often through peer-to-peer networks	High	Nil	Indirect
Secure collector	Actively seeking material but only through secure networks. Collector syndrome and exchange as an entry barrier	High	Secure	Indirect
Groomer	Cultivating an online relationship with one or more children. The offender may or may not seek material in any of the above ways. Pornography may be used to facilitate abuse	Varies—online contact with individual children	Security depends on child	Direct
Physical abuser	Abusing a child who may have been introduced to the offender online. The offender may or may not seek material in any of the above ways. Pornography may be used to facilitate abuse	Varies—physical contact with individual children	Security depends on child	Direct
Producer	Records own abuse or that of other (or induces children to submit images of themselves)	Varies—may depend on whether becomes a distributor	Security depends on child	Direct
Distributor	May distribute at any one of the above levels	Varies	Tends to be secure	Indirect

Source: Krone 2004.

Since the Internet is a relatively new phenomenon, a number of studies have endeavored to discern behavioral and psychological differences between online (non-contact) sex offenders and offline (contact) sex offenders. Babchishin, Hanson, and Hermann's (2011) meta-analysis of 27 studies found that online offenders were younger than offline offenders, less likely to be a racial minority, and less likely to have a criminal history. Both online and offline offenders experienced more physical and sexual abuse than the general population. Offline offenders had lower rates of victim empathy and more cognitive distortions, but also lower rates of sexual deviancy. The authors suggest that higher levels of self-control and less impulsivity may explain why online offenders do not commit contact crimes.

Other studies have attempted to determine the likelihood of non-contact offenders "crossing over" to commit contact crimes. Viewing child abuse images could normalize this behavior and therefore lead to contact offending, or could potentially prevent contact offending by acting as a substitute (Quayle and Taylor 2002). Wortley and Smallbone (2012) point to the increase in child pornography accessibility and decrease in sexual abuse rates to illustrate that Internet child pornography does not lead to contact crimes.

Seto, Hanson, and Babchishin (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of nine studies, which found a recidivism rate of only 4.6 percent for online sex offenders, with 2 percent committing a contact sexual offense over a 1.5 to 6 year follow-up period. They also analyzed 21 studies and found that 12 percent of online offenders have an officially documented contact sexual offense. However, six studies with self-report data indicated a high number of undocumented crimes, as 55 percent of offenders disclosed additional offenses. Even when excluding Bourke and Hernandez's (2009) Butner study, whose high rates of self-reported data have been questioned (Aviv 2013), the rate remains at around 50 percent.

While numerous studies rely on administrative data or interviews with law enforcement officers and clinical staff, Quayle and Taylor (2002) conducted interviews with 13 men convicted of downloading child pornography. Their study sheds light on the function of child pornography and identifies six main ways that offenders describe using child pornography: for sexual arousal, as collectibles, to facilitate social relationships, to avoid real life, as therapy, and as inevitably linked with the Internet.

Recent studies (Merdian et al. 2013a; Seto, Reeves, and Jung 2010; Surjadi et al. 2010; Winder and Gough 2010) attempted to determine the applicability of these discourses, and other motives, to explain offender behavior. Surjadi and colleagues (2010) found the most important function of child pornography was for offenders to avoid real life and that the function of facilitating social relationships was nonexistent in their sample of 43 Internet offenders. However, other research suggests that social networks and virtual communities play an important role in fostering Internet child pornography offenses (Durkin and Bryant 1999; Holt, Blevins, and Burkert 2010; Jenkins 2001; O'Hallaron and Quayle 2010; Quayle and Taylor 2002).

Law enforcement and researchers are aware of a multitude of ways to access and distribute child pornography through the Internet (United States Sentencing Commission 2012; Wortley and Smallbone 2006), which include websites, newsgroups, bulletin boards, chat rooms, peer-to-peer networks, and the deep web. Studies have analyzed posts in web forums to understand how these subcultures operate (Jenkins 2001) and identify the rationalizations that offenders use to justify their actions (Durkin and Bryant 1999; O'Halloran and Quayle 2010).

## **Findings**

### **Offender Background and Demographic Information**

Thirty-three incarcerated male offenders, identified through stakeholder interviews and media searches, participated in semi-structured interviews. The interviews focused on the use of technology and social networking to acquire child pornography and did not ask about the content of pornographic material nor any arousal and pleasure derived from the material. Respondents lived across the eight cities examined in this study, though location did not change offender behavior, as the bulk of child pornography activity was conducted online. The majority (31) of individuals were housed in federal facilities, with the remainder (2) in state prisons.

Three offenders contended that family or friends were responsible for downloading child pornography on their computer, two were reticent to discuss their case, and seven offenders described situations, such as possession of cell phone images taken by a minor and never shared, which are distinct from the focus of this report: Internet child pornography offenses. Therefore, these twelve interviews are not included in the next four sections of this chapter, as we focus on findings from 21 interviews with offenders who engaged in online activity to download and share child pornography as well as findings from interviews with 35 local and federal investigators and prosecutors. In the final section of the chapter, we briefly discuss the accounts of the seven offenders who admitted to possessing child pornography, but did not engage in any Internet activity.

Offenders in the sample were convicted for both contact and non-contact sexual offenses. When asked their main offense for which they were serving time, six (29 percent) named production of child pornography, ten (48 percent) reported possession or distribution of child pornography, and four (19 percent) cited contact sexual offenses such as sexual assault on a child, sexual exploitation of a child, lewd and lascivious conduct, and enticing a minor. One respondent declined to provide his main charge.

### **Gender**

Our offender sample was entirely male, which parallels findings from the National Juvenile Online Victimization Study, which found that in 2006, 99 percent of arrested child pornography possessors were male, and in 2000, 100 percent were male (Wolak et al. 2011). However, studies of self-reported online child pornography behavior have found that women are accessing child pornography at equal rates to men (Seigfried, Lovely, and Rogers 2008; Seigfried-Spellar and Rogers 2013). A paper presented at a 2011 INTERPOL conference recommended further studies into the gender disparity of child pornography offenders (Aiken, Moran, and Berry 2011).

## **Educational Attainment**

The education level of the sample was very high, especially when compared to the general prisoner population. Of the 21 offenders in the sample, 90 percent had some postsecondary education and had either earned their bachelor's degree (19 percent) or associate's degree (24 percent) or attended some college (48 percent). This number contrasts with the percentage of the adult prison population with postsecondary education, found to be only 22 percent (Greenberg, Dunleavy, and Kutner 2007). Similarly, though not as pronounced as our sample, the National Juvenile Online Victimization Study found 51 percent of 2006 offenders to have some postsecondary education (Wolak et al. 2011).

Seven (33 percent) of the offender respondents studied computer-related subjects, such as information and communications technology, and three (14 percent) studied business. Two additional offenders, who did not study computer-related subjects, had an information technology (IT) background or worked with computers. The importance of technological expertise will be explored later in this chapter, particularly in relation to strategies to evade detection from law enforcement.

## **Age**

The age of respondents ranged from 26 to 70, with an average age of 46 years old and over a third (38 percent) in their forties. At the time of interview, offenders had served between one to six years of their sentence, with an average of almost three years. The respondents in our sample were older than the average Bureau of Prison (BOP) inmate (39 years old), and also older than the average age reported in other child pornography studies. For example, the average age found through a 2011 meta-analysis of 27 online sex offenders studies was 39 years old (Babchishin et al. 2011).

## **Race**

Ten offenders (82 percent) self-identified as white or Caucasian, with two (9 percent) identifying as Latino or Hispanic and one individuals not providing his race. This contrasts with general demographics of BOP male prisoners, which break down to 32 percent white, 39 percent black, and 23 percent Hispanic (Carson and Sabol 2012), but supports past findings about the predominance of white online child pornography offenders (Babchishin et al. 2011; Bourke and Hernandez 2009; Jenkins 2001).

Offenders' race may also influence the preferred race of victims depicted in pornographic materials, as offenders seek images of victims that reflect their own race (Bachishin et al. 2011). In support of this, child pornography victims are primarily white (Jenkins 2001; Taylor and Quayle 2003).

## **History of Experiencing Abuse**

While the interviews did not ask about respondents' history of abuse, three offenders (14 percent) shared that they experienced abuse as children, two of whom were molested. A 2011 meta-analysis found that 21 percent of online sexual offenders experienced childhood sexual abuse and 24 percent experienced childhood physical abuse (Babchishin et al. 2011).

## **Sexuality & Relationship Status**

Through the interviews, five respondents (24 percent) volunteered information that they identified as homosexual, six respondents (29 percent) were in long-term relationships or married at the time of their arrest, and six respondents (29 percent) had children. The only other study to report on sexuality found that within a sample of 43 Dutch, Internet-only offenders, 74.5 percent claimed to be heterosexual, 7 percent homosexual, 7 percent bisexual, and 11.5 percent claimed to have pedophilic interests (Surjadi et al. 2010).

## Technology

It is widely accepted that currently, the Internet provides the primary medium for acquisition and distribution of child pornography. Though a stakeholder from the US Postal Service reported a shift back to mail distribution methods as a result of increased Internet monitoring, only one offender in our sample ever distributed or purchased child pornography through the mail.

Over the last twenty years, the rapid increase in Internet use has profoundly affected the availability, affordability, and anonymity of obtaining child pornography. These three A's, identified by Al Cooper (2002) as the "Triple A Engine," fuel addiction for online sexual activity and were found to be powerful factors in offenders' explanations of what contributed to their online behavior to download and share child pornography.

Offenders used the Internet to access child pornography during different time periods and for different lengths of time. All of the offenders collected at some points in the 2000s, with 10 (48 percent) collecting in the early 2000s and 14 (62 percent) collecting during the late 2000s. Three respondents (14 percent) began collecting in the late 1990s. Offenders reported collecting child pornography for varied amounts of time, ranging from one month to fifteen years, with a third (33 percent) collecting for over five years.

## Websites and Programs

Offenders named eight methods to acquire online child pornography. From most to least common, these include peer-to-peer file sharing (P2P), Internet relay chat (IRC), websites, newsgroups, chat rooms, the deep web, bulletin boards, and social network platforms (see table 9.2). Less than a third ( $n = 6$ , 29 percent) of respondents only used one method, the majority used multiple techniques to download child pornography. An individual's chosen medium generally depended on his online experience, technological savvy, and communication preferences. A discussion of the networking aspect of child pornography is provided later within this chapter. The majority (86 percent) of offenders who collected over a five year period used different methods, often changing due to different technological advancements or perceived security.

**Table 9.2 Collection Methods**

Method	Frequency % (n)	Description
Peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing	43% (9)	P2P networks connect computers, which act as both clients and servers, to enable file sharing between hard drives.
Internet relay chat (IRC)	38% (8)	IRCs enable chatting through instant messaging and group forums, called channels, as well as contain file sharing features.
Websites	33% (7)	Child pornography websites may be temporary and require passwords. Individuals may find these sites through chatting, bulletin boards, or newsgroups.
Newsgroups	33% (7)	Usenet, the largest newsgroup network, consists of thousands of discussion newsgroups where users can post images or movies and disseminate information about other sources of child pornography.
Chat rooms, instant and/or video messaging	24% (5)	Programs such as ICQ, ICUII, Yahoo, and AOL chat support group and private chatting, often with the capability of video chat. Chat rooms can be open or private and may have a moderator.
Deep Web	14% (3)	The deep web offers a greater degree of anonymity, as it is not accessible by major search engines or web browsers. One of the main ways to access the deep web is Tor.
Bulletin Boards	10% (2)	Bulletin boards provide a discussion forum, where users can disseminate information about other sites to download child pornography.
Social network platform	10% (2)	Social networks can enable users to find like-minded members, as well as chat and share files.

### **Peer-to-Peer (P2P) File Sharing**

With P2P networks, users can designate which files they wish to share for other users on the network to download. While some programs allow users to preview files, often the filename and size is the only information available prior to download. Current P2P networks operate without a centralized server, enabling computers to download material directly from each other. Respondents named P2P networks including GigaTribe, Gnutella, and eMule. Software to access files are called P2P clients, and respondents used two common clients, Frostwire and Limewire. While P2P networks are generally for file sharing, newer P2P networks such as GigaTribe have a social aspect, as users can create private networks and chat online.

### **Internet Relay Chat (IRC)**

Through IRC, users can participate in group chats and communicate directly with individuals. Group discussion forums, known as channels, can be private, secret, or password protected to allow greater security. Channel operators—users who manage the channel—have the ability to ban others and create bots, programs which can be used for added control. IRC was primarily designed for communication, not file sharing, but users can set up a file server (fserve) to transfer files between users. File servers are run by an fserve owner and often are ratio-based, prohibiting users from downloading more bytes than they upload. Respondents mentioned mIRC as the primary client and listed IRC networks including EFnet, Undernet, and DALnet.

### **Websites**

A United Nations report estimated that the number of websites hosting child pornography grew from 261,653 in 2001 to 480,000 in 2004 (Maalla 2009). However, child pornography sites are extremely difficult to detect since they are frequently temporary and can simply consist of a password protected zip archive (Jenkins 2001).

Two respondents used common search engines to find child pornography sites; one respondent used Tumblr blogs, and one respondent mentioned a one-click hosting website, Rapidshare. One-click hosting websites, which allows users to quickly upload folders of files, were found by the Internet Watch Foundation to be responsible for 60 percent of the 9,550 child pornography webpages they identified in 2012 (Internet Watch Foundation 2012).

### **Newsgroups**

Usenet is comprised of over 100,000 newsgroups, or discussion forums, where users can post messages and other files, including images. Usenet newsreaders allow users to search newsgroups for specific files. Jenkins (2001) lists 16 newsgroups known for providing child pornography, the most notorious being alt.binaries.pictures.erotica.pre-teen or abpep-t. Jenkins quotes a newsgroup post which states that abpep-t gets between 5,000 to 7,000 posts a week. To access these posts, users must find servers which can access these newsgroups, as many Internet service providers have dropped newsgroups (Jenkins 2001; Segan 2008). The Internet Watch Foundation has a list of 303 newsgroups they recommend servers do not carry, because they are known to contain child pornography (Internet Watch Foundation 2012).

### **Chat Rooms, Instant, and/or Video Messaging**

Offender respondents mentioned the chat program ICQ and ICUII, as well as AOL, Yahoo, and Compuserve chat rooms. Law enforcement stakeholders mentioned an increased popularity of live streaming video chat rooms, such as Stickam and MeetMe (formerly myYearbook), which can host self-produced child pornography.

Stakeholders reported that Skype and video chat sites enabling self-directed abuse through a third party, viewed as live child pornography, have become a recent trend. These sites usually involve payment, as described by one federal law enforcement official:



There is big problem that is upcoming with video chatting where I am in the United States, the guy is in the Philippines and I am giving direction to this minor in the Philippines about what I want him or her to do and they are 10 or 12 years old. Well there is a guy there that is running the whole thing and we are not really sure who that guy is but for a certain amount of money I get to watch this from the comfort of my own home. I am direct[ing]. (Federal Law Enforcement Official)

### **Deep Web**

The surface web, comprising the websites indexed by major search engines, is only a small fraction of the World Wide Web. The deep web is hidden, with sites invisible to search engines. Areas of the deep web used for illegal activity are known as the dark web or darknet. One of the most popular ways to access the dark web is Tor, originally short for The Onion Router, which uses multiple layers of encryption to provide high degrees of anonymity. Tor can be used to access hidden sites hosted by networks in the deep web or to increase security while navigating the surface web.

### **Bulletin Boards**

Bulletin board systems (BBSes) predate the Internet, as they can be accessed directly via a modem. Jenkins (2001) credits their continuing popularity for child pornography offenders to the strict oversight of board administrators, or sysops, who vigilantly remove spam and messages condemning child pornography. Some boards are highly restrictive and difficult to find, with vetted members and passwords.

### **Social Network Platforms**

Social networking and dating sites allow users to communicate and share information. Some social networks, such as Ning, encourage the creation of private communities. As the United States Sentencing Commission reports, “Child pornography offenders may utilize the infrastructure of such existing social networks to develop a community in which to distribute images” (2012, 55).

### **Accessibility**

One of the Internet’s main effects on child pornography is its increased accessibility, as individuals do not need to visit sex shops or wait for material to arrive in the mail. They can download large amounts of images and videos at any time without leaving home. As one offender described, he would not have sought out child pornography if it was not available on the Internet:

I guess technology has made it easier to find child pornography. It has made it easier for people to grab it. I wouldn’t have looked for it elsewhere if it wasn’t so easy to get from the Internet. (H10)

A local law enforcement official described how the public and other law enforcement officials are unaware of child pornography’s prevalence:

The public is unbelievably unaware of how much child pornography is out there. They have no idea. I think I would take that one step further and say that not just the public, anyone outside of specifically working it is completely unaware of how prevalent it is because the other officers that I talk to, our command staff that are within our line of command, don’t realize how prevalent it is. (Kansas City Law Enforcement Official)

Accessibility also affected offenders’ perceptions of the safety and legality in procuring child pornography. One offender reflected upon how the Internet enabled his online behavior by giving him the sense of invisibility:

I think that if it weren’t for the technology, I probably wouldn’t have done it. The technology gave me nerve to get stuff that I wouldn’t have ever gone up to anyone to get. I think there’s so much stuff happening out there, the chance of any person getting hit goes down. I think that technology just does create extra noise, it’s harder to find things. (C7)

Almost half the sample (n=10, 48 percent) indicated that they were not looking for child pornography, but rather passively “stumbled across” it. As one respondent recounted, “I didn’t have any interest in child pornography before I went on the Internet” (C6). Seven of the respondents, 33 percent of the sample, discovered child pornography when looking for adult pornography:

It was an accident actually, I was looking for other types of porn. I didn’t look for it, I came across it. Holy shit, this is horrible, but it’s great, but it’s horrible. Like any other addiction, look at it for the rush. (A12)

For these respondents who did not actively seek out child pornography, curiosity was mentioned as offenders’ primary impetus for initially viewing the material. This was often supplemented by the perceived “thrill” of viewing child pornography. One respondent described his curiosity when he came across newsgroups with explicit titles related to child pornography, which led to further fixation:

You see the names of the groups, and think that can’t be real ... I looked in there and was surprised because they were actually real ... It was a gradual process. You look at them, you go look for some more. Pretty soon it becomes an obsession like anything. (A11)

## **Cost**

The availability of free child pornography has resulted in an unwillingness to pay for images and distrust of anyone who charges for material. In the sample, only one individual (5 percent) had ever purchased child pornography, though seven individuals (33 percent) paid for services to support downloading child pornography. These expenses included fees for creating or upgrading P2P or newsgroup accounts, as well as anonymizer services to ensure privacy. One respondent explained this distinction:

I have paid for the method by which I collected child pornography. I’ve never paid for a picture or video. I paid for access to the people I communicated with. (C7)

Some websites required users to pay to for a password in order to access a site. Offenders cited these fees as ranging from \$10 a month to \$30 a week, though they could circumvent these fees by networking with administrators, who would supply free usernames and passwords. Webb, Craissati, and Keen (2007) found that nearly half of London-area Internet child pornography sex offenders in their sample reported paying to view images, though they do not specify if this payment was for pornographic material or to access file sharing programs.

Law enforcement reported that some individuals use alternative means to pay for child pornography, including child pornographers creating Amazon wish lists that others will buy gifts from in exchange for images. Other individuals may also send gifts to children through the mail to entice them into sending images or videos of themselves.

With the abundance of free material, offenders were suspicious of websites or individuals that charged for material. When asked if he had ever paid for child pornography, one respondent answered, “The most basic way I can say it is ‘Why pay?’ ... I guess I just assumed that anyone asking for money was a sting” (A6). Other offenders had similar responses, indicating they expected that any site or individual who charged for child pornography was either law enforcement or a scam. As Jenkins (2001, 91) reports, “There are instances in which money changes hands and videos are sold, but many web sites that demand payment for access are bogus, and anyone gullible enough to pay will, if he is lucky, just lose the price of admission; if he is less fortunate, he will have earned a visit from the FBI.”

