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Author(s): David J. Maurrasse, Cynthia C. Jones

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Experiences of Youth in the Sex Trade in Miami

By David J. Maurrasse, Cynthia C. Jones, Marga Incorporated



520 Eighth Avenue, 18th Floor
New York, New York 10018
646.386.3100 fax 212.397.0985
www.courtinnovation.org



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520 Eighth Avenue, 18th Floor
New York, New York 10018
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Marga Incorporated, a consulting firm, conducted this study. The company's founder, David Maurrasse, served as the Principal Investigator. The Co-Principal Investigator was Pelin Munis, who led field research. Munis was hired by Marga Incorporated in order to play this role. A team of research assistants worked with Munis, including Cassandra Montaudon, Cynthia Castaldo Walsh, Lilian Medina, Maria Moncayo, and Rachel Lewis. Munis and the research assistants served as the field research team.

Researchers reported to Cynthia Jones of Marga Incorporated. Jones handled the project's administrative components. Jones also led various interns and administrative staff. Elinel Almanzar and Jillian Harmon were among these staff. Thanks to all Marga staff and researchers who worked on this project.

Of course, this project is underneath the broader study of the Center for Court Innovation for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention of the U.S. Department of Justice. Marga Incorporated very much appreciated the opportunity to conduct this study. Thanks to the Center for Court Innovation for providing the framework for this study.

For correspondence about this Miami report, please contact David Maurrasse at dmaurasse@margainc.com. For questions about the larger study, please contact Rachel Swaner at rswaner@nycourts.gov.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This study of youth engaged in the sex trade in Miami, Florida included 264 interviews with young people, ages 13-24. This report captures the findings from these interviews, conducted between December 2010 and July 2011. In their interviews, respondents discussed their backgrounds, how they entered the sex trade (referred to as “the life”), how they make and spend money, how they work with customers, how they work with pimps and market facilitators, their health issues, their interactions with law enforcement, and their outlook for the future.

Needless to say, the responses to these questions include compelling and tragic stories. This report provides a qualitative discussion of the common themes and findings, while also painting a picture of these respondents’ varied experiences. There is certainly consistency in some responses, and trends emerge across the many interviews. However, it is difficult to typecast a quintessential experience based on these interviews. For instance, as indicated in the various segments of this report, these young people entered this lifestyle for different reasons. Many of these young people were not forcibly dragged into this work by pimps. In many cases, circumstances led them into the life, and recognition of the opportunity to generate income keeps them in the life.

Many of the respondents want to change the path they have been following and have hopes and dreams about the future. However, as detailed below, external circumstances and barriers keep them on their path. Many of these young people are low income and African American (typical of the diversity found in Miami) and struggling to survive. The world of exchanging sex for money, for many of these young people, while incredibly risky, is a manner of survival.

The study in Miami, Florida is part of a larger study, funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and overseen by the Center for Court Innovation, to fill the current gap in scientific knowledge regarding the size, needs, and characteristics of youth in the sex trade. Based on original research in six sites, including Atlantic City (NJ), the Bay Area (CA), Chicago (IL), Dallas (TX), Las Vegas (NV), and Miami, the larger study aims to estimate the size of the population of youth in the sex trade; to describe their characteristics, experiences, and health and service needs; to explore what services are available; and to

analyze arrest patterns and prosecution and recidivism outcomes when these youth encounter the juvenile or criminal justice systems.

The current report represents one of six site-specific reports that provide systematic, detailed findings drawn from the youth interviews in each site¹. A multi-site report describes the overall study methodology; differences in how that methodology was applied by site; findings from a national and multisite analysis of arrest, prosecution, and recidivism data; themes emerging from social service provider interviews; and multi-site quantitative findings from the youth interviews in all six sites.² Because the multi-site report has a quantitative focus, this report and the other five site-specific reports endeavor to provide a rich qualitative account that reveals and gives voice to the experiences, perceptions, and needs of the relevant population of youth.

¹ For other site reports, see: Jones, N., and Gamson, J., with Amato, B., Cornwell, S., Fisher, S., Fucella, P., Lee, V., and Zolala-Tovar, V. (2016). *Experiences of Youth in the Sex Trade in the Bay Area*. New York, NY: Center for Court Innovation.; Marcus, A., Riggs, R., Rivera, S., and Curtis, R. (2016). *Experiences of Youth in the Sex Trade in Atlantic City*. New York, NY: Center for Court Innovation.; Martin, M., Champeau, H., Ullrich, S., Johnson, A., and Cardarelli, K. (2016). *Experiences of Youth in the Sex Trade in North Texas: Shattered Lives*. New York, NY: Center for Court Innovation.; Schaffner, L., Buhr, G., Lewis, D., Roc, M., and Volpintesta, H. (2016). *Experiences of Youth in the Sex Trade in Chicago: Issues in Youth Poverty and Homelessness*. New York, NY: Center for Court Innovation.; and Wagner, B.M., Whitmer, J.M., and Spivak, A.L. (2016). *Experiences of Youth in the Sex Trade in Las Vegas*. New York, NY: Center for Court Innovation.

² Swaner, R., Labriola, M., Rempel, M., Walker, A., and Spadafore, J. (2016). *Youth Involvement in the Sex Trade: A National Study*. New York, NY: Center for Court Innovation. For all reports produced by this project, see www.courtinnovation.org/youthstudy.

Chapter 2

Miami: Cultural Geography, Rationale for Site Choice, and Evolving Expectations of the Study

With a population of just under 2.6 million,³ Miami Dade County includes the City of Miami and several other municipalities, including Miami Beach. The county is culturally diverse. Racial categories of black or white do not fully capture the range of ethnicities throughout the area. Many of the county's roughly 20 percent black/African American population are of Caribbean descent from countries such as Haiti and Jamaica. Most of those categorized as white in the County are Hispanic. Slightly over half of the County's residents are foreign born.

Prostitution is prevalent throughout the County and South Florida, partly due to a substantial tourism industry. Additionally, this region is a destination for numerous major conventions, national sporting events, and a range of other festivities. Visitors seek entertainment of various sorts, including sex.

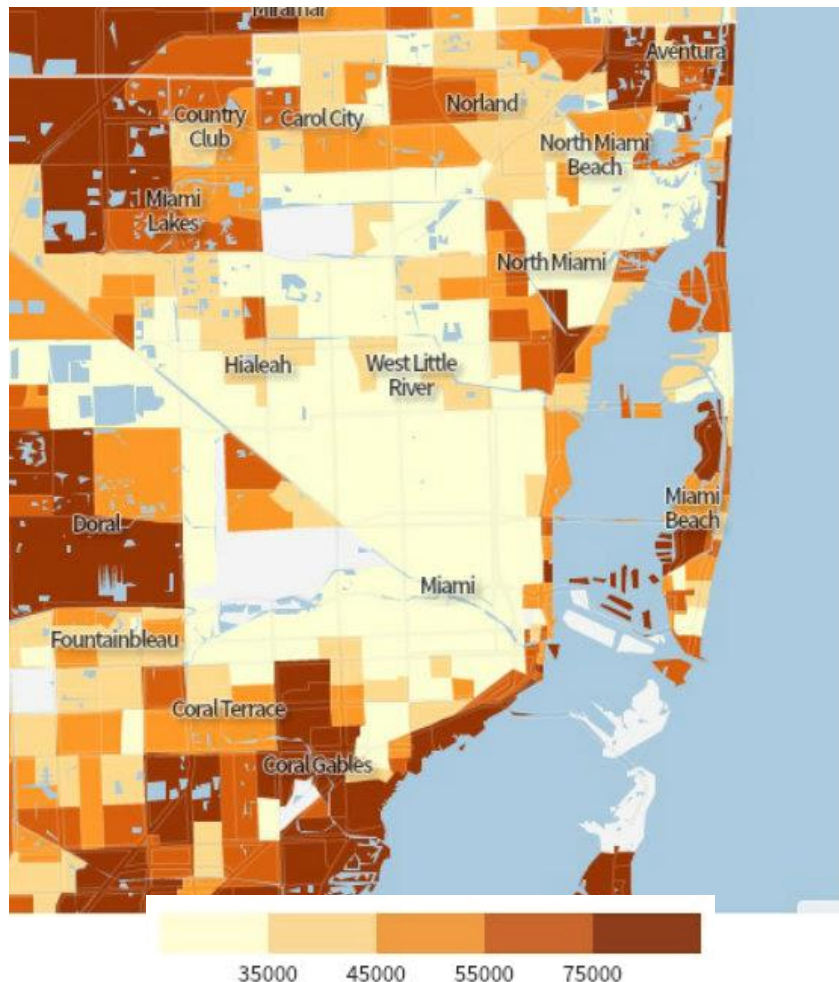
Prostitution, and the participation of minors in this activity, has been newsworthy in recent years. Exchanging sex for money in Miami Dade County and other parts of the region is illegal. Various attempts by law enforcement to crack down on prostitution through "stings" and "operations" have been fairly characteristic of the region in recent years.