Purchasing pornographic material may also affect how an individual perceives their involvement in an illegal activity. When asked if he ever paid for child pornography, one offender replied, “I couldn’t see myself doing that. It seemed wrong on a different level” (D1). Without the exchange of money, another offender did not see his actions as supporting child abuse:

It’s like when you’re buying drugs you’re supporting crime or supporting terrorism. They aren’t getting any money from me to do any bad things or other things. (B1)

One offender acknowledged that purchasing images could ensure quality and remove the time-intensive process of searching for images. When asked if he had ever been approached to pay for child pornography, he responded:

There are certain things that pop up offering to charge, but this was ridiculous and everyone laughed at it because everything else was free. The people that pay are looking for whole sets at one time—easy, instant gratification. The website offers to download a whole series for a certain price ... instead of hunting down images yourself. (B1)

Two of the respondents (10 percent) had sold child pornography. One auctioned off his research services on eBay, charging \$200 per disc. Another offender charged between \$300 to \$400 per disc, each of which held approximately 500 images, which he would mail to customers' post office boxes. This respondent described his customers as individuals who were nervous to go online: "Most of the hustle was guys [who] were afraid to go on sites and use their credit cards. They are scared to download it of course" (I1). Additionally, this offender charged \$75 to watch a family member live on a webcam, where viewers could make requests, such as dressing the victim in specific outfits. Stakeholders reported that using video chat to make requests and direct live child pornography has become a recent trend.

## **Finding Child Pornography**

All offenders cited how easy it was to find child pornography, though they had varying levels of technological expertise. As previously mentioned, almost half the offenders reported not initially looking for child pornography. Rather, they came across images through file sharing networks that they were already using to download pirated software, music, and other types of pornography. One offender, with an IT background, claimed that programmers were likely to engage in file sharing in order to stay up to date with new programs:

The same places you find pirated software are the same places you find that stuff. And it corrupts you ... Being a programmer, you trade software. You trade because you must stay current. (A11)

Bourke and Hernandez (2009) found that some Internet child pornography offenders alleged that they had inadvertently received child pornography materials through unsolicited emails or Internet pop-up windows. While almost half our sample claimed to "stumble across" child pornography, the majority admitted to already using the Internet for illegal downloading.

In a 2003 Congressional hearing, a State Representative on the Committee on Government Reform reported that peer-to-peer network searches for Britney Spears, the Olsen twins, and Pokémon frequently resulted in pornography, including child pornography (Waxman 2003). Prichard, Watters, and Spiranic (2011) discuss the prevalence of child pornography search terms on a popular P2P network, isoHunt, which featured the 300 top searches on its main webpage. Though certain materials may be easy to find, it may take far longer to uncover better-hidden sources. For example, Jenkins (2001) quotes users who reported months, or even a year, of searching before finding a particular child pornography bulletin board.

One offender used basic Google searches to find child pornography. A common keyword was "teen model." Other search terms in chat rooms, newsgroups, bulletin boards, and P2P networks, included "child TV stars," "child movie stars," "preteen," "Lola," "Lolita," "all for bois," "PT cruiser" (PT = preteen), or ages such as "15yo" and "16yo." A study of the P2P network isoHunt (Prichard et al. 2011) identified three commonly used search terms: pthc (preteen hard core), teen, and Lolita. One offender, who used file sharing software to amass a collection of all types of pornography, did not use any special search terms to find child pornography:

I got the software first and then used search terms. No certain terms—just about anything you could use. It was really diverse in that there were a lot of corrupted files and mislabeled [files]—anything and everything. You could put in something unrelated to child pornography and get child pornography. You could put in something like "team" and get child pornography. (F5)

With an availability of child pornography and a culture encouraging information sharing, offenders found it easy to learn where to get more material. As one offender recounted: “It’s all sharing of info; you pick up bits and pieces and figure out what to do” (A6). Contacts would share websites and other sources of child pornography: “I traded with folks, almost from the beginning. I can’t remember any websites I went to on my own. I met guys on Yahoo, met them on different chat rooms” (C7). A Spanish-speaking offender received guidance about file sharing programs and chat rooms in Russian:

Some people from Russia sent me programs in Spanish and instructions in Russian and told me to use a translation program to translate the instructions. They sent it for free. You go to one chat room and they send you to another and then another and it goes on from there. I went to the Latin chat rooms for adult pornography. They told me where to find more stuff. (C6)

As users were accepted into the child pornography culture, they became privy to other websites, which would constantly change locations in order to evade discovery from law enforcement:

The bulletin board—Felixxx—will disappear and come up. 4Chan was a way to find it. Every day it would move to a different site. You learn when you get on the board how it will work—you can scroll forwards and backwards and figure out when it would disappear. I understood it would disappear because it was illegal and a way to evade law enforcement detection. (G2)

Jenkins (2001, 181) reports that vigilantes, private hacking groups dedicated to eliminating child pornography, may embed viruses in child pornography files. This threat often resonates more strongly than the danger of law enforcement detection: “Though viewing child porn sites might, theoretically, attract massive punishment from the federal government, the odds of detection are felt to be slim, say, one chance in many thousands. In contrast, the odds of encountering a virus or Trojan planted by a vigilante are very strong indeed, perhaps 10 or 25 percent, and this high likelihood of damage is clearly enough to make one stop and think.”

One 60-year-old offender, who collected for a year, found that many images were not actually child pornography, but corrupt files:

I don’t think most of the images downloaded were child pornography. Sometimes when you get a file that’s not corrupt and it looks like a functional video, you could put it in a queue and it would download similar things. When you find something that is not corrupted, you’d have to manually put it in the queue. About 10 percent of child pornography was corrupt, but it could infect the whole machine. (F5)

Offenders varied in how often they would go online to download child pornography. One respondent would always search for three to four hours on Fridays. Another would go online between 15 to 20 hours a week, generally on the weekends or late at night. With peer-to-peer trading, a user does not need to actively send files. For this reason, one offender would leave his computer running at all times for trading.

## Collections

The size of offenders’ collections varied greatly, with many offenders only learning the exact size after law enforcement involvement. Collections ranged from less than a dozen to hundreds of thousands of images. The largest collection reported in the sample contained between 300 to 400 gigabytes. Similarly, Webb, Craissati, and Keen (2007) found that offenders in their sample of 90 Internet offenders had between 2 to 921,000 images, with a median of 318 images.

Offenders built their collections for different amounts of time before getting caught. Seven (33 percent) offenders collected for a year or less, seven (33 percent) collected for 1.5 to 5 years, four (19 percent) collected for 5.5 to 10 years, and three (14 percent) collected for over ten years.

Three offenders (14 percent) went through periods of building and deleting their collections. These offenders would vow to stop collecting and erase their images and videos. After time, however, they would start collecting again. For some longtime offenders, this cycle repeated numerous times: “Through the years, I’d copy the images onto CDs and then I’d feel guilty and destroy them” (B2).

The sample was almost evenly split with offenders who would store images and videos to their hard drives (n = 11, 52 percent) or burn them onto CDs or DVDs (n = 10, 48 percent). Of the eleven offenders who saved to their hard drive, four of them (19 percent) used an external hard drive.

Online file sharing methods, as well as increases in download speed and home data storage, enable offenders to obtain massive amounts of files. The National Juvenile Online Victimization Study found the portion offenders with over 1,000 images grew from 14 percent in 2000 to 17 percent in 2006 (Wolak et al. 2011). In our sample, however, 67 percent of offenders possessed collections with over 1,000 images. Law enforcement stakeholders observed the increase in the size of collections, as some collections now near a terabyte (1,000 gigabytes):

I am waiting for the lab forensics to come in on one [case] and I guess when that's gonna come in, I am probably up toward the terabyte. They are getting bigger, and bigger, and bigger. I remember when I first started, if I got a DVD with like five thousand images, I was like we need to put that bastard away. And now ... (Federal Law Enforcement Official)

Due to technological advances and the nature of peer-to-peer networking, users can download large batch files. One offender, with a collection of 16 gigabytes, shared that he did not view all the images he possessed: "Honestly, I don't have this catalogued in my brain. I honestly didn't look at 85 percent of what I had. A lot came in clumps, [I would] look at one or two" (A12).

While the interview did not ask about the content of child pornography images and videos, one offender disclosed that he organized his collection into three folders: clothed, unclothed, and HC (hardcore). Serious, longtime offenders were extremely knowledgeable about series, which are sets of images. These offenders knew when series became available and would look to specific clues to identify the location of images. Results from the 2000 National Juvenile Online Victimization Study found that 27 percent of child pornography offenders were "organized child pornography collectors," which researchers defined as intentional cataloguing organization or files. They determined that these offenders were more likely to have larger collections and use advanced methods to secure their collection (Wolak, Finkelhor, and Mitchell 2005).

In their interviews with 13 men convicted of downloading child pornography, Quayle and Taylor (2002) found that offenders compared collecting child pornography to collecting stamps or baseball cards, which served to normalize the activity by equating it to an innocent pastime. Jenkins (2001) reports the common terminology on child pornography bulletin boards is to refer to collecting as a "hobby."

As Taylor and Quayle (2003) describe, indexing collections and completing series could be pleasurable in itself, even when the offender was not attracted to the material. This was evidenced by one offender, for whom the act of collection became an obsession, even though he rarely looked at all the images within his collection:

I was addicted to the collecting aspect of it. [It was] all so stimulating. It's funny, all during collecting, I'd rarely ever go back and revisit what I collected. [It was] about acquiring more and more. (D23)

Private images or videos were highly valued, therefore individuals would be more selective with whom they traded this material. As will be discussed in the next section, the quality of an offender's collection could determine their networking ability, specifically in terms of access to closed trading groups. However, two of the six offenders who produced child pornography did so for private use, not to share.

## Technological Savviness

A large variation existed in terms of offenders' technological savviness. Technological savviness affected numerous facets of offender behavior, including methods to acquire and distribute material, access to closed groups, and data storage. Through offenders' descriptions of their familiarity with the Internet, we classified nine offenders (43 percent) as technologically savvy. These offenders had advanced understandings of computers, either having studied computer-related subjects or worked as

programmers. Over a quarter of offenders (n = 6, 29 percent), however, had little experience with computers, describing themselves as “point and click” or “rookie” users.

Wolak, Finkelhor, and Mitchell (2005) found in a sample of 429 offenders, law enforcement investigators described 10 percent of arrestees as extremely knowledgeable about the Internet, 4 percent very knowledgeable, 40 percent somewhat knowledgeable, and 3 percent not at all knowledgeable.

## Steps to Avoid Law Enforcement

There was a large degree of variation in how actively offenders used technology to evade law enforcement detection. For some, security was an important factor in determining what method to use to download child pornography. Many offenders recognized the risk involved in peer-to-peer networking. One offender commented that “serious users” would not use GigaTribe, a P2P network, because they would have to trust a third party network:

People involved in the trading community are very cautious of this sort of thing. No matter how good the product looked or the company said, they wouldn't trust them. (E9)

Another offender believed that trading through IRC was less common, therefore he was less likely to be caught:

I was always a little bit nervous about it. It wasn't so much that I thought these places could be patrolled and others couldn't. It was the low hanging fruit, so if anyone wants to get involved in this, it's the first thing they'll see and there are so many people there. IRC was fringe. (E9)

Some offenders felt that uploading images was the most dangerous, since it could attract attention and enable detection by law enforcement:

I didn't upload my own images because I was too afraid of law enforcement. I thought uploading was asking to be arrested—inviting attention to myself and inviting other men to engage me. (B2)

There is always a risk of law enforcement ... If [you are] not posting images, [there is] less risk than [for] people downloading. When [you] post images, all your IPs go along with the post. I never posted. (D1)

One offender assumed that downloading large batch files of legal material would mask child pornography, though he later recognized this large amount of downloading may have actually attracted law enforcement's attention:

**Respondent:** So at the time I would follow that and download a batch, in bulk, and then in more mainstream [files], there would be illegal things buried within it.

**Interviewer:** So there were certain ways to get to what was buried?

**Respondent:** Think of a bag of groceries. You have Oreo cookies around the good, healthy stuff, and then that's how you'd hide it. You snuck it in there.

**Interviewer:** So that's how you would share?

**Respondent:** Yeah, well, that's how I would download. And so I would hide that in there, and try to download all those packages to keep it in the background and part of the low noise. I thought downloading those packages was keeping me safe. But that actually ended up being more of a red flag to the police. (A6)

Serious traders, those who had developed an extensive collection and close networks, had more advanced strategies for evading law enforcement. These methods, such as using the Tor network, often required more technological expertise. One offender, who made money compiling child pornography for customers, was aware of online law enforcement efforts to stop child pornography and used an anonymizer service to cover his tracks. He shared, “If you don't know how to get out there anonymously, ICAC [Internet Crimes Against Children] is serious” (C6).

One offender believed he knew what steps were necessary to secure his collection, which he hid as an encrypted volume to deter detection from law enforcement. From his perspective, a lapse in his process led to his arrest:

I don't know if I was just being lazy or what. I knew what had to be done, a certain amount of maintenance when using encryption. If 99 percent is encrypted and 1 percent isn't, might as well have nothing ... I understood how forensics work, and knew how housekeeping had to happen, and I just wasn't doing it. (E9)

Another offender, who spent ten years collecting child pornography through online search engines, never took any steps to avoid detection by law enforcement though he was aware of advanced techniques. He expected to be apprehended since he was not technologically sophisticated:

**Interviewer:** Did you know you would get caught?

**Respondent:** If you're computer savvy, probably not. If you're like me, yes. [There are] guys that have a computer website and they route it all over the world and when they finally do find them they are not there anymore. (B1)

To secure their child pornography collections, a third ( $n = 7$ , 33 percent) of the sample used encryption or password protection. This percentage is larger than findings from the National Juvenile Online Victimization Study, which found that 19 percent of 605 arrested child pornography possessors in 2006 used sophisticated methods to hide images (Wolak et al. 2011).

## Networking

For over half the offenders ( $n = 13$ , 62 percent), acquiring and sharing child pornography had a social component. For these individuals, social networking facilitated access to material and created a sense of community with other child pornography offenders. Jenkins (2001) describes this community as a subculture with its own values, social hierarchy, and specialized language. In addition to passing down technological expertise and directing offenders to new sources of child pornography, these communities also normalize this behavior (Taylor and Quayle 2003). Bourke and Hernandez (2009) point to the role child pornography cyber-communities play in providing support and social validation. Few studies have identified the portion of child pornography offenders engaged in online communities. Seto and colleagues (2010) found that across a sample of 68 offenders, 58 percent participated in online child pornography communities. The United States Sentencing Commission (2012) reported that approximately 25 percent of offenders have some level of involvement in online child pornography communities.

Through interviews with 13 offenders, Quayle and Taylor (2002) found that for many individuals, social relationships were more important than the child pornography images. Surjadi and colleagues (2010), however, found that function to be absent within their sample of 43 Dutch Internet offenders.

Offenders in our sample pointed to social relationships as an important component of their Internet activity. Though a sense of community was not the initial impetus to find child pornography, it was a key part of keeping individuals engaged in offending behavior. One offender valued relationships more highly than the pornography:

The pictures were a secondary thing. You traded pictures to meet people. I'd go until I got a group of people to talk to, then I wouldn't need to collect so much. (C7)

## Trading

Sharing child pornography is reciprocal; both parties must provide material to conduct the trade. File sharing on mIRC generally ensures users give and take equal numbers of files by counting the number of bytes transferred, though users could inflate the number they shared by renaming duplicate files:

It counts how many bytes [go] back and forth, so you have to trade equally ... Duplicates are hard because people rename the files so they seem like a new file and then trade with them. Some people rename photos that aren't that type of file and then just trade it so it counts as bytes (A11).

For individuals just starting to build their collection, they may resort to “begging” for images:

Initially if you don’t have anything, you beg. Probably get one or two pictures from someone ... I’d ask for a picture, eventually a Good Samaritan will send you a picture. Then you start with a small collection, start trying to barter. (A12)

Coordinating concurrent trades is another strategy, which could potentially lead to a rapid accumulation of images over a short period of time:

**Interviewer:** People would talk to you if you didn’t have any pics?

**Respondent:** Yes. Or if you waited for a couple guys to respond, then one guy would send [an image] to you and you could send that to another guy. If you spend an hour in a room, you could get 50–60 pictures. You’d end up with some duplicates, but get a lot of individual pictures. (C7)

## Location of Child Pornography Seekers

While Jenkins (2001, 201) estimated that a third of child pornography seekers are from the United States, he stressed that child pornography is a truly global community: “The site is posted by an American on a European server, announced on a Japanese server, with passwords posted at a site notionally based in Nauru or Tonga, while those downloading the pictures might be from fifty countries.”

In our sample, while most offenders traded child pornography with individuals from the United States, other countries listed include: Austria, Canada, Germany, India, Japan, and Mexico. One offender felt that online offenders are likely to be English speakers, since most programming languages are in English:

I believe having a computer is a luxury and people who have that kind of money are enthusiasts and learn it better. Most of them are English speakers because all programming languages are written in English. (A11)

## Gaining Credibility

To build relationships, newcomers would have to overcome distrust that they were law enforcement. A user’s steady presence in a chat room would develop trust, as well as their familiarity with commonly traded series. When chatting with new users, one offender would ask about child pornography preferences to determine their compatibility as a potential contact and trading partner:

I would ask them what sort of videos and pictures they liked. Based on what series names they used, of videos and images. I knew when things came out, I knew when they were available. If they were in line with what I was looking for, that’s what I would use. A referral from someone else would also be very helpful. (E9)

## Closed Groups

By developing relationships with other users, offenders could gain entry to private, exclusive groups. The quality of a user’s collection, especially access to private material, would determine one’s cachet in the trading community and therefore influence the groups they could join:

The minute you have pictures, you’re in the trading group. Even if you had something in a series that someone didn’t have. It was like trading freaking baseball cards or something. (I1)

Closed groups, accessible only by invitation, increase security by limiting the amount of members. In order to be accepted, members may have to prove their knowledge of specific series, including not only the number of images in the set, but also the time period and location where it was produced:

The only serious trading group I belonged to on IRC was hidden, it was private ... You have to know the name of the group, and know the password, then it lets you on. Then there is a moderator ... and they could kick anyone off. They would test you. They would ask you questions. They would say things like, “Well how many images are in this



particular series? When did this come out?” They would teach you, tell you the background. They had been doing it for years obviously. If someone got a new one that was private, they would give it to everyone in the group. (A11)

Through Jenkins’ (2001) research on online child pornography communities, he found that the elite, most technologically savvy offenders were in closed trading groups. These groups were believed to have original material that is not easily available through more mainstream mediums.

## **Social Hierarchy**

Past literature demonstrates a social hierarchy within online child pornography communities (Jenkins 2001; Taylor and Quayle 2003). Individuals enter as newbies (inexperienced users) and can progress up the hierarchy to more senior members, which hold higher status. Jenkins (2001, 94) quotes a post on a child pornography bulletin board which instructs new users about the different roles in the hierarchy, which include, from lowest to highest: newbie, lurker, regular, chat member, poster, newsgroup poster, trader, and wise one. Taylor and Quayle (2003) describe the IRC channel operator’s control in establishing policies and philosophies and how differing opinions can lead to intra-community conflict and fracturing of groups.

IRC channel operators or chat room administrators run the group and have varying levels of control, such as the ability to ban users from the group. These individuals are constant presences in the chat room and ensure the chat room’s longevity:

Who was running chat rooms? The people that created the rooms. If taken down, they’d put them back. They were always there whenever you showed up. (C7)

Some IRC channels contain bots, programs that can act in a moderator capacity. These bots, as one offender described, are “a program moderator, essentially” and there to oversee “who is in the chat room, what data is being sent, et cetera” (A6).