As the most well-known tourist destination within the county, one would expect South Beach to be a center of prostitution. Indeed, it had been, but police activity against street-level prostitution gradually altered this landscape. In 2000, much of South Beach was declared a "prostitution-free zone" under the Prostitution Mapping Program. During that year, between

³ U.S. Census Bureau: State and County QuickFacts. Data derived from Population Estimates, American Community Survey, Census of Population and Housing, State and County Housing Unit Estimates, County Business Patterns, Nonemployer Statistics, Economic Census, Survey of Business Owners, Building Permits. Retrieved December 23, 2013
<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/12/12086.html>.

January and July, 274 prostitution arrests were made in South Beach. In the prior year, 334 arrests were made in the entire region.⁴

Miami – Dade Metro Area Map



(See appendix for reference)

⁴ Hidalgo, Margarita. August 8, 2000. "Police to Restrict South Beach Hookers." *Sun-Sentinel*. Retrieved on May 20, 2013 http://articles.sun-sentinel.com/2000-08-08/news/0008080096_1_prostitution-arrests-miami-beach-police-ocean-drive.

South Beach is a destination for not only tourists but also others in the area, including prostitutes. But in recent years, street-level prostitution has been concentrated in low-income areas⁵. This does not mean that prostitution does not occur in South Beach, but *open solicitation* on the street is less likely to be found in South Beach and most likely to be found in a range of low income areas in the City of Miami. These areas have become the focal point of recent police activity, cracking down on both supply and demand. Miami-Dade Police have been arresting johns and prostitutes through “Operation Dear John.” This operation is intended to combat “human trafficking” by affecting the demand side of the equation. In April of 2012, for example, police descended on an area near Southwest 8th Street and Southwest 43rd Avenue and arrested 22 johns and 5 prostitutes; including a 19-year-old woman.⁶

Biscayne Boulevard, north of 36th Street (this same street is the main thoroughfare in downtown Miami, several blocks south of this point) has been another site of police crackdowns. In this area, “Operation Streetwalker” takes a different approach – encouraging residents in this area to persuade judges to give substantial sentences to anyone arrested for prostitution-related charges. In this program, residents are asked to attend the bond hearings and trials of those arrested.⁷ It should be noted that the demographics of parts of this area have been changing significantly. Once a relatively abandoned area with nearby low income residents, this area has been attracting higher income residents and artists.

The 79th Street corridor in Miami was a major source of respondents in this study. The district is no stranger to police operations as well. In May of 2012, police embarked on a two-day sting, which netted 57 arrests. This activity is under “Operation Resilience.”⁸ While street-level prostitution persists; it is only one segment of a multifaceted industry. Higher end prostitution, not only in Miami, but also in many other cities, is facilitated through escort services. In addition, a great deal of prostitution is happening online.

⁵ Low income areas are clearly indicated on the map in the appendix. The 79th Street Corridor is in one of these areas.

⁶ No author indicated. April 20, 2012. “Miami-Dade Prostitution Sting: ‘Operation Dear John’ Nets 27 Arrests in One Block.” *Huffpost Miami*. Retrieved May 20, 2013
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/04/20/miami-dades-operation-dear-john_n_1441365.html.

⁷ Goyette, Jared. March 9, 2011. “Police Crack Down on Prostitution off Biscayne – with Residents’ Help.” *The Miami Herald*. Retrieved May 20, 2013
<http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/03/09/2105484/police-crack-down-on-prostitution.html>.

⁸ Madan, Monique O. May 29, 2012. “Miami Drug and Prostitution Sting puts 57 Offenders in Handcuffs.” *The Miami Herald*. Retrieved May 20, 2013
<http://www.miamiherald.com/2012/05/29/2822140/miami-drug-and-prostitution-sting.html>.

A *Miami Herald* article noted, “What’s certain is that the world of underage prostitution has moved off the street and onto the internet, where it’s a few links away.”⁹ The article references the prevalence of prostitution on *Backpage.com*. Indeed, this trend is significant. We found that many of the respondents we interviewed did not use the internet to find customers. Perhaps, as many of the young people who participated in this study are from low income backgrounds, street-level prostitution is their chosen path.

Overall, Miami is a vibrant site for studying the population of interest. It includes a vast and complex range of ways in which sex is purchased with substantial participation from minors and other young people. Investigating Miami produced numerous interviews that inform the contents of this report.

⁹ Miller, Carol Marbin and Diana Moskovitz. September 1, 2012. “Young Prostitutes off the Streets and Online.” *The Miami Herald*. Retrieved May 20, 2013
<http://www.miamiherald.com/2012/07/28/v-fullstory/2980491/young-prostitutes-off-the-streets.html>

Chapter 3

Methodology

The field research team and the Principal Investigator participated in a training in 2010 held at Kristi House, one of the more well-known local organizations dedicated to combating child sexual exploitation. Kristi House also runs Project GOLD, a program encompassing collaboration, prevention and treatment. During this training, we outlined various “hot spots” for prostitution in Miami, reviewed the interview guide, practiced using the interview protocol, discussed self-care for the interviewers, and talked about what to expect and do while out in the field recruiting and conducting interviews. The field research team began to go out into the streets in these “hot spots” in the winter of 2011. Indeed, in Miami, activity of all kinds increases in the winter. Miami’s population grows during the colder months, as visitors seek warmer weather.

The study’s methodology is based on respondent-driven sampling (RDS), which is the approach that guides all of the interviews conducted at various sites across the country under the Center for Court Innovation project, funded by the U.S. Department of Justice. RDS uses a network-based strategy for accessing and interviewing hard-to-reach populations, such as young people involved in the commercial sex market, by recruiting eligible “seed” interviewees who then refer others they know to be interviewed for the study¹⁰.

Overall, the RDS method was successful in the Miami context as it led to the majority of interviews. What was clear from the field researchers’ experience was that it takes time to stimulate the trees of subjects that emerge out of the networking designed to generate a sample.

Small cards with basic information about the study and a phone number to call were developed. These cards were placed in various establishments near places where street-level prostitution tended to occur. A flyer was developed as well, later in the study. In addition, an

¹⁰ See Swaner, R., Labriola, M., Rempel, M., Walker, A., and Spadafore, J. (2016). *Youth Involvement in the Sex Trade: A National Study*. New York, NY: Center for Court Innovation.

ad was placed in the *Miami New Times*, which is a local free publication that tends to include numerous ads for escorts and massages (see appendix).

RDS worked in two sets of recruitment “waves”; and the vast majority of these respondents were found through these two distinct networks. A very small number of interviews were disconnected from these two periods. The first recruitment period took place a few months after field research began. Interestingly, the second one occurred after a long delay in activity.

After field work began, it took some time to start scheduling interviews. The cards initially produced only a few responses. We believe that part of this slow start was because the original cards did not indicate that participation in the study pays. Once this change was made, the pace of responses picked up. Additionally, during the course of the research, the Center for Court Innovation increased the stipends per interview from \$20 to \$40. This was another significant factor in increasing the volume of interviews.

Initially, we approached community-based organizations to help us find interviewees. Organizations such as Kristi House, which was helpful as our host for training sessions and connector to other organizations providing services to the target population, did not generate seeds; however, some individuals at these organizations played a critical role in providing guidance on where sex market activity was taking place. We found that engaging these organizations to facilitate the recruitment of participants would require that we adopt their policies and practices when engaging potential participants. As this would not enable consistent methodology across all sites for this study, we could not adopt these policies and practices. Even by word of mouth, these organizations did not produce seeds.

As a result, changes in the recruitment strategy occurred and flyers were posted at various establishments, including a health clinic. A clinician found the announcement, contacted the researchers, and became an important source of the second major group of respondents. Respondents from this source led to other respondents. During interviews, researchers asked respondents about their networks and requested they provide the researchers’ contact information to these other potential interviewees.

Eligibility requirements were determined by the Center for Court Innovation’s framework. Targeted prospective participants were initially under the age of 20 years (ultimately extending to the age of 24) and engaging in compensated sexual activities. Most prospects were eligible for the study, but on occasion, supposed teens seemed older (three were over 24

years of age), or some were not particularly experienced in exchanging sex for money. We found that the participants we engaged did not use the organizations we initially approached as service providers.

Once interviews were scheduled, they were usually conducted where street-level prostitution¹¹ was taking place, especially the 79th Street corridor. Researchers followed the interview protocol and, upon completing an interview, handed interviewees a sheet of paper that included the contact information for various social service organizations. Most interviews were completed in less than an hour and depended on the amount of detail shared by participants.

RDS methodology does not guarantee that one interview will always produce other interviews. In RDS, researchers remain optimistic about a single interview's potential to lead to other interviews; when this may not necessarily be the case. It also seems to work well in areas with high population density or where people are well and easily physically connected. As we could not call or email prospective interviewees, it does not seem reasonable to apply this methodology in places where people are spread apart and facing significant costs (e.g. access to a vehicle) or insecure methods (e.g. phone or email) to connect.

Among interviewees: 92 percent of participants were African American, 46 percent were under the age of 18 years, 51 percent were ages 18 to 19 years, 62 percent were female, 36 percent were male, 1 percent were transgender, and 19 percent have children. Most started in the life as minors: 96 percent at age 17 years or younger, 79 percent at age 15 years or younger, and 44 percent at age 13 or younger. A total of 59 percent of participants had their first sexual experience at age 13 years or younger.

¹¹ Street level prostitution refers to solicitation in public and uncontrolled environments.

Chapter 4

Research Findings: Overview

Respondents entered the lifestyle for various reasons. In many cases, financial necessities led them to the sex trade. Many of these young people discovered they could continue making money this way. For others, it was considered as an opportunity they had previously not considered. Upon this discovery, they had to create systems, such as pricing. They charge different amounts, and they often compromise on their desired pricing based on the context. Respondents' spending patterns and spending decisions vary significantly. Indeed, this is situational. If a young person has a child, for example, she has to spend on fairly basic expenses first.

There is also significant variance in market involvement. Some respondents are working lengthy hours with multiple customers. Others may only occasionally exchange sex for money. Many of the young people have regular customers along with new ones. Some heavily rely on these regulars for their money. Many do not have another means of making money. Seventy-five percent of respondents reported that they do not have someone who helps them get customers. Of those who did have someone, the role the person played in the youth's life varied: some had typical pimps who set rules and with whom they shared their money. Others had "market facilitators" who assisted with their participation in the sex market but with whom the relationship was not with substantial coercion and control. Those with pimps work on strict schedules and are punished when they do not follow a set of rules. Some have market facilitators who are friends. Certainly, many of the respondents entered the lifestyle with some form of guidance from others. But most of the young people in this study do not work with pimps; they work for themselves. Most of them become independent freelancers once they begin developing a system for their lifestyle.

These young people protect themselves. Their defense mechanisms are necessary for their risky conditions. They tend to use protection (condoms) while working, although some might make exceptions for regular customers. Sexually transmitted diseases seem to come with the territory even with those who always use protection. The young people have also developed ways to deal with and avoid the police, further discussed below.

With all they confront in their lives, many of these young people have relatively mainstream visions for their future. Each section of this paper includes numerous quotes from these young people to paint a picture of their experiences.

Respondent Information and Context

Most of the Miami respondents have faced various social and economic challenges throughout their young lives. These conditions are somewhat reflective of the sample, which included a substantial number of street-level youth who exchanged sex for money. As a result of increased policing of open prostitution in places such as Miami Beach, where street-level solicitation was once far more prevalent, much of this activity has been confined to specific areas, such as the 79th Street corridor in the City of Miami. This is not an area with high-end hotels and tourist attractions. Nearly 100 percent of the young people we interviewed are African American or Hispanic and from lower income backgrounds.

The home lives, schooling, and relationships of these respondents include many trials and obstacles. An African American 19-year-old male respondent reflected on his schooling, “I went to twelfth-grade and then got kicked out. Problems – I grew up in foster care, really.” A 19-year-old African American female recounted her foster home experiences. She indicated that she left her foster home, “When I was twelve.” She spoke of her mother, “I knew my mom, but she was like on drugs; so she wasn’t really in my life. And my dad, I never knew who he was.”

Challenging home situations have influenced living choices for these young people, sometimes into nomadic circumstances. In some instances, these respondents are simply living on their own and attempting to make a living. The lifestyle becomes a pathway to support an insecure living situation. A 19-year-old Hispanic female left home at age 17 and graduated from high school. Going out on her own meant finding a place to stay. When asked how many places she lived in the last year, she replied, “Like ten.” A 19-year-old African American female, when asked where she lives right now, replied, “Right now I am on the streets. I’m on the streets going to a homeless shelter.”

A 17-year-old African American female spoke of staying in a home called, “Robin Hood” since she was age 15 when she dropped out of school. She said, “I stayed in multiple places because I go from home to home. I had got raped by my mom’s boyfriend; and I used to – it used to be hard on me; so that’s why I left home.” She continued, “My mom used to let her boyfriend rape me.” This situation began when she was 11 years old until she was 15, when she determined, “I had to go. I had to get money.”

Respondents entered the lifestyle from various paths. Many of the respondents saw an opportunity to make money in the face of significant financial need. Entry for these young people is not necessarily deliberate and planned. In some instances, serendipitous

circumstances or mere sexual curiosity ultimately led to financial exchanges. Seldom were these young people drawn into the lifestyle by a pimp. But the concept of pimping is, in itself, complex. Some of those who enter the lifestyle via a pimp were not necessarily recruited by a seasoned pimp.

A pimp could be a relative or a friend or a partner, who may not have had any experience pimping. A 17-year-old African American female elaborated on her entry via her boyfriend, "...I had this boyfriend I was going out with and the relationship was going good and all. Then all of a sudden it changed to the point he started dragging me on top of stuff and then one day he had a gun, and he started like, hitting me with it – beating me, literally beating me. And he had me do somebody; and the person gave him money, and he said, "Oh, here's \$5.00..." She was fourteen at the time.

A 19-year-old African American male stumbled upon an opportunity at the age of 13 while walking, "Like I was walking down the street and it just so happened the guy was in the car and he was like, he'll exchange like \$40 for oral sex. And I was like, well, you know, I need the money, and I said, well, hell, I might as well go for it; and that is what happened." A 23-year-old multiracial (self-described as Colombian-German, Bahamian) transgendered person recalled entering the lifestyle at the age of 17 via the internet. He recalled, "They had this thing called the Miami Chat Line; and it had a bisexual part." He met a man through this Line. He continued, "He took me to his house in Florida City... and it's like the agreement was to have sex but in exchange... I had told him what I had been through; so it is my first time doing it by choice. And it benefitted me because he did not see it as prostitution, but he gave me 80 bucks." This person used the word "choice" as a contrast to having been raped as a child. This respondent also noted that this first experience of exchanging sex for money at 17 was a "dare."

Making and Spending Money

As these young people discovered that they can exchange sex for money, they developed systems for making and spending money over time. They have entered into a lifestyle, which becomes a means of survival. Some need to make money to support their families while others make it to buy their independence and others spend money on many of the items of interest to most young people. And, as in the case of any form of business transaction, respondents establish prices. They have asking prices, and they often make exceptions.

Respondents were asked about the prices they charge, the amounts they actually receive, and how they spend their money. A 16-year-old African American female charges \$150 or \$100.

When asked if this price is for sex, she answered, “It depends.” She receives \$100 on average; she charged her last customer \$150. She does not frequently exchange sex for money. In response to how much she makes in a week, she said, “I don’t do it normally. In a week I make \$150. I probably do it one day a week.” She does not share the money she receives with anyone. She first pays her phone bill, which is approximately \$50; and she does not owe anyone money.

An 18-year-old African American male charges \$35 to \$50 for sex to an entirely female clientele. He received \$45 the last time he saw a customer. When asked how much he makes in a week, he replied, “I make \$450, \$455, between that.” He does not share money with anyone, but he first spends money on, “Clothes for the baby.” Money from prostitution is his only source of income to weekly expenses of “...between \$300 and under.” He said his expenses are “on stuff that I need.”

A 19-year-old Hispanic female charges \$200 for a half an hour. However, she said, “...it’s like \$100 if they just want oral and everything is... I’m not GFE.” She explained, “GFE means girlfriend experience, which is like girls kiss or like you like not use a condom to like suck their dick.” According to this respondent, “200 is the lowest” average price she commands. She says this is for a half an hour, but in actuality, “It’s like five minutes.” She continued, “It’s like they pay for 30 minutes, but it’s like...It’s done. Yeah, it’s finished very quickly.” When asked how much she makes in a week, she replied, “Like a grand, I guess.” She does share her money with “my roommate, my brother, everybody else.” She first spends money on “rent and my phone bill, and then food.”