## **Social Pressure**

In addition to providing a sense of community for members, chat rooms and IRC channels produce their own form of social pressure. In order to impress others, some users would boast about their sexual exploits with children. One offender described how the chat room culture encouraged him to make up stories about molesting family members:

People will lie. They will lie to say they do stuff with kids ... I said the same damn thing. Say that you have a nephew, daughter, or son to develop a rapport. So they don’t think you’re a cop, because you’re talking about this. I’ve never done anything physically, it was to make me seem more experienced than I was ... It’s like in the prison, you have to be a badass. Be ghetto, talk like a gangster. It’s that thing, sense of community. People lie to include themselves in that community. (A12)

Stakeholders believed these networks served to encourage those that possess child pornography to commit sexual abuse of a child. Recording this abuse and sharing the images allows offenders to maintain their status within online communities and guarantee access to child pornography. As a Seattle law enforcement officer stated, “There are even some networks that require you make contributions of more and more graphic pictures in order to maintain your status of being able to download from their site.”

A federal attorney with experience prosecuting child pornography cases described how social networks fuel the demand for more graphic images and encourage child sexual abuse:

I think there is a constant demand to show new material ... It’s because they are offering, or report to offer new content, more severe content. There is a demand. Even when I first started, individuals who every once in a while would give a statement to the police that, “You know, I felt like I need to try get this picture of my daughter, or these neighbors down the street, or whatever, because they were demanding it of me, because I had already shown them everything else ...” I had two or three cases like that where they admitted doing that. (Federal Prosecutor)

One offender shared how pressure to confirm his identity as a father led to producing child pornography:

My production started, actually, by meeting guys and saying that I'm a father. They'd say, "Everyone says that; prove it." Then over a year and a half, I'd prove it more inappropriately. (C7)

Another offender initially believed that everyone must be lying about their behavior, since he was making up stories about his activities:

Part of this whole thing is that you get into a thing where you think people are making everything up. There aren't that many people doing that stuff. You get into this thing. The stuff we were talking about I wasn't doing. You get into a complacent place, you think it's all bullshit. Then all of a sudden you meet someone and it's not. (C7)

Since trades are reciprocal, offenders would need to possess material of relatively equal "value" to what they wanted to acquire. One offender began producing child pornography in order to access private material, which is highly valued:

Underground even deeper—people traded private collections [that are] not on the Internet. In order to see stuff that had never been seen before, [they] needed to offer something that had never been seen before." (A10)

Another offender, who used chat rooms to acquire child pornography, felt pressure to produce child pornography, but he refused out of fear: "I was asked to produce new images, but I was scared. I never did it" (C6).

## **Network Size and Growth**

None of the offenders reported membership in large networks similar to the notorious "Wonderland Club," a child pornography ring which contained approximately 200 carefully screened members across over thirty countries. To join, members had to proffer 10,000 images (Jenkins 2001). Rather, offenders in this study tended to have smaller networks, possibly due to the perceived safety in limiting trading groups.

Eight offenders (38 percent) had small trading groups with whom they regularly traded. These groups could be based on a specific type of child pornography, but would also be determined by social networks. While the majority of trading groups were limited to no more than 10 people, one offender, who had been trading for over ten years, had a larger trading network of 30 to 50 individuals. He believed that due to the increased number of child pornography collectors, groups have splintered into smaller cells:

I would say the community that were really serious traders, back in 2009, would have been in the tens of thousands across the world. Even that community is so fractured. Not only what you're interested in, but unlike using an AOL chat room or Yahoo, you have to know someone who knows someone, or know what you are looking for. Because of that, the individual cells of the community are 30 to 50 people. My specific trading circle was 30 to 50 people at one time. Always new people coming in. (E9)

Groups could grow quickly. As one offender shared, "The first site I went on to, I was the eighth member and then there were 200 or 300 members on it. It was quick; I remember talking to the guys about it" (I1). Relationships could be sustained throughout chat rooms and IRC channels, which could change over time, as explained by one longtime offender: "Sometimes the chat room names would change, but I had people I was friendly with for years that I would stay in touch with through IRC" (E9).

## **Hacking Within Networks**

Trading groups could also foster competition, especially regarding technological prowess. One offender had a "friendly" competition with a trading partner to try to crash each other's computer. Hacking into another offender's computer to find child pornography could afford bragging rights and also enable acquisition of private material:

One guy hacked into my computer one night ... He took images off my PC and he showed me he did it and started trading the images and videos with other guys. He was just an ass. At that point I thought I had enough. I don't know what his motivations were—hackers like to brag. Each person in the group was supposed to be trusted individuals. There were five to six people in the group. Then the images got traded beyond that. (D1)

Another offender shared one of his private images with a trading partner and then later discovered that trading partner hacked into his computer and uncovered additional images in hidden directories.

## **In-Person Interactions**

Five offenders (24 percent) met with trading partners in person. This could be for security, in order to guarantee that members of closed trading groups are not law enforcement officers:

I met one of the guys in person. Just to get to know the person behind the screen name. We all verify that we are all real people behind there. You did not have to provide original images—just want to make sure you are who you are and not the police. (D1)

Taylor and Quayle (2003) quote an IRC channel operator, who had a rule that participants could never meet in real life, since he believed that could potentially lead to child molestation. Jenkins (2001) also found that participants on child pornography bulletin boards would never meet in person and the mere suggestion is met with scorn. One offender in our sample had a similar reaction, since he considered meeting to be unnecessary and create additional risk:

**Interviewer:** Did you ever want to meet in person?

**Respondent:** Yeah, well, I never really put much thought into it. If someone asked to do it—every now and then they would—that was a red flag for me. No reason for it. If you got what I need, send it electronically. If it's a security issue, we both shouldn't want to be on here right now. (I1)

One offender would use dating websites to find men with similar interests. When meeting in person, discussion about child pornography would arise:

I would enter screen names of people I knew—I met these people online. I don't remember how I met them—through gay, hook-up websites ... I would meet up with the guys in person and then they would talk about the child pornography—this was something that came up. There were three to four people. I don't think they knew each other. We would get together one-on-one. I got to know them for a few months on the website before I met them in person. The child pornography came up eventually after meeting them. (D2)

## **Steps to Reduce Risk**

In social networks, the most common strategy for minimizing risk was to limit trading networks to trustworthy individuals. More desirable trading partners would have similar preferences, familiarity with child pornography series, access to private or rare material, and referrals from other traders.

One offender, however, said that efforts to keep his network small were futile, because an individual in his network was arrested:

I limited the guys I talked to. The problem is I limited myself, and then one of those guys got caught. So limiting myself didn't help. (C7)

Numerous offenders believed it was illegal for law enforcement to send child pornography to catch offenders, since this would be entrapment or because law enforcement would have to engage in illegal activity. Due to this rule, an offender would wait to receive images before sharing them, though this could occasionally result in a stalemate, with neither partner wanting to share first:

I always had them send me files first. I thought that would be entrapment [if police sent images], but apparently they can break the law to catch people breaking the law. But then

sometimes [there would be] a stand-off, and neither [of us] would want to send first. (A12)

As Jenkins (2001) documents, many posts on child pornography bulletin boards share strategies to evade law enforcement detection. As he suggests, the fear of law enforcement and discussion of sophisticated techniques to acquire and share child pornography can strengthen the subculture by reinforcing their sense of community.

## Trends

### Availability

*Let's say the government allowed every street corner to have a barrel of drugs to grab and try. That's how it is. It's all available. (A11)*

The rise of the Internet, coupled with other technological advances, has increased the availability of child pornography, making it both more available and more accessible. The ease of production also fuels increased availability. Digital photos do not need to be developed; they can be easily uploaded and shared from a personal phone or computer. Cell phones with cameras are ubiquitous, enabling photography at any moment:

**Respondent:** Just about everybody has a video camera or a camera now and there's a lot of websites out there that have candid shots. Little girl playing in the park and she turns upside down on the bars and she's not wearing any panties. No one knows her picture has been taken.

**Interviewer:** What kind of camera?

**Respondent:** Cell phone. Just about everyone has a digital camera on them at all times now. (B1)

All of the stakeholders reported a level of being overwhelmed by the number of child pornography offenders in their jurisdictions and in the general national and worldwide population. One federal official reflected this sentiment in discussing both child pornography and light child pornography (i.e., child erotica), noting that the latter is rarely investigated and prosecuted:

I am dipping a teaspoon in the lake, and trying to empty it. There's no way out of this. And when you start considering light child porn, the lake is now an ocean—and you are trying to empty the teaspoon of people that are in that category. (Federal Law Enforcement Official)

As one offender noted, with child pornography easier to produce, the market is likely to grow:

It's more readily available—and easy to produce—and will continue to grow like a snowball rolling down the hill. (A10)

Ease of production is not limited to child pornographers, but also minors who photograph or videotape themselves. Law enforcement stakeholders attested to the increase of self-produced child pornography, often through sexting. The Internet Watch Foundation found 12,224 self-generated images and videos of individuals aged 13 to 20, with 88 percent taken from the original location onto other websites (Internet Watch Foundation 2012).

Two of the offenders (10 percent) participated in chat rooms as teenagers, taking photos of themselves and chatting with men:

I noticed that a lot of people, when they think of child pornography, think that it's all other people creating the images and videos. The cell phones and web cameras. The vast majority of kids are doing it themselves. I used to do it too when I was young, 14 and 15. I'd do it myself, take pictures of myself and chat with men and share with them. (D23)

## Production Location

When asked where child pornography was produced, the most popular response was Russia (n = 12, 57 percent). Some offenders would look for identifying characteristics specific to a particular region in the world to determine location, such as the type of electrical outlet or car model in the background of images. Monikers on some images had a Russian website, evident by the .ru domain. As one offender commented, “Lots of images said they were coming from Russia. But you can say anything on the Internet” (B1). As Jenkins (2001, 196) describes, “Some astute fraudsters exploit the Russian reputation for corruption by advertising child porn sites with Russian domain names, that is, the suffix *ru*.” In addition to Russia, other countries and regions mentioned as producing child pornography included: Ukraine, the United States, Southeast Asia, Bulgaria, Taiwan, and South America.

The Internet Watch Foundation (2012) found that the five most common domains of child pornography websites were .com, .ru (Russia), .jp (Japan), .net, .org, and .in (India). These domains accounted for 87 percent of all the 9,550 websites identified in 2012. By continent, 54 percent of servers were in North America, 37 percent in Europe, and 8 percent in Asia.

One offender timed his online activity with Russia’s time zone, since he knew Russians would come online around midnight:

4:00 p.m. is midnight in Russia and they were heavy then. This is when most Russians come online. Lots of posts from Russia. I knew it was Russia because of the time stamp and they’d leave stuff and the actual wording. I could tell the images were taken in Russia. (G2)

Longtime offenders could point to changes in the location of child pornography production. One offender, who collected child pornography for over 15 years, felt that countries’ political instability led to production of child pornography, and the increased prevalence of digital cameras later led to production in the United States:

Well, in the late 2000s, there was a shift to US. Back in the late ’90s, [production was] Eastern European, Russian, when that economy was falling apart and changing over to democracy. More organized crime. Over time, in the West, people had more access to basic technology. In the ’90s [it was] produced by mafiosos, and they were using professional equipment. In the 2000s, everyone has a camera on their phone, video camera. Everyone has access to technology now. So much pornography is produced with web cams, teenagers doing it themselves, using it to barter. Maybe sending it to their girlfriend. (E9)

Jenkins (2001, 195) supports this claim, citing that an abundance of material from Russia, Poland, and the Czech Republic “reflects the extreme weakness of law enforcement in those societies, as well as a common desire to break away from Communist austerity.” He also credits some of their popularity to the victims’ race, evidencing exchanges on child pornography newsgroups expressing dislike for non-white subjects.

Taylor and Quayle (2003) also point to an increase in images from Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia commercial sites during 2002. One offender, who collected from the mid-1990s to late 2000s, saw an increase of images from Russia and material produced by sex tourists in Southeast Asia:

Primarily toward the later years, a great deal of images came from Southeast Asia or Russia. The appearance of the girls and I read about men that went to Thailand, Cambodia, and Philippines and how prevalent the sex trafficking of the girls was. I could also tell from photos of girls from the former Soviet Union. In the beginning of the ’90s—most photos were nudity and as years progressed with digital cameras, the photos got more explicit, graphic and there was a lot more of it. I got the sense that a lot of the images were taken by men that traveled over there and were bragging about their exploits and shared their stories. (B2)

One prosecutor expressed concern over the link between child sex tourism and child pornography and the belief that not enough was being done to fully investigate these cases:

I just get a sense, and this is a gut feeling, that there is more we could be doing on the sex tourism front. Getting folks going over to Thailand and Cambodia and really exploiting kids over there, exploiting kids on cruise ships, on sex cruises, and stuff like that. Especially ones going to the Far East, or India, and really, name any poverty stricken country. (Kansas City Law Enforcement Official)

## Content Changes

A 2010 report to Congress documented law enforcement's and prosecutors' observations that child pornography has become more violent and displays increasingly younger victims, such as infants and toddlers (US Department of Justice 2010). Law enforcement stakeholders reported similar trends, though both a local and federal investigator were clear to distinguish that while there is new material, the majority is recirculated older material. While offenders in our sample noted that many images had been traded for decades—one offender said the images his IRC group traded were from the 1960s to 1980s—there was agreement across offenders and stakeholders that the newer images are more explicit. Some stakeholders described the proliferation of freely downloadable child pornography as responsible for driving the demand for newer, more graphic images or videos. In one offender's estimation, this change is due to the ease of production, which does not require a third party to develop images:

Because of the digital images, you don't have to go through developers to get pictures—it is more explicit than it was 30–40 years ago. It was tame—not pornography at the time. Just nude images. There were magazines you could buy back then. (A10)

Another stakeholder noted that concomitant with an increase in graphic content, child pornography producers are producing child erotica in order to create a commercial enterprise that can evade law enforcement:

I have also seen a softening to where they are trying to make it a little bit more appealing commercially to where they are trying to get more of an acceptance ... I've seen it, one where they are trying to soften it up, where it is not as graphically bondage and torture and stuff like that. You know we're starting to see more bestiality and more torture, but I've also seen the other side of that where they are trying to make it more commercial by softening it up a little bit. I feel like they are making it more commercial to where they can slide for a little while without being picked up by law enforcement and then you have to dig a little deeper. But that's been the standard for a long time; you got to spend \$9.99 a month to get into a membership like this, now you want to get into the really good stuff you got to spend another \$9.99 and so on ... until you get in there. (Federal Law Enforcement Official)

Technological advancements also improve the image quality of child pornography, as it allows for more high quality video footage:

**Respondent:** The changes I mostly noticed were technical.

**Interviewer:** In the way technology was used to capture images and videos?

**Respondent:** You would see film images transferred to video. More low level video, and then high quality video, just like that. Just like higher quality equipment finds its way into the main stream, it finds itself into that too. (A6)

## Perceptions

### Risk and Illegality

While some longtime, technologically savvy offenders had complex strategies to avoid law enforcement, the majority of offenders were unaware that law enforcement could or would police the Internet. The

availability, affordability, and anonymity (Cooper's Triple A Engine) minimized offenders' perceived risk in possessing child pornography.

With child pornography easily available, offenders considered it equivalent to other material available for download online, such as adult pornography and music:

It seemed like downloading [child pornography] was sanctioned—it wasn't treated any differently than other subject matters and seemed to be sanctioned by the government because they didn't try to stop it from being included in the software. In my mind, it was human sexuality and curiosity. (F5)

I didn't even think about it—I thought it was free and it was on the Internet ... I didn't think it was any more illegal to download and have than MP3s. I knew it was morally bad—but watching people get killed was just as bad. I didn't put together that it was so illegal because I am not making it—I am downloading what is free on the Internet. ... I didn't think this was a worse crime. (A9)

The large amount of available child pornography led to a feeling of invisibility. Many offenders felt that their participation was “small potatoes” when compared to the quantity of material and amount of users online:

I thought with as accessible as it is, I wondered why they'd come after me because I am the little fish ... Child pornography is all over the Internet, so I figured, how bad it could be. (G2)

Anonymity was aided by the fact that users did not have to risk identification by patronizing sex shops or providing their name and address to receive materials by mail (Taylor and Quayle 2003). With the advent of the Internet, offenders can engage with online networks and download material from the privacy of their home:

It's very different from other crimes. Not planning anything. Don't go out of the house. In a secluded room, feel isolated from the consequences, from the reality of what you're doing. (D23)

Though a few offenders were aware of law enforcement entities that focus on investigating and prosecuting online child pornography, one offender was unaware that the Internet was monitored:

I knew I was committing a crime. I just didn't think they'd be hunting through the Internet for it. I thought it would require some knowledge I was doing it, I didn't realize there was an Internet police. (D22)

Offenders in the sample who did not produce or pay for child pornography ( $n = 17$ , 81 percent) commonly defended their behavior because, in their estimation, they were not supporting an illegal activity, only viewing images. Research has identified this justification as a common cognitive distortion that enables offenders to justify their actions (Merdian, Wilson and Boer 2009; Taylor and Quayle 2003). In their minds, those who bought or produced child pornography are the serious transgressors:

I think in the back of my mind, a case of gray area. Yes, it's illegal, but I'm not producing this. I'm not physically harming anyone is the thought you justify with. I'm just downloading pictures and storing them and putting them away. (A12)

## **Motives for Wanting Child Pornography**

Researchers have identified both sexual and non-sexual motives for desiring child pornography (Elliot and Beech 2009; Lanning 2010). Offenders with sexual motives can have a variety of deviant sexual interests, including a particular sexual preference for children. Non-sexual motives include curiosity, as well as offenders who distribute or produce child pornography to earn money (Lanning 2010).

While the interview did not ask about offenders' reasons for collecting child pornography, some offenders touched upon this topic. As previously discussed, almost half of the sample ( $n = 10$ , 48 percent) reported their onset offense as unintentional. They “stumbled across” child pornography, usually while

downloading other material, such as adult pornography. This group cited curiosity as their initial motive for viewing child pornography, but often did not elaborate upon why they continued this behavior.

Aside from satisfying curiosity, three offenders (14 percent) described viewing child pornography as a rush, aided by the illegality of the act:

More the collecting, the rush of doing something wrong without feeling like you're hurting someone. ... I was a good boy, doing something naughty felt nice. (A12)

With child pornography—it's that it's illegal. Same with drugs. Don't tell me not to do something, and I'll do it. Don't you ever speed? You get a little rush and mine was just a little deeper. (F4)

Two offenders (10 percent) reported methamphetamine use as a stimulus for seeking child pornography, with another acknowledging that "a lot of guys into meth are also into sexually extreme things" (C7). One methamphetamine dealer believed that a third of child pornography offenders are using drugs:

About 25–35 percent of people involved in child pornography are involved in drugs—producing, selling, consuming. Into meth—crystal meth, ice. It has to do with increasing your sexual libido. It also has to do with, nothing to do at 3:00 a.m. except looking at pornography and then it mushrooms from there. (F4)

An investigator in Kansas City described the link between methamphetamine use and consumption of child pornography, but a lack of resources to fully investigate these cases:

There has always been this correlation between meth users and child pornography so it would be interesting to go with them to their meth warrants and ask for consent to go on their computers and see what comes up, but that would be a perfect world with lots of time and people. (Kansas City Law Enforcement Official)

Five offenders (24 percent) used the word "addiction," "sickness," or "obsession" to describe their relationship with child pornography.