This respondent is an interesting case, as she does not work on the streets, like many of the others. She found out about the lifestyle through the world of massage. When she was 17 or 18, she was “in a bad money situation” and learned of a friend’s cousin with a massaging company. She recalled, “And I was like, OK, I can do massages, you know.” She learned more from this person, who gave her a ride with another girl, whom he dropped off at a hotel. He said to her, “Yeah, she’s about to go make \$350.” She said, “I was like, for a massage!?” She continued, “Then that’s when I found out, like, about prostitution. I had no idea it was even going on.” At first, she would not have sex for money, so her friend’s cousin hired her to “kind of be a secretary for my girls.” He was a pimp without enough time, so he hired her to play this role. She was making “60/40 off the girls, 60 percent.” She said that eventually, “I started getting some of the girls’ clients; like their big time clients. And they wanted to see me, because they already kind of want to see me. They’re like, ‘Oh, I’ll pay triple’, whatever, whatever, because they want what they can’t have.”

A 21-year-old African American female charges “\$80 and up.” She is specific about price distinctions for different acts. She said, “Well, for sex I do \$80; and for oral sex is \$50 or \$60.” The last time she saw a customer, she charged him \$80. She makes \$500 to \$600 per week. When she gets money, she does not share it with anyone, and she uses it to cover “food and rent.” She has another source of income “as a dancer.” About her main expenses, she said, “I spent about maybe – for food I spend about \$20, and for rent I spend about \$300 because everybody chips in.” She does not owe anyone money.

“It depends. Let’s say you want the oral then that’s the full \$100,” declared an African American 17-year-old female. She continued, “If they just want like full, as in like the full throttle everything... everything, this is like \$150.” This respondent has some sort of sliding scale in her pricing based on her responses. She continued to elaborate on her distinctions in pricing, “It really depends on how they look. If I see that they’re not working with much, then maybe \$65 to \$75. If they look like they have the money, then I charge them more, maybe \$100 plus.” The last time she saw a client, she charged \$100. And when asked how much she makes in a week, she replied, “Since I’m always spending the money on stuff in a week, I’ll say I make around \$600, \$750.” In response to whether she shares money, she indicated, “yeah, I’m a stingy person; but I buy stuff for my nieces and nephews.” Her niece “...doesn’t have any clothes because her mother – can’t nobody find her; and she’s somewhere in New York. So, I’m like a second mother to her, other than my sister.”

And beyond her sharing ways, this respondent’s first purchase when she secures her earnings is not rent. Her priority is to, “Get my hair done and my nails done; I have to look up to par.” She does not have any other income; and her hair expenses are significant. She said, “OK, I don’t use synthetic hair... depending on the hairstyle, it costs maybe \$65, \$75... The price of the hair altogether comes out to maybe like \$80 to \$100... And I get my hair done every two weeks.” Indeed, in her line of work, looking “up to par” is significant. As in any profession, one is required to keep up a certain appearance, which brings its own costs.

An 18-year-old African American female shares her earnings with her parents. She lives with her parents and has a child “on the way.” She charges \$50 to \$100, but also has exceptions. “For head, that’s like \$7.00,” she indicated. “And for other stuff, it’s a hundred,” she continued. She added, “I charged her \$150 for both head and sex.” Her clients are both male and female. She makes “about like \$600” in a week. She first buys clothes with her earnings, and covers weekly expenses of about \$300.

Not all respondents charge varied prices for different acts. A 19-year-old African American female, who has a child and is a dancer in a club, charges one price regardless of the act.

“It’s just \$150 for everything. Like blow jobs and sex. Like it’s all the same.” “It come all the same,” she added. While she charges one single price for all acts, that price is different depending on the context. The night before her interview, she saw a client. When asked how much she charged, she replied, “It was \$200 because it was in the club. Like when I’m in the club, and I just want to meet them, it’s \$300. She makes “like seven hundred to eight hundred” in a week.

As a dancer in the club, she has to “tip out,” but not for her sex acts with clients, which are on the side. And with her money, she first has to get “...the bills paid. I make sure that she have pampers and stuff.” For her baby, she shops “for clothes, shoes, whatever...whatever she need.” Her expenses are about \$200 per week.

These various case examples represent the variety of prices and experiences of the respondents. As in any industry, some make more than others. Some have greater access to higher paying clients. And everyone makes exceptions where necessary. Exchanging sex for money is a means of income for these young people. Some respondents have significant responsibilities to consider when spending their money.

Market Involvement

There is no one way in which respondents approach their involvement in the market. Some of them are engaged in the sex trade routinely on most days of the week and during all hours, whereas some others are more occasional in their activity. While many of the respondents work on the street, others find customers in various establishments, such as clubs.

An African American 19-year-old female spends most of her waking hours working on the streets. She said, “I’m a prostitute. I be out there every day trying to get money because my mama, she be in and out jail and stuff and that’s why I follow her lead and I get money to have sex and get some stuff for my personal needs and stuff.” She later elaborated on her market involvement, “I worked to 11:00... I mean, when I start from early in the morning until I start that morning all the way ‘til that night. From midnight and then still going from the same time and like I’ll be out there from 10:00 to about 5:00 in the morning.” She works daily from 10:00 in the morning until 5:00 the following morning. As many of the respondents are driven by financial need, and making only so much for their efforts, some of them work long hours.

The location of the activity is an important factor in respondents’ market involvement. Many of the respondents work on the streets. Others find various ways to get work. Experiences shape some of these location decisions. A 17-year-old African American female made a

conscious decision due to a tragedy. She once attempted to work in the South Beach area of Miami Beach. She described why she changed, “Cause it’s like my friend had – she was doing the same thing ‘cause she got raped and died, like killed.” She continued, “...so I don’t work there no more... I just mainly work at a hotel on 62nd and 2nd.” Awareness of a serious fatal incident drove this respondent from one area to another and her approach now focuses on a singular hotel.

A 21-year-old African American female works in clubs. She recounted how she determines locations for her work. When asked what determines where she works, she said, “The area – it has to be like quiet, low-key area. If it’s too loud and I know police gonna be around there every minute, every second, then I don’t go there. And like 79th Street – it’s hard because they have the transsexuals that be doing it, too. And they be messing up people’s money. So I have to go in the club and look for people who’s in there.” She does not work long hours because she can make a significant amount of money in a club setting. She said of the club environment, “They want you to touch their nipples or whatever – play with them like that. And then they’ll give you \$500 right there just by rubbing their nipple...”

An 18-year-old multiracial female works in various areas. She works on 79th Street, but changes locations periodically. Her locations are driven by customer needs. She said, “It’s anywhere. If they just holler at you, and you know there ain’t no police, you just do it.” Here working hours are determined similarly – by customer availability. She works on demand. When asked when she works, she replied, “Yeah, every day. Whenever they ask me to.” A 19-year-old Hispanic female works wherever she is living and elsewhere. She explained the distinction between working at home and going out. She said, “When they say like do you have an in call, it’s your home, my home... in call for a girl. Out call means I go to them, like I’m doing an out call to them; and that’s more money.”

She has encountered adversity in out calls. She once pursued an out call with a man she had seen a few times. She said, “I did an out call one time; and like I kept talking to the guy like I saw him a few times... He just kept giving me money and stuff. Then, one day, I went up to Port St. Lucie with him. And he like pulled into a hotel...and he ended up raping me in the hotel... and I woke up the next morning; and I was afraid he wasn’t going to take me home. And he dropped me off like 15 minutes away from where I had to be.”

As with any market, exchanging sex for money involves competition. Underground economies of this sort are accompanied by various hazards. A 17-year-old African American male born in the Bahamas, reflected on the nature of the market, “Competition!? Yeah, there is competition.” He deliberately avoids physical altercations that can arise from this

competitive environment. He said, “I just stay calm; just be me – don’t get into no pressure, don’t look people in the eye, stay in my own lane”.

Overall, these young people are navigating a complex market, finding their own opportunities to make money through exchanging sex for money in whatever way works for them. They are confronted with danger on a regular basis. They develop coping mechanisms and various strategies to handle the kind of conflict that might arise.