Things like child pornography is an addiction—like alcohol, drugs—but I didn't realize I was poisoning my mind. (B2)

In one case, an offender described his "addiction" to the Internet, as he felt lost when his computer was confiscated by law enforcement:

My whole life was online. I was a computer generation. I didn't know how to do anything without a computer. I wasn't thinking I need to go download again. I just needed to have a computer because it was like missing my arm. (E9)

Two offenders shared that they were creating collections of all types of pornography. One of these offenders sought out child pornography because of the challenge it posed in collecting:

I collected all different types of porn—gay, vintage, and other subcategories, not of child porn, but other types ... The child pornography was more about the chase because it was harder to come by. I knew it was the rarest ... almost the rarest, there is the snuff [film that depicts a murder]. I didn't necessarily know about the risk and illegality. (G2)

A local law enforcement investigator from Kansas City, with years of experience investigating child pornography offenders, described different subcategories of offenders:

There's a couple different types of offenders. There's the ones who can say they were abused as a child ... they were abused so they're abusing. That's the first idea ... and there are some like that. There are some that ... it is a sexual preference. ... We have bad guys who will sit and tell you once you get to a certain point in an interview, they will sit and tell you ... I'm only attracted to five-year-old, five- to eight-year-old girls. That's a sexual preference ... and then I have one more bad guy. And I call him the "Everything Bad Guy." In the realm of pornography he likes, he'll try everything and anything so he may have had an addiction to just pornography, but all of a sudden, that's not working for him, so then he might try gay pornography, and then that's not working so then he'll try bestiality



and eventually, it works its way towards child pornography. (Kansas City Law Enforcement Official)

## **Leading to Contact Crimes**

Past research has attempted to determine the correlation between viewing child pornography and committing contact sexual offenses, including the likelihood that non-contact sexual offenders would cross over to contact sexual offenses. A meta-analysis of nine studies found that only 2 percent of online sex offenders committed a sexual offense over a 1.5 to 6 year follow up period (Seto, Hanson, and Babchishin 2011). Nine of the ten offenders in our sample with non-contact charges of possession or distribution of child pornography maintained they would never hurt a child, though none acknowledged any indirect abuse caused by viewing child pornography.

An offender convicted for the production of child pornography, however, observed that viewing child pornography normalizes behavior that would make contact offenses more likely:

I'm of a belief it needs to stop. I do believe it becomes a gateway kind of process. I don't believe that every person that does child pornography will abuse kids. But I do believe that the more desensitized you get to objectifying kids, the more you might do that. (C7)

Another offender, also incarcerated for production of child pornography, commented that viewing child pornography triggered his production:

I knew I had it in me, but man that just busted it lose. I hadn't messed with her, then I looked at the pictures, and started messing with her. I hate to blame it for it, but the fact that I got access to the child pornography, absolutely. (I1)

Similarly, one offender learned about sex tourism through newsgroups, as he saw photos that men post to "brag about their exploits and share their stories." He researched his trips for years and was able to communicate with other individuals engaging in sex tourism, in order to "fulfill his fantasy":

I read on the Internet about men going to Philippines, Cambodia, India, etc. and had sex with underage girls and got away with it and I thought well, it would be great if I could do it just once to fulfill my fantasy and get away with it. (B2)

One offender, convicted for possession of child pornography, used child pornography as a tool to prevent sexual offenses:

I was using it to keep from offending and keep away from people. I never went into anything that would lead me back into that. And it was working too. ... Anytime I got the urge to go out and look for a little girl, I'd go on the Internet and stay. (B1)

Stakeholders surmised that child pornography may be linked to other types of crimes, but either due to resource restraints or legal restraints, they have been unable to fully follow some of these leads. One state prosecutor from Seattle described that privacy laws may sometimes inhibit the ability for investigators and prosecutors (and the public) to understand how common the overlap is between possession of child pornography and commission of sexual abuse of a child:

I think it is not uncommon to see an abuser have child pornography. We don't always get access to their computer just because they're committing an offense of child abuse and just because there may be a computer in the house. If we don't have a nexus to the computer we don't necessarily get to go into their computer. There are very strict privacy laws in the state of Washington. So if a child who is being abused said he [was shown] pornography on the computer or he was taking my picture and was using a digital camera, then we have the nexus that gives us access, but just because we have a dad who is molesting his child doesn't mean that we are going to have access to his computer. (Washington State Prosecutor)

## Treatment

Stakeholders from the Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force reported that offenders would often admit they had a problem and needed help. One of these offenders in our sample described relief at being apprehended, since he did not possess the willpower to stop collecting himself:

When I was thinking about it, I knew it was wrong. But I felt like I was on drugs. I felt like the tiger had me by the tail. I felt like I should stop it, but I couldn't. I said thank you to the government, they said for what—I said for stopping me. (D20)

Three offenders (14 percent) cited the need for child pornography treatment outside of prison. Two of the offenders (10 percent) knew they would be reported to law enforcement if they sought clinical help:

I think there needs to be a way for people to get services prior to being arrested. One of my problems, I knew too much. I knew if I went to get help, I'd get arrested. ... There was always the temptation that I could just stop. (C7)

Two offenders wanted to be transferred to facilities with sex offender programming. For prisons with these programs, offenders reported that treatment is only available a few years prior to release. One offender, convicted for sexual exploitation of a child, recommended that prisons create therapy groups:

I think it would be helpful if they had a forum—maybe a group of men that met and shared their stories with one another. They have something like this in sex offender management program[s]—but you don't get there until one to two years from release. I think it'd be great if they had something in between—just like AA (Alcoholics Anonymous), NA (Narcotics Anonymous). (B2)

## Investigation and Adjudication Process

*There's so many of us, we're going to outnumber everyone. It's like shooting fish in a barrel with a nuke. (A12)*

Offenders' descriptions of their experiences with the courts largely focused on their surprise about the long sentence lengths, especially in comparison to contact offenses. As one offender stated:

The one thing I can say is that you'll get more time for images than committing the act itself. ... My attorney is pleading against that. According to the way the bylines read, they consider the images more detrimental than the act. (D22)

Only three (14 percent) of the offenders went to trial, with the rest presumably taking a plea deal. When asked why they pleaded, many offenders stated they knew they would not win and feared the upper end of the mandatory sentence. As one offender described, "I felt underneath the system and that I didn't have a choice in the matter" (F5). Another offender, who collected child pornography for one year before being arrested, was surprised at how the "system" depicted him as a monster:

The whole system was a nightmare and I never had any trouble with law in my life. I'm not a violent person, I would never conceive of touching a child—not part of who I am, I cannot go there. It blew me away how the system made a monster out of me and tried me as a monster and never questioned that I was never incarcerated before. (F5)

One offender, who would lie in chat rooms to "appear experienced" and "develop rapport," expressed frustration about how law enforcement took his IRC exchanges at face value, though his statements contradicted each other and were therefore, in his estimation, clearly fabricated:

Law enforcement said I did this, they took chat out of context. This one says someone ten [years old], this one thirteen [years old]. This one said I molested my nephew, but I don't have a nephew. (A12)

Another offender did not understand how law enforcement obtained images, since he believed that he was not sharing his collection on a P2P network:

Law enforcement said they were able to download some of the images from me and I didn't know how this happened because it didn't seem to be part of the program I was using for them to do that. I clicked the option from file sharing not to share the images. I wasn't sending any images back out so I was confused how law enforcement got them. (F5)

Jenkins' 2001 (13–14) book quotes a “guru” of the child porn community who says that offenders will only get caught if they take their computer in to get fixed, send or receive child pornography through their email, or use IRC for “lolita business.” Jenkins later describes other common ways to get caught: using mediums such as AOL or attempting sexual contact crimes, such as trying to seduce children through the Internet.

Eight offenders (38 percent) stated they were caught by law enforcement identifying them through their file sharing activity through IRC or P2P networks. In five cases (24 percent), they were caught by a victim or family member turning them in. Three offenders (14 percent) were turned in to law enforcement when someone in their trading network was caught. One offender (5 percent) was caught when he took his computer to a repair shop and one offender (5 percent) believed he was caught through facial recognition software identifying him in child pornography he produced. Three offenders (14 percent) were not sure or did not share how they were caught.

None of the offenders mentioned sites or programs posing a threat to individuals who use them to trade child pornography. One offender believed that these sites should be held accountable, since they are complicit in child pornography activity. In his case, a file sharing program took no action when the offender was flagged for sharing child pornography. This program later aided the offender by alerting him that he was under investigation for child pornography, which allowed him time to erase his collection of images and videos:

One interesting thing about the program I used: I was reported to owners of the program about a year before I got arrested. I got a designation put on me by the program, for trading child pornography. But nothing happened. I chatted with a guy, he said that he'd report me. I don't know why he did it. I waited and waited and used the program, and nothing happened. I thought he must not have reported me. Then when I was investigated, [law enforcement] contacted the program. Then the next day I couldn't sign in to the program. The program had a box to find out why I couldn't log on to the site. I typed in my name and password and got an email that I couldn't log in for child pornography. (C7)

## **Strategies to Stop Proliferation**

Though offenders did not think it was possible to completely remove child pornography from the Internet, some shared an assortment of tactics that could be used to limit the proliferation of child pornography.

In order to find child pornography websites, one offender suggested the Federal Communications Commission could block websites known to host child pornography by identifying and blocking their IP addresses:

The only way the government could clamp it down is if you have the FCC identify that these sites are maintaining child pornography. They would get a warning. If they didn't abide and take it off the servers, you can make lists of IPs that are blocked, could make a law that all the servers are blocked in the US so you can't access them ... There are first amendment problems with it, but you don't allow people to sell drugs on the street, why would you let people do the same thing on the Internet? (A11)

Another recommendation was to track cameras used to produce child pornography images or videos through their EXIF serial number:

One idea that I had was to search for the EXIF information. A partnership with Google image search, I don't know if they could do it through their interface now, but working with them. Search the Internet for any images that have EXIF serial number that matches

with these ones that are from contraband images or videos. If someone has produced content and then posted it on Instagram, you can match the camera. Even something as specific as a serial number, or camera model and aperture settings, every little bit helps. (E9)

The last strategy was to target the owners of websites, since they provide the platform and enable child pornography trading:

**Respondent:** My philosophy is that the owners of these sites know what is going on.

**Interviewer:** Do you think the owners should be arrested?

**Respondent:** I do, they're facilitating it and making a lot of money off it. (C7)

## Outliers

While we conducted 33 interviews with offenders incarcerated for child pornography related offenses, only information from 21 of those interviews is included in the preceding sections. Of the twelve interviews not included, information from seven shed light on how offenders who did not trade child pornography online incur child pornography charges.

Four of the offenders possessed less than five child pornography images that were never shared on the Internet. In one case, images were used as evidence to charge an offender with lewd and lascivious acts with a child, which he admitted to, though he defended as being acceptable within his culture. Another offender claimed that while he gave a minor his cell phone, he did not encourage or even know that she had taken photos of herself with the cell phone camera. The other two offenders admitted to taking a few photos on their cell phones, but said they were never shared online.

The fifth offender set up a hidden camera to capture images of naked women. As he acquired photos of some minors, in addition to adults, he was charged with production of child pornography. The sixth offender admitted to purchasing four videos, for \$30 each, but contends he was the victim of a federal sting operation since he purchased non-pornographic videos. In his account, a child pornographer had a front selling non-pornographic material of women dancing, which is what he purchased.

The last offender's charges included purchasing a minor with the intent to produce child pornography. This individual claims he believed the girl to be an adult, since she possessed documentation stating her age as 18. This incident took place abroad and the offender discussed using websites to learn about prostitution in other countries, including rates at different brothels, but he denied any involvement with child pornography.

## Summary

Through the analysis of 21 offender interviews and 35 stakeholder interviews, this chapter provides insight into the Internet's role in how offenders acquire and distribute child pornography. As supported by extant research, child pornography is increasingly easy to find, with a high number of offenders reporting accidentally stumbling across material online. The ease of accessibility affected offenders' understanding of the crime, some respondents shared that they felt any material so easily available must be sanctioned; other offenders described feeling protected, or invisible, due to the high number of individuals accessing child pornography.

While aspects of child pornography are commercial, there has been a shift toward free trading of videos and images since the advent of the Internet and the creation of peer-to-peer file sharing. Thus, relative to other activities within the underground commercial sex economy—adult and child sex trafficking and prostitution—child pornography represents a large, but commonly noncommercial economy in the United States. This does not mean, however, that profits aren't generated and that the crimes committed are any less severe. As multiple stakeholders across all sites pointed out, the ease of accessing free child pornography may be the driving force behind a trend toward increasingly graphic images and videos of younger children. However, they also noted that the majority of those profiting from child pornography are located overseas, particularly in Eastern European countries.

A national or international nexus was common across cases in each jurisdiction as offenders often network and trade videos and images with other offenders across state and country borders. Stakeholders reported that as they have taken down child pornography websites, more are being hosted on servers overseas, most commonly in Russia. As a result, domestic investigations may be able to identify individuals that possess child pornography in the United States, but may be unsuccessful in shutting down sites that produce or trade the child pornography internationally. As such, it was reported that much of the commercial activity generated through child pornography consumed in the United States goes to international entities operating these sites outside of US jurisdiction.

Though child pornography is easy to find, both law enforcement and offenders reported the bulk of material to be widely shared and recirculated. To access new material, offenders would build relationships with individuals who had access to private images and videos. Often, this would require an offender to produce their own private material. Offenders built collections of child pornography, using trading networks to expand their collection and create a sense of community. In addition to reinforcing and normalizing offender behavior, these communities enabled offenders to quickly share information about new sources of child pornography and strategies to evade detection by law enforcement.

While offenders possessed varying levels of technological sophistication, almost half were extremely tech savvy, working in computer-related jobs. Of the six offenders who produced child pornography, the majority was tech savvy and participated in private trading networks. These offenders, who use advanced techniques to avoid detection, pose a challenge to law enforcement, as their methods are constantly changing as new technology emerges.

## Chapter 10

# Major Findings and Implications

### Introduction

The goals of this study were to (1) derive a more rigorous estimate of the underground commercial sex economy (UCSE) in eight major US cities; and (2) provide an understanding of the structure of this underground economy. To date, no reliable data exists to provide national or state policymakers with a verifiable and detailed understanding of underground commercial sex trade networks, or the ways in which these networks interact with one another on the local, state, or interstate level. In addition, there is no information regarding the relationship between the UCSE and the local commercial sex trade or commercial sex activity conducted over the Internet. This study aimed to close the gap in our understanding about the nature and extent of these activities.

In this concluding chapter we highlight 17 main findings from the study which are divided into two sections: (1) sex trafficking and sex work and (2) child pornography. After each major finding, we offer implications for policy and practice (where applicable) based on what we learned through the qualitative data collected for this study. Lastly, we offer suggestions for future directions of research.

### Sex Trafficking and Sex Work Major Findings and Implications

**Finding 1: Estimates of the UCSE in 2007 range from \$39.9 to \$290 million in the cities included in the study. In five of the seven<sup>78</sup> cities, the size of the UCSE decreased from 2003 to 2007.**

The underground drug economy increased in five cities and the underground gun economy decreased in three cities, increased in three cities, and remained the same in one city. Estimates of the illicit markets for sex, drugs, guns, and other unlawful commercial economy (UCE) goods are listed below in table 10.1.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Due to the insufficient data about Kansas City, this city was dropped from the estimation analysis (see chapter 3 for more detail).

<sup>79</sup> Table 10.1 Estimates of Illicit Markets for Sex, Drugs and Guns and UCE/CE for Other Goods is also presented and discussed in more detail in chapter 3 as table 3.1.

**Table 10.1 Estimates of Illicit Markets for Sex, Drugs and Guns and UCE/CE for Other Goods (millions)**

City	Year	Sex	Drugs	Guns	Other
Atlanta	2003	\$238	\$104	\$169	\$14,500
Atlanta	2007	\$290	\$117	\$146	\$16,000
Dallas	2003	\$99.4	\$134	\$171	\$16,900
Dallas	2007	\$98.8	\$191	\$171	\$19,000
Denver	2003	\$47.2	\$54.7	\$58.4	\$7,470
Denver	2007	\$39.9	\$63.9	\$47.4	\$7,820
Miami	2003	\$302	\$93.4	\$106	\$15,300
Miami	2007	\$235	\$95.7	\$118	\$14,700
San Diego	2003	\$124	\$105	\$46.6	\$8,490
San Diego	2007	\$96.6	\$96.3	\$47.7	\$8,740
Seattle	2003	\$50.3	\$87.3	\$83.1	\$9,840
Seattle	2007	\$112	\$87.4	\$60.1	\$11,800
DC	2003	\$155	\$111	\$150	\$17,700
DC	2007	\$103	\$103	\$160	\$20,300

While we estimate these changes, uncovering why these different economies changed over the course of these two time periods is beyond the scope of the study.

**Finding 2: In all eight study sites, there appears to be no connection between weapons trafficking and the UCSE. The overlap with drug trafficking varies by UCSE venue. In five of the study sites, gang involvement in sex trafficking and prostitution seems to be increasing.**

Neither offenders nor law enforcement stakeholders offered concrete evidence of a connection between domestic weapons trafficking and domestic sex trafficking or prostitution. Sixteen percent of pimps reported carrying weapons for their own use, but provided no indication or evidence of involvement in weapons trafficking. While law enforcement stakeholders reasoned that individual offenders might exploit some of the same criminal networks to facilitate pimping and gun trafficking—or help fund one activity with proceeds from the other—no evidence shared by law enforcement illustrated an existing connection.

The connection between drug trafficking and the UCSE varies by type of sex venue. Twenty-five percent of respondents worked as drug dealers prior to working as pimps. Stakeholders reported that some pimps moved to sex trafficking after serving time for drug dealing—seeing it as a less risky endeavor. Pimps corroborated these reports; offenders stated that they transitioned from drug dealing to pimping because they perceived fewer and less serious risks associated with the latter. At the same time, 18 percent of respondents continued to deal drugs while they pimped, creating overlap between the profits and networks within each economy. However, these connections were based on movement of individual facilitators and not the result of organized criminal syndicates controlling both economies.

Established connections are tenuous between drug trafficking and indoor commercial sex venues. Dallas law enforcement uncovered evidence of drug sales at erotic Asian massage parlors and Latino brothels. Miami stakeholders noted that Mexican drug cartels helped facilitate the smuggling of women and children who are trafficked in Miami brothels. The extent to which gangs are involved in brothel or massage parlor-based sex trafficking or prostitution could help determine additional links between sex trafficking and drug trafficking. For example, law enforcement in Washington, DC reported that Latino brothels are extorted by MS-13. However, this link is still relatively new and unexplored in other cities in our study.

The involvement of gangs in pimping was cited in five of the eight study sites: Dallas, Denver, Miami, San Diego, and Seattle.<sup>80</sup> However, the level of organization varied. While law enforcement reported that gangs are playing an increasingly central role in sex trafficking in San Diego, Seattle, and Miami; stakeholders in Dallas and Denver noted that the connections between gangs and sex trafficking are more based on individual facilitators with involvement in both economies. While sex trafficking profits likely contributed to gang establishments through the involvement of individual actors, it is not clear that gangs in Dallas and Denver have organized control over segments of the market. In addition, law enforcement stakeholders and offenders reported evidence that rival gang members network with one another to traffic women and minors. This fact suggests that while gang members may work as pimps and network socially with other pimps, it is possible that their involvement in sex trafficking is not directly controlled by their gang.

## **Policy Implications**

All states and DC should mandate training to ensure that law enforcement is equipped with the knowledge necessary to identify and pursue cases of human trafficking. As of August 2013, 21 states required human trafficking training for law enforcement,<sup>81</sup> 8 states permitted human trafficking training for law enforcement,<sup>82</sup> and 21 states and DC have not enacted statutory provisions regarding human trafficking awareness training (Polaris Project 2013). This study illustrates some overlap between the actors and networks that facilitate drug and commercial sex markets; the connections discussed above indicate that investigation of gang activity and drug trafficking may uncover evidence of sex trafficking.

## **Practice Implications**

At an agency-level, cross-training of narcotics, gang, and sex trafficking investigators should be developed and promoted. Simply sharing information about suspects across units could help build local evidence. Given the presence of gangs in sex trafficking in more than half of the cities studied, gang units should dedicate resources to investigate potential involvement in sex trafficking.

## **Finding 3: Pimps travel in circuits and utilize social networks to facilitate the transportation of employees to different locations for work.**

Criminal justice stakeholders and offenders reported that pimps use informal travel circuits and social networks to facilitate the movement of employees to different cities. There are many reasons why pimps move their employees; respondents explained that pimps traveled to avoid police crackdowns or attend major events that promised substantial crowds. Pimps also reported travelling to recruit new employees or market employees as “fresh faces” in the local UCSE. According to law enforcement officials, erotic massage parlor and Latino brothel owners would also move employees to different locations, sometimes weekly, in order to meet clients’ demands for new sex workers.

Pimps transported women and girls along circuits that connect different cities with active UCSEs. These circuits ranged in size. Law enforcement respondents reported local, statewide, regional, and national circuits. For example, Seattle law enforcement reported a Washington state circuit between Everett, Seattle, and Tacoma and a regional circuit connecting Portland, Oregon, California cities, and Las Vegas, Nevada. Atlanta law enforcement observed a Southeast circuit including cities in Tennessee, Alabama, Florida, North and South Carolina, and Virginia. Law enforcement also described national circuits: one circuit included cities in New York, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Texas, and Nevada.

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80 Noted gangs included the Bloods, the Crips, and MS-13.

81 The 21 states requiring training are Alaska, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Texas, Washington, and Wyoming.

82 The 8 states that permit training are Idaho, Kansas, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Oregon, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia.



Law enforcement noted that travel circuits may evolve in response to enhanced law enforcement activity in specific cities. Although pimps did not confirm that they traveled specific circuits, there were trends as to where pimps from certain cities would travel to for business. For example, pimps from Miami would travel to Atlanta and some Atlanta pimps would travel to Washington, DC.

Offenders reported that connections with pimps in other cities helped them stay informed about law enforcement activities and local events that could inform travel decisions. Social networks could also help pimps assimilate quickly to the local UCSE when travelling. Pimps reported that local business partners assisted with logistical planning by identifying hotels and streets where prostitution takes place.

## **Policy Implications**

All states and DC should develop human trafficking task forces or bodies to help coordinate law enforcement strategies statewide. State-level taskforces are critical to coordinate law enforcement responses to local travel circuits and networks, improve social services for human trafficking victims, and disseminate information about human trafficking. At present, only 20 states have statutes that create or support human trafficking task forces.<sup>83</sup> As this study indicates, pimps' modify their travel circuits based on law enforcement attention, and effectively dismantling travel circuits will require coordinated work across cities.

## **Practice Implications**

Increased communication across law enforcement agencies will bolster investigation efforts. Agencies along circuits described by law enforcement and offenders should communicate about cases and share investigative findings. Law enforcement agencies should also communicate local crackdowns on sex work, as local efforts in one city may displace activity to other cities.

Federal-level coordination remains critical to combat regional and national circuits and networks. While neither travel circuits nor pimp networks appear highly organized, they enable offenders to adjust course and target cities with lower law enforcement activity. Federal-local partnerships to investigate cases that cross state lines (and country borders) should be maintained, including the President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking, Bureau of Justice Assistance and Office of Victims of Crime human trafficking task forces, the Federal Bureau of Investigation Innocence Lost and Internet Crimes against Children Task Forces, and the Department of Justice's Anti-Trafficking Coordination Teams. Their efforts should continue to focus on maintaining, expanding, and modifying, when necessary, the responsibilities and activities of policies and programs that address trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.

## **Finding 4: Pimps and sex workers cited many of the same factors influencing their decision to become involved in the UCSE. Pimps described neighborhood influence, family exposure to sex work, lack of job options, and encouragement from a significant other or acquaintance as critical factors in their decision to engage in the UCSE.**

As one of the only studies to systematically explore pimps' entry into the sex market as facilitators, this study offers insight into the factors that influence offenders' decisions to engage in the UCSE. Findings suggest that individuals start pimping for a number of different reasons; including the learned experiences of family members (32 percent), the impact of neighborhood environment and a perceived lack of legal employment alternatives (26 percent), pressure from a female acquaintance or significant

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<sup>83</sup> The 20 states with statutes creating or supporting human-trafficking task forces or responsive entities are Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Kansas, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Mexico, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, and Washington (Polaris Project 2013).

other (25 percent), and mentorship by another individual in the underground sex economy (18 percent).<sup>84</sup> Studies have also shown that street-based sex workers become involved in sex work for reasons that also included economic necessity, family and peer encouragement, coercion (by pimps, johns, or others), childhood trauma, and social acceptance.

UCSE actors' loved ones, friends, and acquaintances often played a critical role in influencing their initial decision to participate. Some pimps emphasized that intimate partners asked them to manage them, while other offenders noted that their first pimping experience followed a request from an acquaintance or friend that was already engaged in or interested in engaging in sex work. Additionally, pimps reported that sex workers on occasion teach pimps the "rules" of pimping. Sex workers sometimes instructed new pimps on the "dos and don'ts" of the UCSE and demonstrated advanced knowledge that enabled them to serve as a mentor to pimps. These findings highlight the complexity of pimp-sex worker relationships.

Alongside the similarities, there are also critical differences in the factors influencing individuals to facilitate sex work and to engage directly in sex work; sex workers cited coercion from pimps and clients as a critical factor influencing their involvement. Offender respondents did not report coercion by other individuals, though they did at times feel misled or manipulated into UCSE involvement.

## **Practice Implications**

Cities and counties should address sex trafficking as a complex problem that requires a systemwide response, and schools, law enforcement, and social service agencies must work collaboratively to combat sex trafficking in their communities. Prevention campaigns must ensure that both boys and girls are educated about the role of force, fraud, coercion, and exploitation in sex trafficking. Public schools should implement awareness campaigns. As a component of these campaigns, local law enforcement should present in schools and share stories related to real cases, as well as encourage student outreach and reporting to law enforcement officials. Increasing the awareness of school officials will also help them identify at-risk or involved youth. In cities with active task forces, cross-training of local school officials and teachers and awareness raising within the schools will encourage the active involvement of school authorities in detecting possible cases of sex trafficking. Additionally, local service providers should also provide information to students about what services are available if they or someone they know should need help.

Local prevention campaigns are already developing around the country. Fairfax County, Virginia, launched its Just Ask Prevention Project in January 2014, aimed at promoting public awareness about domestic minor sex trafficking. Starting in the spring of 2014, Oakland, California's Unified School District will educate middle school boys and girls on sexual exploitation and healthy relationship-building. These local efforts are critical to enhancing boy's and girl's knowledge about sex trafficking.

## **Finding 5: Pimps rely on multiple actors to maintain control over UCSE operations. Individuals already under pimp control play a critical role in recruiting other individuals to engage in the UCSE; friends or family members work as drivers or provide security; and complicit legal businesses often enable sex trafficking operations.**

Offenders reported working with multiple individuals to facilitate sex work. Thirty percent of pimps reported working with a bottom, an employee who engages in sex work but also provides management and oversight of other employees. Twenty-five percent of respondents reported paying non-sex work employees to complete additional tasks associated with the business, such as driving employees to transactions and providing security. Pimp-controlled women and girls also played an instrumental role in promoting the business to prospective employees. They helped male pimps covertly approach individuals

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<sup>84</sup> Eighteen respondents (25 percent) to this study also reported transitioning from drug dealing to pimping. Three respondents (4 percent) cited the legality of prostitution in their home country as a primary factor influencing their decision to pimp in the United States.

in public venues, utilized their own social networks to connect with prospective employees, and trained new employees regarding business practices.

Some pimps also enjoyed lucrative relationships with legal businesses. Hotel employees and managers were known to turn a blind eye to prostitution occurring within their establishments. Car dealerships and retail stores also provided discounts to pimps or allowed pimps to make purchases under a friend or family member's name to avoid detection.

Though pimps can operate without the support of additional actors, their assistance often helps pimps expand their operations, maintain tighter control over their employees, and avoid law enforcement detection.

## **Policy Implications**

As recommended by Polaris Project (2010), state law should distinguish between those that use force, fraud, or coercion to compel involvement in sex work, and those who facilitate or benefit from the involuntary commercial sex work of another individual. Findings demonstrate that while multiple actors help facilitate sex trafficking, their level of involvement varies greatly. In many cases, an individual actor's involvement may be limited to driving a sex worker to the location of a date or storing money earned through the facilitation of sex work. The severity of the charge should correspond to the level of involvement. Polaris Project's Model Provisions of Comprehensive State Legislation to Combat Human Trafficking treats human trafficking as a Class A felony and the facilitation of or benefit from human trafficking as a Class B felony (Polaris Project 2010). At present, nine states impose lesser penalties for facilitators than for traffickers, while 29 states and DC impose the same penalties for sex trafficking and the facilitation of or receipt of profit from sex trafficking (Polaris Project 2013). Laws should also take into consideration the victimization of bottoms, who often become involved in the UCSE through a pimp.

## **Finding 6: Different forms of coercion and fraud are used by pimps to recruit, manage, and retain control over employees. These forms include feigning romantic interest, emphasizing mutual dependency between pimp and employee, discouraging women from “having sex for free,” and promises of material comforts.**

Pimps, sex workers, and law enforcement officers explained that coercion and fraud are used by pimps in a number of different ways to control sex workers of all ages, races, genders, and socioeconomic statuses. These methods are relatively advanced; pimps reported adjusting their recruitment methods in response to their observations regarding the personal needs, experience, and vulnerabilities of the individuals they intend to recruit. Using coercive tactics and fraud, pimps successfully recruited and exploited individuals from myriad backgrounds and all socioeconomic strata.

The use of manipulation also enabled pimps to develop and preserve their control over business operations and profits. Pimps often instigated competition between employees by maintaining romantic and sexual relationships with many of them and then showing affection for the most profitable employees. Recognition from the pimp thus served as a motivation for employees to engage in sex work and turn over proceeds. In other cases, offender respondents reported that some pimps only employ one individual, who is frequently involved in a romantic and/or sexual relationship with the pimp. In such cases, pimps asked this person to prove their love and commitment by engaging in sex work for the pimp.

## **Policy Implications**

Given the many forms of fraud and coercion identified by sex workers, law enforcement, and offenders, state statutes must clearly encompass acts, omissions, and threats that create a context of coercion. All states should include fraud and coercion in their definitions of sex trafficking, and enact statutes that invite broad interpretations of fraud and coercion that include subtle, non-physical forms used to

manipulate victims. At present, 26 states<sup>85</sup> and DC specifically define the meaning of force and coercion in the context of sex trafficking (Polaris Project 2013).

As noted in finding 2, all states and DC should mandate training to ensure that law enforcement personnel are equipped with the knowledge necessary to identify and pursue cases of human trafficking. These trainings should explicitly address the vast forms of nuanced fraud and coercion employed by pimps to control individuals that engage in sex work.

Finally, all states and DC should require that certain establishments post information relating to either state or national sex trafficking hotlines. By targeting establishments where sex trafficking may take place, these efforts can help connect individuals seeking assistance with the necessary information to access services.

## **Practice Implications**

The above findings indicate that coercion, manipulation, and fraud, sometimes coupled with violence, are critical to pimps' facilitation of sex work. However, evidence of coercion and fraud can be more difficult to identify than physical signs of violence and abuse. In coordination with prosecutors, law enforcement trainings should focus on both victim and offender interview techniques to identify signs of fraud and coercion. In addition, local and federal prosecutors, law enforcement, and judges should be trained on the evidence necessary to prove fraud and coercion according to both the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) standards and the legal standards of state human trafficking laws. To successfully try cases with evidence of fraud and coercion, prosecutors will also require training on how to present evidence of fraud and coercion to juries. In addition to law enforcement, mental health service providers should also be trained on how to assist victims who have been psychologically manipulated and coerced by a pimp to engage in sex work.

As noted in finding 4, local education campaigns are critical to teach both boys and girls about sex trafficking. It may be more difficult for victims to articulate experiences of fraud and coercion than stories of physical violence. Educational campaigns in schools that depict the coercive psychological techniques used by pimps to target and control victims will help both victims and their allies identify signs of fraud and coercion.

## **Finding 7: While pimps have varying levels of knowledge regarding law enforcement tactics and sentencing surrounding sex trafficking, offenders believed that pimping was less risky than other crimes, including drug trafficking.**

Firsthand reports on the perceptions of offenders are critically important to understanding the possible deterrent effects of current law enforcement initiatives and criminal sentencing. While the majority of respondents stated that arrest is a foremost "risk" of pimping, they also routinely reported that they believed pimping was less risky than other crimes.

Some pimps believed that pimping offenses could only be charged as misdemeanors, while others thought they would not be pursued by law enforcement or prosecutors. Prior to arrest, multiple respondents believed that pimping was neither a felony nor a crime that was ever enforced by the police or pursued by prosecutors. Others believed that pimping wasn't a crime at all. As a result, respondents often assumed that they were immune to prosecution or highly unlikely to be locked up for pimping. In fact, some respondents reported transitioning from drug dealing to pimping because they perceived the UCSE as a lower risk.

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<sup>85</sup> The 26 states with sex trafficking statutes defining coercion and force include: Arizona, California, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin (Polaris Project 2013).

Pimps who were aware of the penalties associated with sex trafficking modified their methods and practices to elude law enforcement or avoid punitive sentencing. Law enforcement's acute attention to cases involving minors was relayed in some offender interviews. Multiple respondents reported avoiding minors as a result; some respondents even asked prospective employees to provide identification to verify age. Other respondents reported that they avoided specific cities that were reportedly cracking down on pimping or tried not to cross state lines with employees (despite the fact that no border crossing is necessary to bring a sex trafficking charge). Other tactics to elude law enforcement included the use of codes for online advertisement, minimal or coded communications between pimps and their employees, and tactics to proactively identify law enforcement stings.

### **Policy Implications**

Additional resources should be made available to local and state law enforcement agencies to maintain consistent and visible law enforcement attention to sex trafficking and pursue investigations.

### **Practice Implications**

Findings suggest that some pimps engaged in facilitation of sex work in part because they were unaware of the severity of the possible consequences. Public awareness campaigns, as discussed in finding 4 and finding 6, are critical to inform the public and prospective offenders about sex trafficking laws and the associated consequences.

## **Finding 8: The widespread availability and rapid expansion of the Internet has redefined the spatial and social limitations of the sex market by introducing new markets for both recruitment and advertisement.**

Findings from this study corroborate extant literature on the expansion of Internet use to facilitate sex work. Offenders reported new marketing opportunities for pimps to connect with both recruits and clientele, including online classified websites, as well as social media and networking websites. Some respondents also reported building personal websites to advertise their business; other respondents aspired to do the same. The Internet also allowed pimps to test the market by posting ad online before travelling to a new city in order to determine the level of demand.

Respondents also cited a growing awareness among pimps about the dangers of law enforcement detection due to online activities. Law enforcement in all eight study cities also reported the use of the Internet by pimps for advertisement and/or recruitment. This study reveals that pimps and traffickers are increasingly aware of law enforcement tactics to identify and prosecute online sex work. With few exceptions, respondents who used the Internet to facilitate sex work recognized that law enforcement used the Internet to locate and prosecute pimps. This study found that pimps modify their business practices to elude law enforcement investigations online.

### **Policy Implications**

Federal law should require that trafficking hotlines are posted on websites hosting service advertisements, including Craigslist.com and Backpage.com. State laws should similarly mandate that websites for local newspapers hosting classified advertisements post trafficking hotline information. Websites including adult advertisement sections should be mandated to post visitor requirements to report suspected human trafficking or exploitation of minors.

### **Practice Implications**

Websites known to host advertisements for sex work should proactively post contact information for state and national trafficking hotlines, awareness campaigns, and advertisements for services including shelters, counseling, and crisis intervention.

Law enforcement should continue to aggressively investigate trafficking cases online. Efforts should be undertaken to overcome traffickers' tactics to elude law enforcement detection through the use of code language.

## **Finding 9: Although interviews with offenders did not uncover elements of organized crime, interviews with law enforcement suggest that the level of “organized crime” and degree of criminal network involvement varies by UCSE venue.**

Criminal justice stakeholders had extensive knowledge about the pimp networks in online or street-based sex work, and only limited knowledge about the offenders that run brothels, erotic massage parlors, and other indoor UCSE venues. This is due, in part, to the success investigators and prosecutors have had bringing these cases forward.

Stakeholders and offenders described pimps that primarily facilitate street and internet sex work as networked socially, rather than through traditional organized crime structures. Pimps use these social networks to facilitate their criminal behavior by giving tips about local markets, sharing advertising space or websites, lending money, and sharing, trading, or selling victims. While pimps and traffickers are competitive, they are not usually violent in their competition with one another.

Higher levels of organized crime were suspected by law enforcement within erotic Asian massage parlors, strip clubs, and Latino brothels, although these suspicions remain largely unconfirmed in most cities due to resource limitations and the challenges of investigating organized crime. Law enforcement from all study cities cited the presence of Asian massage parlors operating as fronts for prostitution and potential sex trafficking, and almost all study cities<sup>86</sup> noted the presence of Latino brothels. Law enforcement in Dallas and Miami suspected that some strip clubs and bars were fronts for prostitution and sex trafficking.

Law enforcement also explained that specific circuits were used to place employees in UCSE establishments. For example, law enforcement respondents from Dallas, San Diego, Seattle, and Washington, DC all reported that Asian massage parlors were connected to networks based out of New York or California. Law enforcement respondents from Miami and San Diego stated that brothels were often located within migrant camps or sex workers were transported through the United States along with migrant farm workers. The possible connection between smuggling and trafficking in these cases was not always fully understood, but warrants additional investigation.

## **Policy Implications**

As noted in finding 4, federal-local partnerships to investigate cases that cross state and country lines should continue to be funded.<sup>87</sup> Agreements should be developed with countries linked to cases in the United States to help dismantle syndicates, and overseas undercover resources should be dedicated to tracking and dismantling networks that originate in foreign countries.

In addition, states should allow law enforcement the use of wiretaps to investigate human trafficking offenses. At present, at least 14 states have enacted statutes that authorize law enforcement personnel to intercept electronic communications in the investigation of sex trafficking.<sup>88</sup> Given the challenges of investigating UCSE venues that may be operated by organized crime syndicates, wiretaps are a critical investigative tool that should be available to law enforcement.

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<sup>86</sup> Kansas City and Seattle did not report Latino brothels.

<sup>87</sup> These include the President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking, Bureau of Justice Assistance and Office of Victims of Crime human trafficking task forces, the Federal Bureau of Investigation Innocence Lost and Internet Crimes against Children Task Forces, and the Department of Justice's Anti-Trafficking Coordination Teams.

<sup>88</sup> The 14 states that have authorized law enforcement to use wiretaps in sex trafficking investigations are Arizona, Arkansas, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, New York, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin.

## Practice Implications

Investigative techniques used to uncover organized crime, drug trafficking, and gangs should be adopted to better uncover the level of organized crime within all forms of the UCSE. The development of confidential informants and the use of wiretaps (where allowed under state law) should be promoted to gather evidence necessary to prove sex trafficking or prostitution within certain venues of the UCSE (e.g., massage parlors, brothels, strip clubs). In addition, steps should be taken to increase law enforcement racial, ethnic, and gender diversity, and recruit individuals with fluency in languages spoken by suspected offenders and victims in the local UCSE.

Given the large number of cases that cross state and international lines, cross-deputizing local law enforcement should be promoted, as well as partnerships with federal law enforcement.

## **Finding 10: Findings suggest that the cases of pimping and sex trafficking investigated and prosecuted in the United States represent only a small fraction of the UCSE.**

Across sites, criminal justice stakeholders felt the UCSE was much larger than they were able to investigate, due to resource constraints, political will, or lack of public awareness about the prevalence of UCSE crimes. This is striking, given that the cities selected for this study had some of the highest numbers of convicted sex traffickers and pimps across the United States. When looking across UCSE venues, it appears the cases least likely to be investigated may also be those that are more organized, generate more money, more likely to be run by foreign national groups, and have client bases that are the most closed ethnically or socioeconomically (i.e., only wealthy individuals that pass background checks are accepted as clients). The vast majority of offenders interviewed in our study were pimps that facilitated street or Internet sex work and did not base their operations out of a commercial space, such as a strip club or brothel. Given that these individuals were not criminally organized and generally did not restrict their client base, it may be that these cases are easier to investigate through law enforcement operations and are not the most prevalent.