Customers

Respondents find customers from various sources – the streets, hotels, online, and others. Types of customers vary as well. There does not appear to be a single profile of respondents’ customers, as they are of many ages and backgrounds. Numerous respondents identify as “bisexual”, with a male and female clientele. Some of the respondents engage repeat customers, while some others continually find new customers.

A 19-year-old African American male sees numerous customers in a single day. When asked how many customers he saw the last time he worked, he replied, “I seen like 20.” He does not find customers through a pimp. He uses online sources. He said, “I get my customers off of Facebook, Adultspace, and... Over.com”. He described Over.com, “Well you can see a person when you’re talking to them. It’s like a web cam.” He also indicated, “I used to get them off of MySpace – sometimes the party line; mostly the party line.”

A 17-year-old African American female sees about two customers per day. She finds customers through clubs, her sister, and the Internet. She does not use a pimp. She goes to motels with typically, “two people in a day.” She does not visit the homes of customers. She describes her customers as, “Business owners, construction workers, and mechanics.” A 16-year-old African American female who was born in Jamaica tends to see about six customers during a given night. Customers tend to take her to a location on 79th Street. She said, “They usually bring me to this little... I don’t know if it’s a church. Yes, it is. A little church that kind of a... I think it’s an abandoned church.”

Some respondents have regular customers, who play an ongoing role in their lives. A 17-year-old African American female refers to a “boyfriend” and “sugar daddies” when describing her customers. She sees four people. She said, “Yeah, I had like four people. And two was like a minimum mid 20s, their early 20s. The rest of them was like late 30s and early 40s.” She continued, “If I see my boyfriend on Monday, I’ll see my sugar daddy and I’ll see the other young one with the other men; like they all have a day together.”

A 19-year-old African American female does not deal with repeat customers. She said, “I don’t deal with the same customers. I deal with different customers every time.” She continued, “And I just like to have sex because I feel like that’s how I get my money to get my hair and nails done and stuff like that. I really don’t have nobody to give me money like family-wise. So, I just go out and do it with niggas and guys.” She does not get customers through a pimp. However, she indicated, “I’ll say one time I got a customer from a pimp. This guy who I was messing with, he gave me a customer, but I dealt with him one time and never did deal with him again.” She continued, “I started finding an easier way to get customers.” She attains customers through “clubs, 79th, and that’s about it.” She cannot count the number of customers she sees. She said, “Because I do it all the time to get money. I don’t keep track of how many. I just do it because I feel like if the money is coming to me easy...”

An 18-year-old multiracial female (self-described as “Haitian Spanish”) used to have a pimp, and now intentionally avoids them. She said of pimps, “They broke my teeth.” She finds customers on the streets, through friends, and through the Internet. When asked how many customers she saw the last time she worked, she replied, “The last time, I’d say about 15.” She meets them “sometimes in a hotel, sometimes we park somewhere in the car.” She elaborated on her customers’ tendency to lie. She said, “All of them lie about their relationship. They all lie and some lie about their age.”

A 17-year-old African American male gets his customers from a pimp. A pimp sets up the ten to 20 customers he sees on a given day. However, he also works at a strip club, where customers come directly to him. He said of how his pimp arranges customers, “He don’t use the Internet; we use the phones.” He continued, “...but when I go to the club, they’ll come to me by myself.” A 16-year-old Haitian-Jamaican female born in Jamaica said of her sources of customers, “pimp, sometimes pimp referrals, sometimes friends...” She never uses the Internet. She sees six to ten customers on an average night. “It’s either they come to me or somebody refers them; that’s about it.” Of her self-generated customers, she said, “Like they just come out of nowhere, and they just drive...”

Respondents find customers through a variety of methods. Most of them have learned to generate customers on their own even if someone else originally facilitated their entry into the lifestyle.

Pimps and Other Market Facilitators

While pimps are not driving respondents’ market involvement, they are present in the streets. When asked about their involvement with pimps, most indicated how they independently

generate customers. However, many respondents could identify the presence of pimps, and even recall being recruited by prospective market facilitators. Those who are working with pimps have a range of experiences. For some, a pimp or facilitator can be a brutal taskmaster. While for others, a pimp or facilitator can be a friend.

A 21-year-old African American female does not work with a pimp. While she works independently, she has had experiences with pimps. She is aware of their presence, and she periodically refuses their advances. She said of pimps, “Yeah, in the clubs... the Rolex on 119th and 27th Avenue – it’s like the security guards – it’s one of the security guards. He, I guess he wanted an escort or whatever service, but he think people dumb. He would like watch us on stage – watch what we do. He’ll stand behind us and be like, ‘OK, I know you make money. You wanna join our team?’ I’m like, ‘No!’ Then he’ll be like, ‘All you gonna do is just give me the money, and I’ll give you a cut.’ I’ll be like, ‘No—hell no!’ She continued, “And then one was, Magic – an old, old man with a perm – oh my gosh! He be in the club; and his name is Magic.” She elaborated on Magic’s approach, “And he be having younger girls—girls that are like 16, 15 working for him; and they be in the strip clubs too.”

A 16-year-old African American female is also aware of the presence of pimps seeking to recruit. She said of pimps’ attempts, “So many people tried to – the first night I did that, so many people tried to, because they asked me. Because I was looking real nervous, and they was like, do you have a pimp? I was like, no and they said, do I want one? I said, no because all my friends told me the pimps will take all my money.”

Those who actually work with pimps or market facilitators have a range of experiences. A 17-year-old African American female works for someone with whom she grew up. Her pimp is a longtime friend. She speaks highly of him, “The pimp is a friend of mine. I met them when I was younger—childhood. I love my friend very much; and he was there for me a lot, so...He is much important because he be there. He was like a brother to me. He makes sure I’m OK...” This pimp does not impose rules on her.

Another 17-year-old African American female had a negative experience with a pimp. She does not work with a pimp at this point, but she recalled, “Yeah, his name was Smiley; but they call him Smiles.” When asked how she knows this person, she replied, “Well, I was living on 6th Avenue for the longest. He was just like a person I used to always see – I used to say ‘hi’ to. So, we just started clicking together, hanging out, chilling. If I needed him to go, somebody bother me, he’d go talk to the person. As I got older, we started dating; and that’s when he started, like making me do stuff I wasn’t wanting to do.” And when asked how she feels about this person, she said, “Still now, I hate him with all my guts.” This pimp is now in jail. She testified against him.

This pimp imposed rules on her. She said, “I was supposed to be his girl, so his rule – always be home, always go to school, go home. Couldn’t even step out with my girl without getting knocked out.” He was violent with her. She said, “It was to the point – I could’ve been dead right now, because he shot at me.” She began to fight back by contacting the police. She said, “So, every time I see him, I made a police report.”

Overall, most respondents are not working for a pimp. They are generally working independently. However, respondents generally have some form of market facilitators. These facilitators could be friends as well as customers. And these facilitators often do not receive a cut of the money, making them distinct from actual pimps. A 19-year-old African American female spoke of a friend who helps her secure customers. She referred to this “friend” as, “Someone I know from school when I was going to school.” She characterizes this person as, “very close – like a true friend.” This friend imposes no rules and does not receive any part of her income.

A 19-year-old African American male refers to facilitators as “sponsors”. He said, “I could say a sponsor is somebody who – it’s like a referral.” He receives referrals through a sponsor by phone. He explained, “Yeah, who arranges it like calls me and lets me know what’s going on. Then they talk to the other person, then we just click up like that.” He often receives customers through this method.

For those such as this young man, a pimp or facilitator brings an advantage – someone who can identify prospective clients and arrange meetings. But many do not use pimps because they do not trust them. Most of these young people need money; they want to keep all they earn. And the experiences of those who have been abused by pimps demonstrate the potential hazards of working with pimps. But, there is no single experience of working with pimps or market facilitators. So, these relationships are manifested differently.

Health and Needs

Respondents were asked about their health needs – how often they see a doctor, if they use protection, their experiences with sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and any help they seek to address health challenges they confront. Clearly, the lifestyle these young people have embarked upon brings numerous health risks. Many respondents have contracted an STD at some point.

A 21-year-old African American female recently saw a doctor. “I went the other day,” she indicated. She suggested she does not have any particular health problems. She uses protection. When asked how often she uses protection, she responded, “All the time – the only time I ever went unprotected was with my boyfriend; that’s it.” However, she has had

an STD, which she contracted when she was seventeen. She elaborated, “Chlamydia – I didn’t even know what the hell was that; but I thought I was gonna die.” She took a pill for seven days and received a shot to clear up this situation. At this point in her life, she does not feel she can talk to anyone for help. She has not gone to any social service agencies. When asked why, she said, “I never – like nobody ever really told me. The only things I know about is where to get tested, where to go check if everything is OK, and that’s it. For me to sit down and talk to somebody about my problems, I never...”