Findings from offender interviews suggest that UCSE extends far beyond the cases investigated and prosecuted by law enforcement. Offenders observed that many, many people in their home cities and throughout the United States were engaged in the facilitation of sex work. In addition, respondents noted that very few people were arrested, charged, and incarcerated for pimping. Despite their present incarceration, multiple offenders expressed the sentiment that “no one actually gets locked up for pimping.” To many, incarceration was a sign of extreme missteps or failures during facilitation.

## Policy Recommendations

Each policy recommendation noted in findings 1 through 9 provides opportunities for the federal and state governments to support the detection, investigation, and prosecution of sex trafficking cases.

## Practice Implications

The practice implications discussed in findings 1 through 9 will help law enforcement, local government, and the public address the prominence of sex trafficking throughout the United States.

## Child Pornography Major Findings

### **Finding 1: Child pornography is an escalating problem and has become increasingly graphic with younger victims.**

Both stakeholders and inmates incarcerated on child pornography charges described a growing number of individuals viewing online child pornography. Researchers acknowledge the inherent difficulty in calculating the total number of offenders worldwide; estimates range from 50,000 members of organized rings to millions of individuals accessing Internet child pornography (Wortley and Smallbone 2012). In addition to increasing numbers of offenders, child pornography collections are getting larger as technological advancements support faster download times and greater home data storage capacity. Stakeholders and inmates pointed to increasingly graphic content, often featuring violent acts against infants and toddlers.

Child pornography's heightened availability also affected offenders' perceptions of the crime, as it lessened their sense of wrongdoing and granted them a sense of security due to their perceived invisibility within a virtual crowd. Without enough resources to target all offenders, stakeholders are overwhelmed by the amount of accessible child pornography. Unable to conduct proactive investigations, they instead focus on responding to tips and referrals, often from federal agencies. The high volume of tips frequently results in primarily reactive work, which typically leads to the targeting of less sophisticated offenders.

### **Practice Implications**

Stakeholders described a lack of awareness from the public and criminal justice stakeholders as a major impediment to garnering support for increased funding to combat child pornography. Education about child pornography's prevalence, in addition to its violent content, could put pressure on politicians and policymakers to support effective investigative strategies. Increased manpower may also allow stakeholders to stay current with constantly evolving technology and focus resources on serious offenders producing child pornography.

### **Finding 2: Child pornography is an international crime that transcends real and virtual borders.**

Child pornography is a crime that has become global in scope, particularly with the advent of the Internet. Individuals interested in trading child pornography no longer have to rely on the postal service or clandestine meet-ups to share images. Through technology and the Internet, individuals can download, trade, and produce child pornography with anyone in the world at any time during the day, which may help offenders elude detection. According to both law enforcement and offenders currently incarcerated on child pornography charges, child pornography is produced, traded, and downloaded by individuals all over the world—sometimes for profit, but most often not. For example, pornographic images of children produced in Russia can be posted on a website hosted on a server in Germany which can be accessed by someone in the United States. In this scenario, cooperation between authorities in Russia, Germany, and the United States would aid the apprehension of all the players involved in the crime.

Sex tourism was cited by stakeholders interviewed for this study as an international problem that is growing in both scope and scale and is greatly facilitated by the Internet. Stakeholders shared that sex tourists travel to an impoverished country (often with lax law enforcement) to engage in commercial sex, and in the cases where a minor is involved, often produce child pornography. Additionally, the Internet has made it much easier for an individual to book a flight, find a hotel, and identify an individual or individuals in the host country willing to facilitate this crime. The Internet has also made it possible for individuals to virtually travel to foreign countries to direct and produce their own child pornography. These encounters occur through live web cams and entail payment to the individual orchestrating the child pornography in the foreign country. Similar to the scenario provided above, authorities in both the foreign country and the United States would need to work together to identify and apprehend the offenders.



## Policy Implications

As the above finding illustrates, child pornography and sex tourism are two growing international problems. In order to effectively address them, authorities in countries where child pornography is produced, traded, and downloaded, and where sex tourism is occurring, need to cooperate with one another and make this issue a priority. One way to accomplish this is by developing and enforcing memoranda of understandings between the United States and other countries that detail how offenders will be identified and who will be in charge of the investigation and prosecution.

## Practice Implications

In 2003, the United States passed the PROTECT (Prosecutorial Remedies and Other Tools to end the Exploitation of Children Today) Act, which imposes fines and/or imprisonment for up to 30 years for US citizens or residents who engage in illicit sexual conduct abroad, with or without the intent of engaging in such sexual misconduct. From 2003 to 2012, only 33 individuals have been prosecuted in the United States for international sex tourism under the PROTECT Act (United States Sentencing Commission 2013). By prioritizing this crime and enforcing the PROTECT Act, more US citizens and legal US residents traveling overseas for the purposes of sex tourism can be identified and brought to justice. Additionally, by focusing on the websites that facilitate sex tourism, individuals who have perpetrated this crime, or are intending to do so, can be apprehended.

## Finding 3: Child pornography is easy to access online and requires little technological savvy to download.

Law enforcement officials and child pornography offenders unanimously agreed that the Internet has made child pornography extremely accessible and that individuals need little technological knowledge to download and trade child pornography. Several offender respondents stated they did not initially intend to download child pornography, but there was child pornography mixed in with the adult pornography which they had downloaded. This acted as a catalyst for what became for many an addiction to child pornography. Additionally, because they felt it was so easy to obtain, many offenders believed that viewing or downloading child pornography could not be illegal. If it were illegal, there would be a lot more barriers to overcome in order to access the content.

## Practice Implications

Because stakeholders and offenders stated how easy it is to obtain child pornography online, steps should be taken to decrease access to such material. This would require better filters on search engines (e.g., Google, Bing, and Yahoo) and peer-to-peer networks (e.g., GigaTribe and FrostWire). Additionally, search engines and peer-to-peer networks could develop pop-up windows that warn an individual who types in certain search terms associated with child pornography that they are about to commit a crime and then direct them to a website that provides more information on child pornography crimes and offers resources regarding child pornography addiction. Currently, Bing in the UK has implemented a pop-up warning window for child pornography searches that links the individual to an organization that provides counseling for child pornography addiction.<sup>89</sup>

## Finding 4: Many child pornography offenders want treatment.

Inmates incarcerated on child pornography charges frequently described their relationship with child pornography as an addiction or sickness. They highlighted the paucity of treatment options within prison, which are only available at certain facilities for inmates close to release. Several offenders recounted wanting treatment to address their child pornography addiction prior to apprehension, but explained that they did not know where to access confidential treatment, as they feared being reported to law enforcement for seeking clinical help. One respondent expressed gratitude to the government for forcing

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<sup>89</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/jul/27/social-workers-child-sex-grooming>

him to stop downloading child pornography, a reaction which law enforcement stakeholders regularly witnessed.

## **Practice Implications**

Accessible treatment for child pornography offenders is a vital part of the solution to combat child pornography. Though resources are available to address online child pornography behavior, they are not well publicized in the United States. The organization Stop It Now!, located in the United States and United Kingdom, runs a helpline offering confidential support for adults concerned with their at-risk behavior toward children. Another tool, the website Croga.org, offers self-help exercises for individuals concerned about their child pornography behavior.

A lack of clarity regarding clinician reporting requirements prevents offenders from getting help, as offenders will not seek help without understanding what information treatment providers must disclose to law enforcement. Though mandated reporting laws vary by state, therapists are required to report if a client is a danger to others. Clinicians may assume that any individual viewing child pornography is a risk, especially if the individual has frequent contact with children. Easily accessible treatment resources, with clearly communicated confidentiality agreements and reporting requirements, are essential to addressing child pornography offender behavior.

## **Finding 5: Child pornography is commonly considered a victimless crime by child pornography offenders who do not commit contact offenses.**

The majority of individuals interviewed for this study who were currently incarcerated for non-contact child pornography offenses (possession and distribution) claimed to never have engaged in contact offenses with children. Therefore, they believed, their crime was “victimless” since they were downloading and/or trading the images—not producing new content. Some offenders even stated that downloading, and in some cases trading, child pornography prevented them from abusing a child. However, others viewed these acts as a gateway to producing their own images and videos. Several individuals that were incarcerated for non-contact child pornography offenses stated that the punishment did not fit their crime since they did not have direct contact with the victims.

Offenders were not the only ones to believe that the penalties associated with possessing and trading child pornography were too harsh. According to stakeholders, there are judges who believe that cases in which an individual is not physically abusing the child, only viewing the content, are essentially victimless.

## **Policy Implications**

Although a section in the 1994 Violence Against Women Act indicates that victims of child pornography should receive mandatory victim restitution, judges are struggling with not only calculating how much an individual should pay in restitution based on the crime committed, but also whether the offender should have to pay any restitution at all if they did not directly exploit the victim. While providing restitution to the victim will not directly prevent the images and videos from being traded and downloaded, it will send a powerful message to those who are trading and downloading child pornography images that they did not commit a victimless crime. Providing judges with victim restitution guidelines will not only help the victim but also send a much-needed message to child pornography offenders.

## **Practice Implications**

The information included in pop-up window warnings, such as those currently used by Bing, should incorporate a link to resources on how and why downloading and/or trading child pornography is not a victimless crime. This practice will help educate individuals who are downloading and/or trading child pornography (or are thinking about doing so) about the crime they are committing.

## **Finding 6: For offenders, the prevalence of online child pornography communities reinforces and normalizes child pornography offenses.**

Over half of the offenders interviewed were members of online child pornography communities. These communities allow offenders to be around like-minded individuals, share child pornography content, and discuss fantasies, which may involve first-hand contact with children. Online child pornography communities also allow individuals to communicate with one another under a cloak of anonymity. Both law enforcement officials and offenders agreed that these communities help to reinforce and normalize the trading and downloading of child pornography, and in some cases, even pressured individuals to produce their own content in order to be more accepted by the community.

According to law enforcement officers and offenders, online child pornography communities are typically very structured and are often run by a moderator. Moderators are tasked with screening individuals interested in joining the community and frequently have final say as to who is welcomed into the group. They also monitor the content shared and are responsible for taking down the host site or community board and moving it elsewhere if there is a fear of law enforcement detection. In some cases, the site that hosts the online child pornography message board or groups might also host other types of content and claim ignorance if questioned by law enforcement about the child pornography content. Stakeholders stated that it was rare for them to go after these website owners since it was difficult to prove that they knowingly hosted illegal content.

### **Policy Implications**

Law enforcement should prioritize investigations of individuals or businesses that host and/or support online communities. Informing an individual they are blocked from their website due to a pending child pornography investigation (as one offender described in chapter nine) should be stopped since it could provide that person with enough time to delete evidence and ultimately dismantle the investigation. In addition to being held criminally responsible, facilitators should also be ordered to pay restitution to the victims of the child pornography, especially since some are profiting from online child pornography communities.

## **Finding 7: Due to resource limitations, the least technologically savvy offenders are most likely to be detected.**

Both stakeholders and inmates described a variation in collecting behavior and networking levels across Internet child pornography offenders. While some offenders are technologically sophisticated, sharing strategies to evade law enforcement within structured trading networks, other offenders described themselves as “point and click,” using rudimentary methods to download, store, and share child pornography.

Stakeholders shared frustration that they are unable to devote the time and resources necessary to investigate technologically advanced offenders, who law enforcement reported are often responsible for producing child pornography. Instead, law enforcement frequently focuses on offenders with the least technological expertise. As Jenkins (2001, 143) notes, “The vast bulk of arrests still involve low-level or plainly careless perpetrators, and this is likely to remain the case for the foreseeable future.” Offenders were aware of law enforcements’ lack of capacity and they felt a sense of security that advanced techniques would help offenders evade detection.

### **Policy Implications**

Due to constantly evolving technology, more resources should be invested in law enforcement to stay up to date on new methods. Additionally, the criminal justice system should properly distinguish between low-level and serious child pornography offenders. As a 2012 United States Sentencing Commissions report (ii) notes, the “existing sentencing scheme in non-production cases no longer adequately distinguishes among offenders based on their degrees of culpability.” Sentencing enhancements routinely apply to most offenders, largely because they were developed when child pornography was acquired through the mail (United States Sentencing Commission 2012, iii). Adopting the Sentencing

Commission's recommendations, which incorporate characteristics such as offenders' collecting behavior and involvement with offender networks, would aid in properly classifying different types of offenders, which could also inform the types of offenders targeted by law enforcement.

## Future Directions for Research

The current study makes several contributions to the knowledge base on the underground commercial sex market in the United States and the findings lend themselves to implications for future research in this area. Several aspects of the findings merit further investigation:

1. Although we presented the estimates for the underground commercial sex, drugs and weapons economies for seven of the eight study sites for 2003 and 2007, we did not provide further analysis as to why these illicit economies increased or decreased over time. Future research could entail in-depth analyses of economic, social, and environmental factors in these eight cities during this time period to shed light on why these economies changed over time.
2. Further research can, and should, be conducted to test the validity and reliability of the method used to estimate the underground commercial sex economy. If the method proves to be both valid and reliable, it could be replicated to estimate the size of the UCSE in other US cities.
3. Though researchers have observed the use of psychological manipulation and "finesse pimping" to control women and girls, more research is needed to elaborate on the methods of psychological coercion revealed by this report and earlier studies. Future directions for research include the role of romantic relationships between pimps and employees in the facilitation of sex work and victim experiences and consequences of psychological coercion. In addition, research should explore indicators of individuals at-risk for psychological coercion.
4. More research is necessary to explore the reasons and circumstances that compel youth and women to participate in sex work through a pimp. Understanding the perceived benefits of not only engaging in sex work, but engaging in the underground sex market through the facilitation of a pimp, will help identify individuals at-risk for recruitment.
5. Legislative analyses should be undertaken to ascertain how existing state laws governing wiretapping, cross-deputization, and human trafficking might be amended to better promote the incorporation of organized crime investigative strategies into human trafficking and prostitution investigations.
6. Although law enforcement claimed that there is a link between sex tourism and child pornography, there currently is no empirical evidence to demonstrate this connection. Research on this topic can shed more light on this issue, and potentially identify more ways to effectively combat both child pornography and sex tourism.
7. Though stakeholders, child pornography offenders, and researchers suspect a correlation between technological savviness and risk of detection, there has been little empirical evidence to support these claims. This gap in knowledge is particularly problematic as almost all existing research on child pornography offenders is based on apprehended offenders. Additionally, further studies analyzing gaps in case law versus technological advances that facilitate child pornography would allow stakeholders to be more effective in investigating and prosecuting offenders.
8. Stakeholders and inmates convicted of child pornography offenses shared a connection between methamphetamine users and the consumption of child pornography, but there is no available research to support this claim. Investigating this would grant a deeper understanding into child pornography offender behavior and could affect law enforcement's approach to investigating methamphetamine-related crimes.
9. One point that law enforcement officers and offenders did not agree on was the commercialization of child pornography. The majority of offenders interviewed for this study stated that although they had been approached by overseas websites, they had never purchased or had the intention to purchase child pornography, mainly because they could trade and download content for free. That said, several stakeholders stated that there were individuals still heavily profiting from child pornography sales, although they agreed that these individuals were mainly located overseas. According to law enforcement officials, individuals in the United States were profiting from child pornography by selling programs that made it easier to trade and download content. These sites often advertised on websites and message boards that were known to host

child pornography. More research needs to be done in this area to determine the liability of these companies and how it directly ties into child pornography sales. Additionally, more research is needed to determine if individuals are directly profiting from child pornography sales in the United States.

## **Conclusion**

This report is a first step in estimating the size and structure of the underground commercial sex economy in the United States. Although we acknowledge that the both the quantitative and qualitative methods that were employed in this study had their limitations, we believe that the information presented in this report will help to fill a number of knowledge gaps regarding the size and structure of the UCSE, and also provide the stepping stones for policy and practice reform. There is still much we need to learn and much work that needs to be done in order to shrink the underground commercial sex economy in the United States.

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## Appendix A

# Introductory Email to Support Sites

Dear [Personalize],

We are writing to invite you and your agency in XX to participate in a preliminary site selection screening for a national study funded by the U.S. Department of Justice that seeks to improve our understanding of the Unlawful Commercial Sex Economy (UCSE); which includes sex trafficking, prostitution, and child pornography (production, distribution and sale). UCSE poses significant risk to public safety. We plan to estimate the UCSE, compare this economy to other illegal economies (drugs and guns) in selected cities, and measure how this activity has changed over the last ten years. Please see the attached one-page project description for more information.

In order to select the final sites for our study, we are screening a number of prospective agencies to determine availability and eligibility for inclusion in the study. Based on this information, we will select six final sites to participate in the study. We anticipate that the study methodology will include interviews with personnel involved in the investigation of UCSE cases and a review of closed case records.

We are interested in speaking with you, and whomever else you deem knowledgeable on the UCSE issue, in the coming weeks. This includes officers who work on sex trafficking, child pornography and prostitution cases. All information relayed during the call will be considered confidential and will not appear in a final report. Please let me know if you are interested in participating, and I will be in touch with next steps. If you prefer that we submit this request to your supervisor, please let me know who to direct the request to.

We sincerely hope that you will take part in this important study. If you have questions about the project or the screening interview, please do not hesitate to contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Meredith Dank (mdank@urban.org 202-261-5824) at the Justice Policy Center of The Urban Institute. If you have questions about the role of the Department of Justice in sponsoring this study, you may contact John Picarelli at the Department of Justice ([REDACTED]).

We look forward to working with you or designees in your agency in the coming weeks to learn more about the work your department has been doing to identify and investigate UCSE cases.

Sincerely,

## Appendix B

# Screening Interview Questions

### Estimating the Unlawful Commercial Sex Economy in the U.S.

#### Screening Interview

Background: The screening telephone interview is designed to gather basic information about cases involving the unlawful commercial sex economy investigated by law enforcement agencies under consideration for inclusion in the study. This information will be used to select partners for the study and provide the research team with background information to help prepare for the onsite interviews and possible case reviews.

---

Hello, my name is XXXX, I am a researcher from The Urban Institute in Washington DC.

I am working on a project that is funded by the Department of Justice that is trying to better understand the structure and scale of the unlawful commercial sex economy (UCSE) in the United States. Cases that involve the unlawful commercial sex economy include: human trafficking, the production and distribution of child pornography (in exchange for money), and prostitution. Yours is among a select group of agencies that has been chosen for potential participation in the study. You may have recently received an e-mail from us that described the goals of the study. Did you receive this e-mail which included a one-page description of the project? [Note: If they did not receive a message, then indicate that you will explain the reason for the contact now].

The Department of Justice has tasked us with gathering information about the UCSE, especially the networks of people benefiting from it. Your agency is one of a select few across the country that we believe can give us greater insight into how the UCSE works. Because of your agency's track record in pursuing some of these cases, we would like to find out some basic information about your experience investigating the UCSE. Our goal is not to evaluate your investigatory practices, but to get a better understanding of the market itself in your city. The purpose of gathering this general information is to help us select the jurisdictions that would be most appropriate for a more detailed study. None of the information provided by you during this call will be published, reported externally or shared with your supervisors or others that oversee your agency. This is for our project's use only, to help us screen for the best sites for the study.

Answering these questions should only take about 15 to 30 minutes. Would you be able to help us answer some questions, or is there someone else within your agency who may have

experience investigating cases that involve the unlawful commercial sex economy that you would recommend we speak with instead?

*If the interviewee agrees to go ahead with the interview, continue to the next line.*

*If the interviewee does not want to do the interview, try and set up another date and time to call back and complete the interview.*

*If the interviewee suggests someone else would be more appropriate for the interview, get that person's name and contact information and follow up with him/her.*

I know that you may already be familiar with the UCSE, but to review, for the purposes of our study, commercial sex act is defined as<sup>90</sup>:

any sex act in exchange for which anything of value is given to or received by any person.

Here are some examples: prostitution; selling sex acts performed by children; production, distribution, or sale of child pornography; and Internet-based commercial sex acts. We are particularly interested in describing how the UCSE is tied to sex trafficking, such as increasing the demand for sex trafficking or facilitating the transport of sex trafficking victims.