A 17-year-old African American female answered, “I don’t know,” when asked when was the last time she saw a doctor, nurse, or some other healthcare worker. She said, “I went to a clinic... that was like last year.” She also protects herself. “I use protection all the time,” she indicated. But when asked about whether she has had an STD, she replied, “No...oh yeah. I had Chlamydia and Gonorrhea.” She used pills to remedy these situations. She feels comfortable speaking with friends about personal challenges, and she has used social service agencies. In reference to this organization, she said, “It’s called Miami Bridge.” She has also used numerous drugs, such as marijuana, methamphetamines, and ecstasy. She started drinking alcohol at age 11 and started using marijuana at 12. She “chips” in to a pot with friends for drugs and alcohol. When asked how much she chips into this pot per day, she said, “About \$40.” She clarified, “Yeah, it depends on how much I made.”

An 18-year-old African American male saw a doctor last year. When asked about using protection, he responded, “Protection? All the time. I use protection all the time, but only two of the girls of my regulars I don’t use protection on. But I had them checked out first.” These customers did not want him to use protection. He said, “Yeah, they didn’t want it though but I told them before we do that, we got to go to that clinic together. Because I had an uncle that died of AIDS; and I don’t want that happening to me.” He has never had an STD. And, he feels he has someone to turn to regarding personal matters. When asked with whom he discusses challenging life circumstances, he replied, “Yeah, my home girl. She’s my best friend. She know what I do and everything.” He turns to his good friend, and does not use social service agencies. He only turns to people he knows rather than organizations. He drinks alcohol and smokes marijuana, spending about \$20 per day on these habits.

A 17-year-old multiracial female is a mother. When asked when she last saw a doctor, she replied, “Last time was when I had my baby.” Her child is two years old. She said she uses protection, “All the time.” And in response to whether she has had an STD, she said, “Not that I know of.” She does not turn to anyone to discuss personal matters. In fact, when asked with whom she communicates, she answered, “Myself.” She does not approach any social service agencies because, “I don’t like to ask.” She does not use any drugs.

A Haitian native, and 19-year-old female directly addressed insurance as a factor in how often she sees a doctor. She said, “I don’t have insurance, so it’s been like, for a long time.” She continued, “Like, um... It’s a long time, like I don’t have insurance; so it’s probably been – probably two, three years ago, something...” She does not have any health-related problems, and she uses condoms for protection. When asked about those with whom she can share personal matters, she replied, “Probably, like a friend. I would not tell my mom, so, a good friend.” She is aware of Planned Parenthood, but she does not use social service agencies. When asked why she does not turn to such agencies, she said, “I don’t know. I don’t really think I need help.” She sometimes drinks alcohol, but she has never tried any other drugs. When asked when she started drinking, she said, “It was a while ago; I think I was like, 12, probably.”

A 17-year-old African American male also has not seen a doctor recently. His answer to when he last saw a doctor or healthcare professional was, “Can’t even tell you that. I ain’t go to the doctor in so long. There was an AIDS truck the other day. I took like an AIDS test, like three months ago.” He does not have any health problems; and he always uses condoms. He has never had an STD. When he was initially asked if he turns to anyone regarding personal matters, he responded, “Uh-uh.” However, he later indicated, “Yeah, my brother.” He is aware of social service agencies, but he does not use them. He mentioned he once went to a food truck. He said, “It’s right down 66th and 15th Avenue. It’s like everybody – there be a lot of people, old timing people there. They give out food and stuff like that every Saturday, I think.” But he generally does not go to social service agencies because, “I don’t need nobody help.” He continued, “Why I don’t go to them? I can’t even tell you. Just I really don’t think they’re gonna help me.” He does a variety of drugs beyond alcohol, including marijuana, methamphetamines, and, as he suggested, “Pop pills too.” He spends about \$20 per day on various drugs when he has the money. He said, “I be trying not to smoke a lot. I don’t have enough money. But when I do have it, I be spending like \$20. Probably like \$5 on a bag, and another \$5 on cigarettes.”

These young people have various experiences with health professionals and diseases. Their isolation is evident in these cases. They know how to protect themselves with condoms. They generally rely on themselves, demonstrating little faith in social service agencies, and looking only to very close friends for guidance or support or not anyone at all. Even with protection, some of these young people contract STDs. Their life circumstances make them vulnerable on many levels; and they heavily rely on themselves to navigate health and health-related challenges.

Drug and alcohol use is quite common among these respondents. As indicated in numerous responses, many of these young people spend some of their earnings on drugs and alcohol, making their health status even more vulnerable.

Experience with the Police

As many of these young people are working at night on the streets, and engaging in illegal activity, they are bound to encounter police. Respondents were asked about run-ins with the police. These run-ins are complicated by the fact that police can engage in illegal activity themselves and can even ask for sex themselves. The police are ever-present in the lives of these young people. And respondents have developed strategies for how to avoid the police where necessary, and how to communicate with them when they are confronted.

An 18-year-old multi-racial female, self-identified as Haitian-Spanish, said of her run-ins with police, “Yeah, I’ve spoke to the police.” When asked if police have ever offered her money for sex, she replied, “Yeah.” She added, “Not all police is good.” She said she avoids the police. She indicated, “I stay my distance and I don’t like talking to the police. They just creep me out, and I just want to cuss them out.” She has never been arrested.

A 19-year-old African American male, when asked about conflicts he encounters in the streets, referred to the police. He said, “They see you walking... they going to want to harass you, not really say harass, but they just want to know what’s going on – probably think you up to no good.” When asked about run-ins with the police, he replied, “They stop me... probably about 50 times (in his life).” He attributed these stoppings to perception, “Them thinking I probably got dope.” He continued, “Oh, I probably look suspicious, you know. I have on all black, probably think I’m trying to rob somebody or something.” He suggested that he never gets approached by the police regarding sex-related activity. He explained, “Like they never suspect a guy to be doing that, so...” He said he has had “about ten” run-ins with the police in the last year. In his last interaction with the police, he “...gave them a fake name, and then he ran it, and somehow it went through, and he let me go.”

This young man tries to keep his distance from the police. In this respect, he maintained, “I mean as I got older I realized I was wearing clothes that make you look so aggressive or you up to no good, like you wearing certain clothes and they just think you’re up to no good. So, I try to wear bright colors or something like that sometimes, so you won’t look so obvious.” He had been arrested 12 times for the following, as he claimed, “Possession of marijuana, armed robbery, burglary, selling drugs, possession of counterfeit money, assault and battery,

possession of a firearm.” He had never been arrested in the City of Miami, where the interview was being conducted. He has only been arrested near his home in North Miami.

A 19-year-old African American female has encountered the police a few times. When asked how many run-ins with the police she has had, she replied, “About five of them; that’s it.” She continued, “They were saying I needed to leave before they arrest me, because that’s not a good environment for me to [be] out here and stuff...” But the five run-ins she referenced happened in one day on 79th Street. She maintained, “They approached me about five times that day and told me to stop.” When probed about how many run-ins she had with the police over the last year, she answered, “About 15 of them.” And during her whole life, she said, “Oh, you can say about 50 of them (from the point when she started having sex for money at 13 years old).”

She discussed a recent time she interacted with police. She recalled, “...I was out on the streets. It was late night, and they stopped me and they told me I need to go home and go in the house. I needed to stop doing this. They said if you don’t leave, I’m going to take you to jail. So, I played like I was going home, so they followed me there.” And when asked if a police officer asked her for sex, she replied, “They arrested me and took me to jail because they told me I was dealing in the streets and they were walking me and stuff, and they wanted to have sex with me, and I told them, No.” Consequently, she was arrested. Such experiences have shaped how she interacts with police officers. She said, “I just stay where I know they ain’t gone come over...” And when asked how many times she was arrested, she replied, “I been arrested only twice out of my whole life.” She continued, “I was arrested for drugs, and oh, I was prostituting.” She was last arrested in 2010 for drugs.