I know that you may already be familiar with the definition of sex trafficking, but to review, for the purposes of this study, sex trafficking is defined as:

The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for either; (1) a commercial sex act through the use of force, fraud, or coercion; or (2) if the person is under 18 years of age, any commercial sex act, regardless of whether any form of coercion is involved. *Note: These definitions do not require that victims be physically transported from one location to another.*

Do you have any initial questions about this definition of the UCSE before we start the interview?

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<sup>90</sup> Only read these definitions if the person is unfamiliar with them.

1. How many UCS cases has your agency handled over the last several years?

*If they ask how many years, say since 2000, but focus on the period for which they can be most accurate. If they don't know the number off the top of their head, ask for an approximation and say you'll follow up by email.*

2. Are there any members of your agency designated to specifically respond to UCS cases?

*Ask how many members and if possible their names and their ranks, and how long they have been assigned to this detail and what proportion of their time is spent on such work.*

3. In how many UCS cases identified or investigated by your agency, were there other agencies involved in the investigations?

*Prompt for information about other law enforcement (local, county, state, federal) agencies involved or victim service agencies. Which were the most productive partnerships? If possible, ask about which agency maintains case files.*

*Ask the respondent to break it down by type of offender – e.g., trafficker, pornographer, etc.*

5. Are there common characteristics that UCS offenders share? If yes, what are some of them?

6. Are sex traffickers directly or indirectly connected to UCS offenders (other prostitution, internet-based sex acts, and child pornography)? If so, How?

[Alternate: what are nature of the links between prostitution, internet-based sex acts, child pornography and sex trafficking?]

*Probe: does UCS affect the DEMAND that is met by traffickers?*

*Probe: does UCS intersect or overlap the NETWORK of people involved in sex trafficking?*



8. How has the UCSE changed in recent years?

*Of particular interest is whether they think the UCSE has grown and if so by how much.*

Has your agency tracked how much money is generated from UCS cases?

[Alternate: does your agency have any way of keeping track of how much money is generated from UCS cases?]

*If yes, Could you send us a copy?*

*If no, ask: "As you review the evidence on cases, where are the typical points at which money become visible (i.e., countable) in the process?" "How would you go about figuring out how much money is generated from UCS acts?" then continue to next question*

9. What kind of illegal transactions related to UCS cases has you agency uncovered?

11. Has your agency seized assets related to UCS cases? If yes, what kinds of assets and what is the approximate monetary value of those assets?

12. If your jurisdiction is chosen as one of the final sites, would you allow some members of the research team to view USCE case files?

13. Is there any additional information about the business practices of offenders or the structure of the UCSE that you think we should be aware of?

Thank you very much for taking the time to answer these questions. Over the next few weeks, we will use the information you provided to help us make final decisions about the sites that will be selected for this study. We will be back in touch in the next couple of months to let you know more about the study process, and if your site is selected, we will seek approval from your chief/sheriff and provide more details about your agency's participation in the study. Who would you like us to contact in further communications and what is the best way to reach them (phone, email, etc.)?

If you have any additional questions about the study you can contact: Meredith Dank, Research Associate, The Urban Institute, 202-261-5824 or one of us.

### Follow-up Questions for Research Team Only

1. Overall, how was their demeanor? Did they seem enthusiastic? Cooperative?

2. Is there anything foreseeable that could go wrong if we select this as a final site?

## Appendix C

# UCSE Title/Section Codes

### UCSE title/sections

18:1328	Importation of alien for immoral purpose
18:1581	Peonage, obstructing enforcement
18:1583	Enticement into slavery
18:1584	Sale into involuntary servitude
18:1585	Seizure, detention, transportation or sale of slaves
18:1587	Possession of slaves aboard vessel
18:1588	Transportation of slaves from United States
18:1589	Forced labor
18:1590	Trafficking with respect to peonage, slavery, involuntary servitude or forced labor
18:1591	Sex trafficking of children or by force, fraud or coercion
18:1592	Unlawful conduct with respect to documents in furtherance of trafficking, peonage, slavery, involuntary servitude, or forced labor
18:1594	General provisions of sections 1581, 1583, 1584, 1589, 1590, and 1591
18:1596	Additional jurisdiction in certain trafficking offenses
18:2251	Sexual exploitation of children
18:2251A	Selling or buying of children
18:2252	Certain activities relating to material involving the sexual exploitation of children
18:2252A	Certain activities relating to material constituting or containing child pornography
18:2253	Criminal forfeiture
18:2257	Record keeping requirements
18:2257A	Record keeping requirements for simulated sexual conduct
18:2260	Production of sexually explicit depictions of a minor for importation into the United States

- 18:2421 Transportation generally
- 18:2422 Coercion and enticement
- 18:2423 Transportation of minors
- 18:2424 Filing factual statement about alien individual
- 18:2425 Use of interstate facilities to transmit information about a minor
- 18:2426 Repeat offenders
- 18:2427 Inclusion of offenses relating to child pornography in definition of sexual activity for which any person can be charged with a criminal offense
- 18:2428 Forfeitures

# Appendix D

## Participation Letter

 THE URBAN INSTITUTE

2100 M STREET, N.W. / WASHINGTON D.C. 20037

**Meredith L. Dank**  
Research Associate

Phone: 202-261-5824  
Fax: 202-659-8985  
E-mail: [mdank@urban.org](mailto:mdank@urban.org)

May 31, 2011

Chief name  
Agency  
Address  
City, State, Zip

Dear *[personalize]*,

We are writing to ask for your assistance in a study we are conducting to estimate the scope and structure of the unlawful commercial sex economy (UCSE) in the United States that is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice's National Institute of Justice. The preliminary screening interview that we conducted with the *[personalize agency and screening contact person]* suggests that your agency offers a tremendous opportunity to gain more insight into the activities that comprise the UCSE, the nature of those activities, and their extent. We would like to formally invite your agency to participate in this national study.

*This study would require a minimum of time and effort on the part of you and your staff.* Over the next year, our research team would conduct one site visit to better understand how the unlawful commercial sex economy operates to determine the structure of UCSE and how these networks overlap with other illicit economies. This information will help us estimate the scope and scale of the UCSE, describe how it has changed over the last five years, and document how it relates to other illicit economies. We will schedule our visit at a time that is most convenient to you and your staff. We estimate that we would spend approximately three days on site at your agency. During our visit, we would like to conduct interviews with key personnel involved in the investigation of UCSE cases (human trafficking, promoting prostitution, and child pornography) regarding their experience with UCSE. These interviews would last 30-60 minutes. In addition, we would like to access the case records for *closed* cases (from 2004-2010) identified as being related to the UCSE. Our focus would be on exploring the structure of the market, rather than reporting on specific cases or individuals. These reviews will concentrate on offenders' business operations, such as recovered ledgers or details about finances or money laundering. We see

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these case reviews as supplementing law enforcement interviews by providing information which is difficult to convey verbally (such as accounting information).

The main goals of this project are to understand the trade networks that comprise the unlawful commercial sex economy as thoroughly as possible, and to make recommendations for other agencies about how to best target criminal activities or networks that facilitate sex trafficking and elevate efforts to identify, contain, and prosecute UCSE criminals. Information from case records reviews and interviews will be reported in the aggregate and the name of agency personnel will not be specifically identified in any published reports. *The names of all agency personnel participating in this study will remain confidential.* We will contact individuals interviewed for the study prior to submission of the final report to ensure we have reported information about your agency's experiences accurately.

We will be contacting your office within the next few days to discuss the details of this study. In the meantime, it would be very helpful if you could complete the attached certification of participation and designate a point person within your agency that we can contact with further inquiries about your agency's participation in this study. If you have any questions about this project, please do not hesitate to contact the Principal Investigator, Drs. Meredith Dank ([mdank@urban.org](mailto:mdank@urban.org), 202-261-5824 at The Urban Institute). If you have questions about the role of the Department of Justice in sponsoring this study, you may contact John Picarelli, Social Science Analyst at that National Institute of Justice ([REDACTED]).

We look forward to learning more about the knowledge your agency has built around sex trafficking and the networks involved in the UCSE. We are confident that your participation in this study will provide critical insight for national human trafficking policies.

Sincerely,

Meredith L. Dank, Ph.D.  
Research Associate  
Justice Policy Center  
The Urban Institute

Richard Curtis, Ph.D.  
Chair  
Anthropology Department  
John Jay College

## Certification of Participation—Instructions

Please fax this completed form to Mitch Downey, project manager, at (202) 659-8985. If you prefer, it can be mailed to:

Mitch Downey  
2100 M Street, NW  
The Urban Institute  
Justice Policy Center  
Washington, DC 20037

If you would prefer this participation statement on your own letterhead, email [pdowney@urban.org](mailto:pdowney@urban.org) and we will send you an electronic copy of this form that you can copy and paste onto your agency's stationery.

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## Certification of Participation

I acknowledge that [*insert name of agency*] will participate in the project, *Estimating the Unlawful Commercial Sex Economy* conducted by researchers from The Urban Institute (UI) and John Jay College. For this study, researchers from UI and John Jay will be permitted to:

- interview personnel involved in the investigation and prosecution of UCSE cases and
- review records of closed human trafficking or UCSE-related investigations.

Signature

---

Chief [*insert name of highest authority*]

---

Date



## Point-person designation

The person indicated below has been designated to provide the requested information to the research project personnel and serve as the point-person for the coordination of the site visit.

---

Name

---

Telephone

---

Email address

# Appendix E

## Inmate Consent Form

### STUDY PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

My name is Meredith Dank and I work at the Urban Institute, a non-profit research firm in Washington, DC. We are doing this study for the National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice. Our goal is to learn about your employment history prior to incarceration and your involvement in any underground economies such as drug dealing, pimping, promoting prostitution or the selling of fake goods.

The following things will happen in this interview:

1. You will be asked, in private, about your employment history prior to incarceration and your involvement in any underground economies such as drug dealing, pimping, promoting prostitution and the selling of fake goods. We will talk about your business and the people you worked with before going to prison. This interview will take about 45 minutes to 1 hour. You may refuse to answer any question and you may stop the interview at any time. If you want to speak with a counselor at any point during or after the interview, we will contact the appropriate person(s) to make sure you can speak to someone right away.

We promise you the following things:

- **Confidentiality:** Everything you say will be kept confidential. Nobody outside of the Urban Institute team will be told your name and any other information about you without your permission. That means that the government, such as the Bureau of Prisons and FBI, and other people, such as the general public, will **not** know what you say to us. We are going to combine what you say with everyone else we talk with. That way no one will be able to figure out who said what.

Any information that you tell us cannot be used to change your status here in . Talking to us will not change the programs or services you get in prison or when you go home.

The confidentiality is protected by law under Title 28 Part 22 of the Code of Federal Regulations. That means that information discussed in the interviews (except as otherwise mentioned) are fully protected from law enforcement investigation. We also ask that you not discuss new or unprosecuted criminal activity during today's interview. If you begin to talk about these activities, we will stop you from continuing to do so. Everyone who works on this project must sign a contract to make sure they do not to tell anyone outside of the research team anything about you.

There is one exception to our promise of confidentiality. We will tell someone if you tell us specific information about child abuse, your plans to commit a future crime, or your plans to hurt yourself. But we don't plan to talk about those things.

- **Voluntary Participation:** You may refuse to answer any questions or provide any information whenever you want. You may stop the interview at any time. If you do not answer our questions, we will not tell anyone here in **[name of the facility]**. Talking to us will not change the programs or services you get in prison or when you go home. Same if you don't talk to us.

### **Possible Risks or Discomforts**

Some of the interview questions are personal and it is possible that they may make you feel uncomfortable or upset. There are no right or wrong answers and you can skip any questions you do not want to answer. If you become upset for any reason, you can ask to stop the interview. If you want to take a break at any time during the interview, please let us know. I can also alert your case counselor who can meet with you if you feel that would be helpful.

If you have any questions about the interview or the study, you can write to:

The Urban Institute  
Attn: Meredith Dank  
Justice Policy Center  
2100 M Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20037

*By signing this form, I agree to participate in this interview process as described above:*

Individual's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

(Please Print)

Individual's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix F

## Law Enforcement Interview Protocol

### Estimating the Unlawful Commercial Sex Economy in the United States

#### LAW ENFORCEMENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Position Title:

Location:

Interview Date:

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*Unlawful sex activity (including sex trafficking, prostitution, and child pornography) poses significant risk to public safety and undermines fundamental human rights. Together, these activities comprise the Unlawful Commercial Sex Economy (UCSE).*

*The actors who propel and benefit from the UCSE are recognized as serious criminal elements. However, without reliable estimates of the UCSE, we lack a verifiable and detailed understanding of trade networks that comprise the UCSE. The goal of this study is to answer two broad research questions.*

- *First, how does the UCSE operate?*
- *Second, what is the role of social networks in the UCSE?*

*We plan to estimate the structure (qualitative and quantitative) and scale of the UCSE, compare this economy to other illegal economies in those cities, and measure how the amount of this activity has changed over the last five years. This project focuses on six local sites across the United States. We expect that focusing on how the UCSE operates in these different locations will result in the best available estimates of the UCSE in each site.*

*Thank you for participating in our study. Do you have any questions before we begin?*

## Part I: Background information

1. What is your current position/title? What unit/department do you reside within?
2. Please describe your current role and the role of your unit/department (in general and with respect to human trafficking).
3. How long have you been in your current position?
4. How long have you worked on UCS related cases?
5. In what capacity have you worked on these cases?

## Part II: General UCS Case Investigation Questions

6. What types of UCS-related cases do you and/or your unit/department most often investigate?  
*Prompt: prostitution, child pornography, sex trafficking*
7. How many of the following types of cases has your agency handled since 2000?
  - a. Sex trafficking
  - b. Child pornography
  - c. Prostitution
8. Did all of these cases result in an arrest?
9. How many of the cases resulted in a conviction/plea?
  - a. Sex trafficking
  - b. Child pornography
  - c. Prostitution
10. Are there common characteristics that UCS offenders share? If yes, what are some of them?
11. How are UCS offenders connected to one another?
12. Are traffickers directly or indirectly connected to child pornographers? If so, how?
13. How extensive are UCS offenders' networks? Are they primarily local, inter-state, and/or international?

14. How (if at all) do you track these networks? Do you work with agencies in different states? Countries?
15. To what degree are UCS offenders connected to the illegal drugs and weapons economies? What do these connections look like?
16. How has the unlawful commercial sex economy changed in recent years?
17. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate the USCE in 2005 versus 2011?
18. Has your agency managed to track how much money is generated from UCS cases? If so, how has your agency tracked this?
19. What kind of illegal transactions related to UCS cases has your agency recovered?
20. Has your agency seized assets related to UCS cases?
  - a. If yes, what kinds of assets?
  - b. What is the approximate monetary value of those assets?
21. At what point would an investigation into prostitution turn into a charge of sex trafficking?  
(*probe for both adults and juveniles*)
  - a. Is involvement by a pimp and/or john a requirement to charge sex trafficking in cases of adult sex trafficking?
  - b. Is involvement by a pimp and/or john a requirement to charge sex trafficking in cases of minor/child sex trafficking?
22. Are there needs you or your department/unit or other partners have that would help overcome challenges investigating UCS cases?
23. Are there specific things about your state law (if applicable) that help facilitate the prosecution of UCS cases?
24. Are there specific things about your state law (if applicable) that impede the prosecution of UCS cases?
25. Are there any differences in the investigation and prosecution of sex trafficking cases involving US citizen victims and/or suspects vs. foreign national victims and/or suspects?

## Part II: Specific Case Questions

*(Prompt—Now we'd like to talk specifically about UCS related cases.)*

26. How did X case first open as an investigation (tip from public, undercover investigation, investigated as another crime that turned out to be human trafficking, etc.)?
27. Were you involved in the investigation of X case from the beginning through the conclusion of the case?
  - a. If no, who else was involved? What agencies were these investigators from?
28. Were other state or local law enforcement entities involved in the investigation of X case?
  - a. If yes, who and in what capacity?
29. Were any federal law enforcement agencies (FBI, ICE, etc.) involved in the investigation of X case?
  - a. If yes, who and in what capacity?
  - b. Probe: What role did ICE play (if any) in the initial investigation?
30. How long did it take to investigate X case?
31. What types of investigative strategies were employed in this case (e.g. wiretaps, surveillance, undercover work)?
32. Did you find any records of assets, profits, expenses, etc.? If so,
  - a. What kind of records did you find (e.g., ledgers, spreadsheets, rough calculations in a notebook, etc.)?
  - b. Where do you keep these records?
  - c. Did you submit them as evidence?
33. Did you seize any assets? If so,
  - a. What kind of assets?
  - b. How much did the assets total (approximately)?
34. Were suspects arrested in X case?
  - a. If yes, were the arrests executed by state or federal officials?
  - b. Can you tell me a little about how the arrests were executed? Were there any challenges specific to the execution of the arrests (e.g. obtaining warrants, etc.)?
  - c. If yes, what happened to the suspects following arrest? Were they detained (for how long) or booked and released?

35. Were the suspects part of a larger syndicate or organization or were they working alone?
36. If they were part of a larger syndicate or organization, can you describe the structure of the syndicate/organization?
- Number of people involved
  - Hierarchy
  - Recruitment tactics
  - Geographical spread
  - Involvement in other unlawful activities (drugs, guns, identify fraud, etc.)
37. Of suspects that were arrested, where were they in the “hierarchy” of the business structure? Were you able to apprehend the main trafficker or child pornographer?
38. When did the prosecutor become involved in the investigation of X case?
- Clarify if it was a state or federal prosecutor and find out name and unit.*
  - Did the case go before a grand jury before the execution of the arrests?
39. How was the decision made to take the case through the State or Federal System?
40. How were the suspect(s) in X case charged? (state, federal, both, human trafficking, non-human trafficking, both)
- Are there specific challenges you see to charging human trafficking cases (probe: charging under human trafficking statutes either state or federal)?
41. For X case, were there other potential suspects associated with the case that are not represented in the charging document?
- If yes, how many?
  - What prevented these suspects from being identified/represented in charging?
42. For X case, were other non-UCS charges applied?
- If yes, what were they?
  - If yes, who made the charging decision and why?
43. Is it common to charge human trafficking cases with multiple charges?
- If yes, what other charges are common?
44. Are you aware of the prosecutorial outcome of the case?



- a. If yes, how did you learn about the outcome? (media, prosecutor contacted investigator, investigator contacted prosecutor, etc.)

45. Is there any other information you would like to provide about UCSE cases in your jurisdiction?

# Appendix G

## Prosecutor Interview Protocol

### Estimating the Unlawful Commercial Sex Economy in the United States

#### PROSECUTOR INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Position Title:

Location:

Interview Date:

---

*Unlawful sex activity (including sex trafficking, prostitution, and child pornography) poses significant risk to public safety and undermines fundamental human rights. Together, these activities comprise the Unlawful Commercial Sex Economy (UCSE).*

*The actors who propel and benefit from the UCSE are recognized as serious criminal elements. However, without reliable estimates of the UCSE, we lack a verifiable and detailed understanding of trade networks that comprise the UCSE. The goal of this study is to answer two broad research questions.*

- *First, how does the UCSE operate?*
- *Second, what is the role of social networks in the UCSE?*

*We plan to estimate the structure (qualitative and quantitative) and scale of the UCSE, compare this economy to other illegal economies in those cities, and measure how the amount of this activity has changed over the last five years. This project focuses on six local sites across the United States. We expect that focusing on how the UCSE operates in these different locations will result in the best available estimates of the UCSE in each site.*

*Thank you for participating in our study. Do you have any questions before we begin?*

## Part I: Background information

46. What is your current position/title? What unit/department do you reside within?
47. Please describe your current role and the role of your unit/department (in general and with respect to human trafficking).
48. How long have you been in your current position?
49. How long have you worked on UCS related cases?
50. In what capacity have you worked on these cases?