A 19-year-old African American male elaborated on his six run-ins with the police. He recalled, “The run-ins over smoking weed and stuff like that.” When asked if any of his arrests were over sex activity, he said, “No.” He reflected on his first experience that sent him to jail, “The first time I ever went to jail, it was maybe somewhere between this year, January sometime; and it was on this side of the park. I was going to get some smoke, and on my way coming back, a undercover officer had pulled up on the side of me; and I got arrested.” This took place in Liberty City, where all of his encounters with police have occurred. During his most recent run-in with the police, he was riding his bike. He said, “I was riding and the undercover Taurus just pulled up on the side, and I stopped. He rolled down the window, like, ‘Police, get off the bike! Put your hands on the car!’ He searched me. He couldn’t find nothing, so I picked up my bike and rode off.” He provided further context regarding policing in Liberty City. He said, “I know why police is riding around

undercover. ‘Cause where there’s a lot of killing and shooting going on in the neighborhood, they tend to stop everybody all the time in different places to see if you was hot, basically.”

An 18-year-old African American female answered, “Never got caught,” when asked about her experiences with the police. She mentioned four run-ins with the police. While she initially said she had not been caught, she later indicated, “I got caught stealing.” However, she did not get arrested. She said, “They caught me about to do something on the beach; they caught me in the act; that’s why they did not take me. They told me just go home.” In this situation, she was in South Beach with a customer; and she was going to steal from him.

She has not had any run-ins with the police this year. She said of the last time she interacted with the police, “He just asked me questions, and he left me alone. Because I don’t wear hoochie mama clothes, they don’t even think I’m a prostitute.” She continued, “He asked me what am I doing out this late.” The police officer probed further. She recalled, “He said, what am I doing out, and I was like, I’m waiting for somebody, officer – it’s a free country and I’m over 18; I can be out here. I lied to him; I told him I was 18. Because they have this rule thing – when you are a certain age, you can’t be outside.” And when asked if an officer ever asked her for sex, she replied, “One asked me, but I was too scared. I thought it was a setup.” She is not generally threatened by the police; she does not avoid police officers like many of the other respondents. She maintained, “There’s not really a problem for me; I look like a regular person – a regular girl walking down the street. She added, “Yeah, they think I’m cute, and they be like, hey... and then men only want sex anyways...”

Overall, these young people have complex relations with the police. As they can be arrested for prostituting, they are always at risk of being harassed or arrested. But many of the young people are harassed or arrested for activities other than prostitution. Perhaps males are more likely to be pursued by police under suspicion of any range of violent crimes. And females are apparently asked for sex by some police officers. Whatever the circumstances, these respondents are fairly savvy about how to handle police. They all have different coping mechanisms, from the way they dress to how to avoid police where necessary to knowing which lie can get them out of trouble.

Life Perceptions and Expectations

Many of these respondents have faced tragedies and continued to navigate adversity in their lifestyle. They are still young, with potentially many years ahead of them. Like all young people, they have a vision for the future and dreams about the lives they would ultimately like to lead. They were asked to assess their current situation and imagine their long term

direction. Respondents were asked about what they like and dislike about their work. Respondents also replied to questions about their expectations for the future. Overall, respondents are in this life primarily because of money. They like generating money for themselves at a young age and in contexts that provide few opportunities to make a similar level of income. Many respondents are conflicted about how they are going about making money. Some are deeply opposed to the idea of exchanging their bodies for money, but they see this lifestyle as the best possible way to make a certain amount of money. Most respondents have rather conventional visions for their futures, and realize that their current lifestyle might create obstacles for their career and family goals. Nevertheless, they hold higher expectations for the years to come.

A 19-year-old Hispanic female, when asked if there is anything she likes about her work, she replied, “The money.” And when asked what she does not like about the work, she replied, “The sex.” She has thought about leaving the lifestyle, and has discussed this with her roommate (also a prostitute). She said that she and her roommate have a “master plan.” In reference to prostitution, she said, “It’s like a stepping stone – like to get us where we want to go due to the circumstances we’ve been put in. And now we need to go somewhere else; so this is just the middle.” She indicated that she could stop prostituting at some point. She said, “Yeah, like it’s us that has to be like, OK, I want to stop. But I think it’s a hard thing, because it’s so easy. Like, in the future, I feel like it’s still be like, oh, I want a new pair of shoes, I could just post online and get quick money, you know. But I’ve got to get away from it.”

She placed her lifestyle in the context of existing job opportunities. She said, “I just went on Craigslist, and there’s jobs on there for like \$20 an hour just like for experience with customer service. So, I’m like, OK, I’m going to go to school and then still will get paid \$20 or not go to school and still get paid \$20.” She and her roommate receive a more significant amount of money than many of the other respondents. And while their situation is in some ways distinct, it is also very similar. They want to make more money at a very young age and prostitution became the path. She reflected on her current belongings, “Everything I own is from prostitution.” She continued, “I left my parents’ house. I was down here on my own with nothing. And I got my job. When I didn’t know about prostitution, I got my job.” I got a room under somebody’s house, I went to school; I graduated. It’s possible to do just a regular job; and it pays the bills.” When asked where she sees herself in two years, she answered, “Married and rich.”

An 18-year-old female Haitian native does not like anything about the work. She dislikes “Selling my body. That’s the most disgraceful thing you could do. But, hey, I get it’s how I live.” She thinks about leaving the lifestyle. She looked ahead, “yeah, as soon as I get a

good job. Like as soon as I graduate and get my Associate's...after I get my Associate's, I give myself two months. I'm not gonna have sex for money to get a job. If I don't, I'm gonna keep on doing it again. And I'm gonna still go to school to get my Bachelor's in paralegal."

When asked if there were an agency that existed to meet her needs, what it would offer, she answered, "I guess a job. I mean I'm willing to work hard for money. It's better than selling my pussy and, you know, become worthless in front of God. So, I suppose a job." And regarding where she sees herself in ten years, she maintained, "In ten years, finished with – get my Bachelor's. Working as a probation officer or a police officer. And then have – probably getting married. I don't know. Probably, because I want to get married to the right person, not a person who's going – having sex with a whole bunch of girls."

Clearly, money is an important driver in keeping many of these young people in the lifestyle whether they are in dire circumstances, or they simply find prostitution as the more lucrative option. A 19-year-old African American female, when asked if she liked anything about being in the life, she replied, "Yes, the money." But when asked if there is anything she does not like about the life, she answered, "Not really." She elaborated, "I like the sex. I like the money." She has considered leaving, but she does not, "because the money too good. I don't have no money, so I have to do what I have to do." She indicated that she would not leave the life tomorrow if she could. She said she would not know how to leave "because I've been doing it for too long. I'm used to it; this is how I'm used to getting my money."

She is conflicted about leaving the life. She declared about whether she wishes she could make changes, "Sometimes yes, sometimes no, because I feel like if I make the change, then I'm gonna be broke again. And I'm not gonna be able to get my hair done, have no money for my hygiene or nothing. So, I feel like I shouldn't want – I don't want to leave that life because that's how I live." Regarding where she sees herself in ten years, she replied, "I do see myself making a chance, but not right now." She did say more, "Down the road, I see myself with my house, and I see myself with a job – a legal job and that's it."

Respondents have different aspirations and perceptions of their work. While some might desperately seek an exit from the life, others do not. But, money remains a critical factor in keeping young people in prostitution. An 18-year-old African American male, a Jamaican native, likes, "the extra cash" and "nothing else". When asked what he dislikes about the life, he replied, "Well, it's not right." He elaborated, "I mean it's not right to exchange sex for cash." In ten years, he sees himself, "getting out of this life, settling down with a girl."

A 16-year-old African American female, regarding what she likes about the life, responded, "I get money." With respect to her dislikes, she maintained, "Only thing I don't like about it

is I know what I'm doing is not right, but I still do it because I need the money. I know it's not right..." She has considered leaving the life, "but I know if I stop, I won't have nothing; that's the only way I really use to get money." She dropped out of school, and often considers returning. She left home, and sometimes considers going back. She said, "I think about it, but I never did." When asked where she sees herself in ten years, she answered, "If I keep this up of what I'm doing, I won't see myself nowhere. But if I start asking myself what I want to be able to be a teacher, I believe I could do it; just that this street life is stopping me. The tricking like is stopping me. But I believe I can; I just don't..." She continued, "I see myself doing better; I see myself being somebody. And I wanted to be a teacher; and in ten years, I start I can see myself in teaching."

Overall, these young people have found a way to generate income through prostitution. They may envision a changed future; however, they may not make a quick exit from the life. In the long run, their visions sound like those of most people – careers and families. But the long and short terms are in conflict for some of these respondents. They need resources right now; and prostitution appears to be one of the better ways to make money even if some are fundamentally opposed to the idea of exchanging sex for money.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The lifestyle of exchanging sex for money is a pathway to income for these young people. This pathway is filled with danger from violence to STDs to arrests. For most respondents, the challenge is how to survive in the face of limited opportunities.