## Part II: General UCS Case Investigation Questions

51. What types of UCS-related cases do you and/or your unit/department most often investigate?  
*Prompt: prostitution, child pornography, sex trafficking*
52. How many of the following types of cases has your agency handled since 2000?
  - a. Sex trafficking
  - b. Child pornography
  - c. Prostitution
53. Did all of these cases result in an arrest?
54. How many of the cases resulted in a conviction/plea?
  - a. Sex trafficking
  - b. Child pornography
  - c. Prostitution
55. Are there common characteristics that UCS offenders share? If yes, what are some of them?
56. How are UCS offenders connected to one another?
57. Are traffickers directly or indirectly connected to child pornographers? If so, how?

58. How extensive are UCS offenders' networks? Are they primarily local, inter-state, and/or international?
59. How (if at all) do you track these networks? Do you work with agencies in different states? Countries?
60. To what degree are UCS offenders connected to the illegal drugs and weapons economies? What do these connections look like?
61. How has the unlawful commercial sex economy changed in recent years?
62. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate the USCE in 2005 versus 2011?
63. Has your agency managed to track how much money is generated from UCS cases? If so, how has your agency tracked this?
64. What kind of illegal transactions related to UCS cases has your agency recovered?
65. Has your agency seized assets related to UCS cases?
- a. If yes, what kinds of assets?
  - b. What is the approximate monetary value of those assets?
66. At what point would an investigation into prostitution turn into a charge of sex trafficking?  
(*probe for both adults and juveniles*)
- a. Is involvement by a pimp and/or john a requirement to charge sex trafficking in cases of adult sex trafficking?
  - b. Is involvement by a pimp and/or john a requirement to charge sex trafficking in cases of minor/child sex trafficking?
67. Are there needs you or your department/unit or other partners have that would help overcome challenges investigating UCS cases?
68. Are there specific things about your state law (if applicable) that help facilitate the prosecution of UCS cases?
69. Are there specific things about your state law (if applicable) that impede the prosecution of UCS cases?

70. Are there any differences in the investigation and prosecution of sex trafficking cases involving US citizen victims and/or suspects vs. foreign national victims and/or suspects?

## Part II: Specific Case Questions

*(Prompt—Now we'd like to talk specifically about UCS related cases.)*

71. How did X case first open as an investigation (tip from public, undercover investigation, investigated as another crime that turned out to be human trafficking, etc.)?

72. Were you involved in the investigation of X case from the beginning through the conclusion of the case?

a. If no, who else was involved? What agencies were these investigators from?

73. Were other state or local law enforcement entities involved in the investigation of X case?

a. If yes, who and in what capacity?

74. Were any federal law enforcement agencies (FBI, ICE, etc.) involved in the investigation of X case?

a. If yes, who and in what capacity?

b. Probe: What role did ICE play (if any) in the initial investigation?

75. How long did it take to investigate X case?

76. What types of investigative strategies were employed in this case (e.g. wiretaps, surveillance, undercover work)?

77. Did you find any records of assets, profits, expenses, etc.? If so,

a. What kind of records did you find (e.g., ledgers, spreadsheets, rough calculations in a notebook, etc.)?

b. Where do you keep these records?

c. Did you submit them as evidence?

78. Did you seize any assets? If so,

a. What kind of assets?

b. How much did the assets total (approximately)?

79. Were suspects arrested in X case?

a. If yes, were the arrests executed by state or federal officials?

- b. Can you tell me a little about how the arrests were executed? Were there any challenges specific to the execution of the arrests (e.g. obtaining warrants, etc.)?
  - c. If yes, what happened to the suspects following arrest? Were they detained (for how long) or booked and released?
  
- 80. Were the suspects part of a larger syndicate or organization or were they working alone?
  
- 81. If they were part of a larger syndicate or organization, can you describe the structure of the syndicate/organization?
  - a. Number of people involved
  - b. Hierarchy
  - c. Recruitment tactics
  - d. Geographical spread
  - e. Involvement in other unlawful activities (drugs, guns, identify fraud, etc.)
  
- 82. Of suspects that were arrested, where were they in the “hierarchy” of the business structure? Were you able to apprehend the main trafficker or child pornographer?
  
- 83. When did the prosecutor become involved in the investigation of X case?
  - a. *Clarify if it was a state or federal prosecutor and find out name and unit.*
  - b. Did the case go before a grand jury before the execution of the arrests?
  
- 84. How was the decision made to take the case through the State or Federal System?
  
- 85. How were the suspect(s) in X case charged? (state, federal, both, human trafficking, non-human trafficking, both)
  - a. Are there specific challenges you see to charging human trafficking cases (probe: charging under human trafficking statutes either state or federal)?
  
- 86. For X case, were there other potential suspects associated with the case that are not represented in the charging document?
  - a. If yes, how many?
  - b. What prevented these suspects from being identified/represented in charging?
  
- 87. For X case, were other non-UCS charges applied?
  - a. If yes, what were they?
  - b. If yes, who made the charging decision and why?
  
- 88. Is it common to charge human trafficking cases with multiple charges?
  - a. If yes, what other charges are common?

89. Are you aware of the prosecutorial outcome of the case?
- a. If yes, how did you learn about the outcome? (media, prosecutor contacted investigator, investigator contacted prosecutor, etc.)
90. Is there any other information you would like to provide about UCSE cases in your jurisdiction?

# Appendix H

## Inmate Interview Protocol

### Estimating the Unlawful Commercial Sex Economy in the United States

#### INMATE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

##### Background Questions

1. How long have you been in this facility?
2. What is the main offense you are currently serving time for?
3. How old are you?
4. What race do you identify yourself as?
5. What is the highest level of education you completed?

##### Business Structure

*For individuals who were not involved in the production or sale of images, but were involved in (free) distribution, possession, and purchase of images, skip to technology section.*

6. Prior to incarceration, did you see yourself as running or being involved in running a business?
7. Were you involved in the production or procurement of material or people? If not, were you involved in the distribution and or marketing of the product and/or people? Or both?
8. How did you recruit individuals to work for you?
9. How did you get started in your business?
10. Did you have a business model that you followed? If so, could you describe it?
11. Was your business a one-person operation or did it involve partnering with others?
12. What cities did that business operate in?
13. Which city was best in terms of business?
14. If you rank that city as a 10 on a scale of 1-10, how would you rank the other cities (in terms of business)?
15. If you worked with others: How many people did you work with directly?
  - a. Can you describe them (e.g. age, race, etc.)? *We are not interested in any identifying information such as names, addresses, etc.*
16. How many people did you work with indirectly?
  - a. Can you describe them (e.g. age, race, etc.)? *We are not interested in any identifying information such as names, addresses, etc.*
17. In what capacity did you work with others? (Time, location, tasks, etc.)
18. How did you communicate with others? (e.g. texting, phone conversations, social network sites, multi-player video game chats, etc.)



19. Who did what? How was that decided?
20. How was responsibility divided?
21. Did everyone cooperate?
22. How was conflict resolved?
23. How did you manage work relationships?
24. Were there certain rules or regulations that you enforced with your employees?
25. How often did people/employees come and go?
26. How were new employers, employees or partners found?
27. If you worked alone, how did you manage that?
  - a. How large was your business?
  - b. How do you find suppliers (of labor or material)?
  - c. How do you find and manage customers?
28. How did your (business) involvement change over time?
  - a. Was that business better at the time of your arrest than it was 5 years prior?
  - b. How would you rate it on a scale of 1-10?
29. Did you have business competitors?
  - a. If yes: How many did you have?
  - b. How many did you do business with?
  - c. Were there more competitors at the time of your arrest than there were 5 years prior? (For whichever is higher, if that is a 10 on a scale of 1-10, what was it at the other time?)
  - d. Can you tell me about them, especially how they were similar to or different from your operation? *We are not interested in any identifying information.*
30. How would you compare the size of your business with those of your competitors?
  - a. Can you rate their businesses in comparison with the one you were involved in on a scale of 1-10 at the time of your arrest?
31. Has the number of competitors changed over time?

### **Technical Organization**

32. How many transactions would you make in a typical day?
33. What kinds of transactions were most typical? How much money did that bring in?
34. Where did you work? (What part of the city, etc.)
35. How many apartments/buildings/etc. did you/your business maintain? What was the cost of that?
36. Did you work there with others (or perhaps others you worked with worked elsewhere?)
37. What kind of hours did you work? What about others?
38. What kind of money were you making?
39. What forms of payment did you accept (e.g. cash, credit, etc.)?
40. How did you move people/goods from place to place?
41. How was security maintained?

42. What kinds of security precautions did you take?
43. In your business, did you use any things like computers, vehicles, security equipment, communications devices, etc.?
44. How much did all of that cost you?
45. Can you tell me about an unusual business related expense?
46. How did you find clients?
  - a. Did you use certain kinds of social networking websites?
47. How/what did you do to ensure or encourage they return as customers?
48. How would you describe your clients (race, ethnicity, jobs, etc.)?
49. How did you publicize your business?
  - a. What did that cost you?
50. How did you distribute your goods/humans?
51. How did you manage your money?
  - a. Did others help you with that?
  - b. If so, who?
  - c. How did you chose these individuals?
  - d. Were there any types of financial services or products you needed and could only get with one bank/institution? (*e.g. online access, pre-paid cards with higher limits, ePayment capability, merchant processing, etc.*)
52. What problems did you have with money management?
53. What did you spent your money on?
54. How much money did you reinvest back into the business?
55. Did you use certain methods to hide your money (e.g. green dot cards)?
56. What losses did the business suffer?
57. Did you have any long term plans on what you wanted to do with your money?
58. How did you deal with risk?
  - a. Did you consider the work risky?
  - b. What were some of the risks that you thought about (prison, arrest, loss of business) and how did these compare to each other?
  - c. What sorts of activities (transporting people, finding new clients, renting hotels) did you think were most risky?
  - d. What were the risks of these activities?
  - e. How did you respond to risk? What measures did you take to protect yourself from these risks?
  - f. Do you think that other individuals in a similar business as yours know the risks before they enter the business?

## **Technology Questions**

*These questions pertain to individuals convicted of crimes related to child pornography*

59. How many images/videos did you have in your possession when you were arrested?
60. How long have you been collecting and/or distributing images and videos?
61. What kinds of technology/programs/sites did you use to find images and videos?
62. What kinds of technology/programs/sites did you use to distribute images and videos?
63. How did you learn about these programs and technology? How did you figure out how to use them?
64. Where did you store this information?
65. Did you ever purchase images or videos? If so, how much did you pay?
66. Why did you decide to purchase the information as opposed to downloading it for free?
67. How did you communicate with the individuals that you received/distributed the information from/to?
68. Did you ever meet with these individuals in person?
69. Did you take certain steps to avoid law enforcement detection? If so, what were those steps?
70. Has the advancement in technology made it easier to trade images/videos? Has it made it more risky?

## **Other Illicit Network Questions**

71. What other businesses/individuals were important to maintaining your business?
72. How frequently were you in touch with them?
73. How long have you known them?
74. Did you exchange goods or services with them? Did they with you?

## **Other**

75. How did you get the girls/individuals working for you to continue to work for you?
76. Do you feel the representation of “pimps” (or applicable term) in the media is accurate?
77. How would you compare those images with your perception of yourself?
78. Have you known people that did fit the media representations of “pimps” (or applicable term)?
79. How would you describe differences and similarities between yourself and the way you did your business with others in the same line of work who you knew or were aware of?
80. What was an average day in your life like while involved in (activity)?
81. What was an exceptional day like?

Thank you very much for your time.

# Appendix I

## Sex Worker Informed Consent Form

### STUDY PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I represent the Urban Institute, a non-profit research firm in Washington, DC. The Urban Institute is conducting this study for the National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice. The purpose of this study is to learn about the unlawful commercial sex economy (UCSE) in the U.S., more specifically, how it works and how it has changed over time.

The following things will happen in this interview:

1. You will be asked, in private, about your involvement in the UCSE. Questions will focus on the structure of your business, the technical organization of your business, and the scope and structure of your social networks. This interview will take approximately 45 minutes to one hour. You may refuse to answer any questions or stop the interview at any time. If you would like to speak with a counselor at any point during or after the interview, we will contact the appropriate person(s) to make sure you are able to speak to someone immediately.
2. To thank you for your participation in the interview today, you will receive a \$50 gift card upon completion of this interview.

We promise you the following things:

- **Confidentiality:** Your responses will be kept confidential. Your name and any other identifying information will not be disclosed to anyone, other than the researchers conducting this study, without your permission. Your name will never be used in any report. Reports will combine information from many individuals who are participating in this project. However, all the information gathered from interviews such as this one will be combined so no one will be able to deduce who exactly said what.

Any information that you tell me cannot be used to affect your status here in this program or your ability to participate in any programs in the community.

An exception to the promise of confidentiality is specific information about child abuse or intent to commit crime in the future or intent to harm yourself. The Urban Institute will not ask you about these issues. However, the Urban Institute will report this information to the proper authorities if you share such information.

The confidentiality of your responses is protected under Title 28 Part 22 of the Code of Federal Regulations. That means that information discussed in the interviews (except as otherwise mentioned) are fully protected from law enforcement investigation. We also ask that you not

discuss new or unprosecuted criminal activity during today's interview. If you begin to talk about these activities, we will stop you from continuing to do so.

All Urban Institute employees must sign a Pledge of Confidentiality. Interviewers also sign a Pledge of Confidentiality requiring them not to tell anyone outside of the research team anything about you.

- **Voluntary Participation:** You may refuse to answer any questions or provide any requested information whenever you want. You may stop the interview at any time. If you do decide not to participate in this interview, your decision will not be shared with anyone in this program. Your decision to participate in this interview will in no way affect your participation in this program or any treatment or services available to you. Likewise, your decision not to participate will not affect your participation in this program or access to services.

If you have any questions about the interview or the study, you can write to:

UCSE Study  
Attn: Meredith Dank  
The Urban Institute  
Justice Policy Center  
2100 M Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20037

I have read this to you because I want you to understand what I mean when I promise you confidentiality and voluntary participation. Do you have any questions?

I will now sign this form to show that I have read you this information and have promised you confidentiality.

---

Urban Institute Research Staff Signature and Date

*By signing this form, I agree to participate in this interview process as described above:*

Individual's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

(Please Print)

Individual's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix J

## Stakeholder Informed Consent Form

### Estimating the Unlawful Commercial Sex Economy in the United States

#### INTRODUCTION AND INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I represent The Urban Institute, a nonprofit research organization in Washington, DC. Researchers at the Urban Institute's Justice Policy Center and John Jay College have been tasked by the Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice to measure the scope and structure of the unlawful commercial sex economy (UCSE) in the U.S. Study findings will help us to close the gap in our understanding of the nature of UCSE activities and their extent.

We would like to invite you to be interviewed as part of this research study. The interview will last approximately one hour and includes questions about your involvement in the investigation and prosecution of closed UCSE cases in your jurisdiction.

I am asking for your consent to be interviewed as a primary stakeholder. It is important to understand:

1. You do not have to participate. Your decision on whether or not to participate will never be made known to anyone, not even program staff.
2. You may stop participating in the study anytime.

If you participate in this research, we promise you the following things:

**Confidentiality.** Everything you report on any interview will be kept in strictest confidence. Only the people doing the research will see any information that identifies you personally. Your name will never be used in any report. The answers you provide during an interview will be combined with answers from many individuals and will be reported in the aggregate without a link to your name. However, because there are a limited number of law enforcement, prosecutors and public defenders that work on cases related to the UCSE in your jurisdiction, it is possible for someone to deductively determine who was potentially interviewed for the purposes of this study.

Everyone who works on this study has signed a Pledge of Confidentiality requiring them not to tell anyone outside the research staff anything you tell the researchers. The only exception is if you tell the interviewer about your intention to harm yourself or commit a specific crime against someone else it may have to be reported. All information you provide to us is protected by federal statute. That statute protects all information we have about you from being turned over to anyone, even if ordered by a court, without your consent. That is, all information will be kept private like a medical record.

**Voluntary Participation.** You may refuse to answer any questions. You may stop the interview at any time.

If you have any questions about the study, you can call collect to William Adams, the Project Director, (202) 261- 5506 or write to him at The Urban Institute, 2100 M Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037.

There are no foreseeable risks to you for taking part in this study other than the possibility of someone deductively determining who was potentially interviewed for this study. There are no direct benefits to you for participating in the study. However, the results of this interview as well as the others will help us measure the scope and scale of the unlawful commercial sex economy in the U.S.

The decision to participate in this research project is up to you. You do not have to participate and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may withdraw at any time.

I am signing this form to show that I have read you this information and have promised confidentiality. If you agree to participate, please sign this form to show that I have explained this information to you and you agree to be interviewed.

---

Interviewer's Signature and Date

*I consent to participate in this study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and information on my participation will not be known to anyone. I understand that I can stop participating at any time or refuse to answer questions in any interview.*

Please check **one**:

\_\_\_ I agree to the interview being audio-taped

\_\_\_ I do **not** agree to the interview being audio-taped

Name \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix K

# Bureau of Prisons Letter

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

You are invited to be part of a study being conducted by the Urban Institute, a non-profit research organization based in Washington, D.C. As part of our study, we will be talking with inmates to learn more about their activities prior to incarceration. You have been selected to participate in a one-on-one interview with one of our researchers. The interview will last approximately 60-90 minutes, and the interview date will be determined based on interest in participation.

**We will be coming to your facility during the \_\_\_\_\_.** at which point you may agree to participate in this study. At that time, we will give you more information about the study and you will have time to ask questions. Then you can decide if you want to participate – the choice is up to you. If you do not want to participate, you will be free to leave.

If you do choose to participate, the information you give us will be kept completely secret. We will combine the information you give us with responses from everyone else we interview. Your name or details about you will never be used in a report.

Studies like this one are an important source of information. We hope you will join us to learn more about the study.

Sincerely,



Meredith Dank

The Urban Institute



# Appendix L

## Terminology

**Blade:** A public location where sex workers congregate and solicit clients.

**Bottom:** A sex worker who has a higher status than other sex workers affiliated with the same pimp. The bottom's duties may include recruiting, supervising, punishing, and controlling the other women. Bottoms may later become pimps themselves.

**Cisgender:** An individual whose self-identified gender is aligned with their biological sex at birth.

**Concrete:** See **Blade**.

**Date:** The exchange of a sex act for money, or the individual buying a sex act. A sex worker can have "dates" or be "with a date." See **trick**.

**Deep web:** Internet content that is not commonly indexed by standard search engines.

**Dope:** A term used for specific types of drugs, particularly crack cocaine and heroin.

**Full service:** A commercial sex transaction that includes intercourse.

**Honey comb hide-out:** A safe place to hang out with friends and party where one doesn't have to worry about the police.

**IRC (Internet Relay Chat):** An online chat service that allows live communication in groups or one-on-one private messages.

**In pocket:** A sex worker who follows her pimp's rules and doesn't misbehave.

**John:** The individual client who pays for a sex act.

**On automatic:** When a sex worker is not in direct contact with her pimp for any reason (such as the pimp being unavailable due to being in jail or the worker is traveling to a city alone) but continues to perform commercial sex transactions for him.

**Out of pocket:** A sex worker who does not follow her pimp's rules. In this scenario, she will be asked or forced to leave the "stable."

**Peer-to-peer:** A decentralized network of computers where interconnected peer computers share resources among each other. This is contrasted with a client-server network, where a central server provides services and resources to clients.

**Renegade:** A sex worker who is not affiliated with a pimp.

**Series:** A numbered set of child pornography images or videos that display the same victim.

**Stable:** A group of women who work for the same pimp.

**Stroll:** see **Blade**.

**Tor (The Onion Router):** An online software that enables the user to establish online anonymity and confidentiality, including user location, identity, and web traffic.

**Track:** see **Blade**.

**Trick:** The exchange of a sex act for money, or the individual buying a sex act. A prostitute can “turn a trick,” which means a performing a specified sex act for money, or refer to “being with a trick.”

**Trick rollin’:** A situation where a sex worker steals money or property from a john.