They enter the life for varying reasons. Many of these young people discovered a way to generate income, in some cases, to remedy dire financial circumstances. Often a particular experience unearths the opportunity to make money for sex acts. This discovery leads to repeated occurrences. A teenager discovers how to make substantially more money than a typical afterschool job, and begins to create a method of operating – how to find clients, how much to charge, how often to work.

As in any market, some are more successful than others. Some make hundreds in a night, and others make much less. Some can rely on a steady clientele, while others have to continue to find new ones. Some actually attain the rates they charge most of the time, while others take what they can get.

In their pursuits, these young people face all of the challenges of any income-generating activity, such as pricing for services, balancing regular customers with new ones, determining how to spend money and potentially where to save in the long run. They have to invest in their craft, considering where they look for customers, how to secure a higher-paying clientele, how to look as attractive as possible, and how to charge for different types of sex acts.

Pimps and market facilitators are certainly present in the lives of these young people, but they do not dominate their experiences. Some have been brutally beaten by pimps and tightly controlled, but many of the young people are essentially freelancers in an underground economy. These are often lower income African American or Hispanic, entrepreneurs making ends meet. Some of them are even disgusted with their own actions, but they do it for survival.

The dangers of this lifestyle are plentiful. While working independently, many of the young people are aware of the presence of pimps. They are especially aware of the presence of the police. Police officers must uphold the law; and these young people are involved in illegal activity. But the young people are aware that police officers can abuse their power and even

menace these respondents. Health risks are also notable. As these young people, pretty much across the board, claim to use protection, many of them have contracted sexually transmitted diseases in their young lives. Clients can be quite dangerous as well. While many respondents have developed somewhat trusting relationships with regular customers, they constantly encounter strangers, who may have bad intentions. Not every client is willing to pay. And some will fight to get away with a free ride.

With all of these hazards, these young people have developed a range of coping mechanisms. They have a strategy for speaking with and/or avoiding the police or dealing with lurking pimps or handling unruly customers. Many of them have ways of easing the insecurity of their existence by using various drugs. And, yet, with all of their challenges, respondents have hopes and dreams, imagining more mundane existences in the future, often complete with stable careers and spouses.

There is a substantial market for sex in Miami. Many people want it and want it from young people. The respondents did not create this reality. This demand factor, coupled with financial need in the lives of these young people, is a virtual perfect storm that shapes the landscape in Miami. Vulnerable young people with limited opportunity discovered how to generate income by providing sex for the many who are seeking sex and willing to pay for it. In this sense, their lifestyle is a form of exploitation. Financial circumstances or even addictions drove these young people into the lifestyle.

For these young people, once the lifestyle begins, it becomes a source of funds to pay rent and buy food, but also a way to support unhealthy and addictive habits. The lifestyle in itself is quite hazardous. However, these are not young people who were abducted and forced into the lifestyle to produce funds for an organized criminal circuit. While this kind of arrangement exists, there is clearly a large segment of the young people in the universe of those in the sex trade who are closer to independent actors. This is not to suggest that the respondents in this particular study are leading free and happy lives where they control all aspects of their existence.

The lack of money from more conventional sources is a lack of control. And once young people enter the lifestyle routinely, they lose control – over clients, over how much they make, over persistent health risks, over their interactions with the police. Overall, these young people are oppressed on many levels. But it is important to treat this segment of the universe within its own context – there is a significant portion of the population of young people in the sex trade who are essentially entrepreneurs operating within a highly hazardous market.

Appendix A.

Backpage Ad Content

Reply: [click here](#)

CONFIDENTIAL ANONYMOUS INTERVIEWS
WILL PAY \$\$

Looking to interview 300 girls and guys 19 years old and younger who exchange for money. Interviews are confidential and anonymous. Will be reimbursed for your time. Referrals welcome!

Call: 1-800-401-6519

Text: 1-646-715-7534

Email: SoFlaYouthStudy@gmail.com

Poster's age: 25

- Location: Ft Lauderdale, Fort Lauderdale

Appendix B.

Tear Sheet

Confidential, Anonymous Interviews Will pay \$\$!

Looking to interview youth 19 and under who exchange sex
for money, housing, etc.

For more information call
The South Florida Youth Study
Call 1-800-401-6519 or text 646-715-7534

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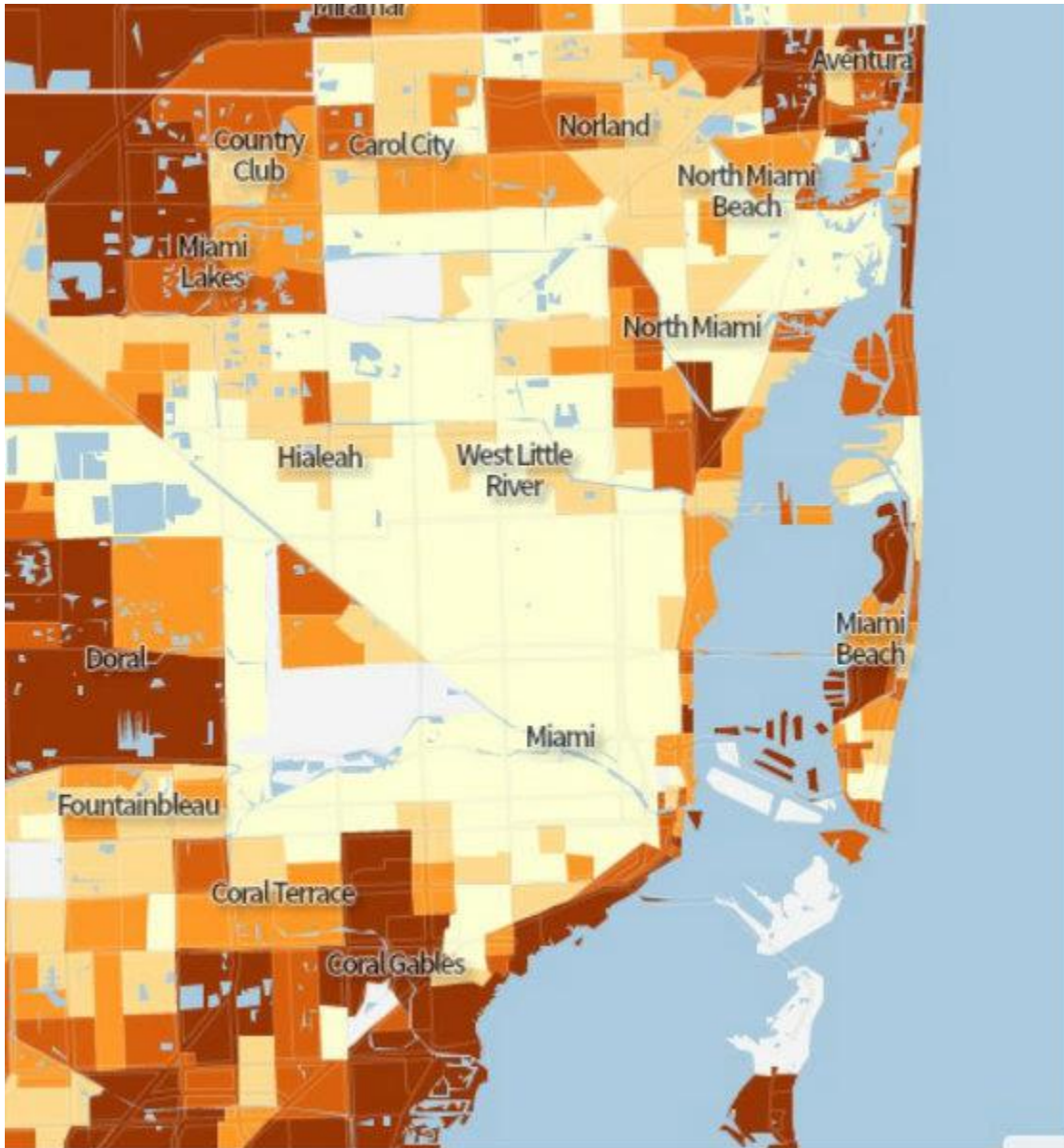
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Appendix C.

Miami – Dade Metro Area Map



Source: McCoy, Terrence. December 23, 2013. "Miami's Staggering Inequality Explained in One Map." *Miami New Times*. Retrieved December 23, 2013.
http://blogs.miaminewtimes.com/riptide/2013/12/miami_inequality_us_census_bureau.php.