



Spring 5-18-2015

# Educating Students About the Social Constructs of Sex Work: Integrating a Course Focused on Prostitution into the Social Work Curriculum

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# Educating Students About the Social Constructs of Sex Work: Integrating a Course Focused on Prostitution into the Social Work Curriculum

## **Abstract**

This dissertation explores the reasons for the inclusion of a course focused on sex work, particularly prostitution, in the social work curriculum of graduate schools of social work. An anonymous survey was distributed to field placement directors at CSWE accredited graduate social work programs. The survey asked questions about the placement of students at organizations that provide services to sex workers and the existence of courses in the curriculum that focus on sex work and sex workers. The survey confirmed the hypothesis of this exploratory dissertation that while social work interns are being placed in organizations where they are encountering sex workers, there are very few courses that provide information about how to address the specific needs of this population. In response to these survey results, a curriculum was created that includes a comprehensive compilation of sources and addresses the evolution of prostitution, the relevance of feminist, economic, and intersectionality theoretical frameworks, the use of specific teaching pedagogies, and the implications of sexual trauma and a multitude of critical psychosocial challenges. In addition, this curriculum can be adapted for use by other professionals, such as those in the fields of medicine, criminal justice, public health, and policy development as a way of educating them about the complexities involved in understanding and responding to the lives of female street-walking prostitutes.

## **Degree Type**

Dissertation

## **Degree Name**

Doctor of Social Work (DSW)

## **Department**

Curriculum & Instruction

## **First Advisor**

Marcia Martin, Ph.D.

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## **Keywords**

sex work, prostitution, curriculum, social work, street-walking prostitutes, course

## **Subject Categories**

Social and Behavioral Sciences | Social Work

EDUCATING STUDENTS ABOUT THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTS OF SEX WORK: INTEGRATING A  
COURSE FOCUSED ON PROSTITUTION INTO THE SOCIAL WORK CURRICULUM

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Dissertation in Social Work

Presented to the Faculties at the University of Pennsylvania

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Doctor of Social Work

2015

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## **Dedication**

*I dedicate this dissertation to myself. This body of work and my completion of this doctoral program erases all uncertainty regarding my power and authority over fear. Therefore, I proudly lay to rest my self-doubt and lovingly resurrect my self-assurance.*

## Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank my parents Jennifer and Leonard “Terry” Francis for your overwhelming love and support throughout my life in all of my endeavors. Thank you for never placing boundaries on what I could do and instilling in me the idea that if I put my mind to it, nothing is beyond my grasp. I truly hit the parental lottery. To my sister Lauren, you have been an excellent role model for me in many ways. It takes courage to live out your dreams and you are proof that dedication and tenacity pays off. I adore you for the woman that you are and I cannot imagine being on this earth without you by my side. To my brother-in-law Anand, thank you for your enthusiasm about my studies. It is greatly appreciated. Sage and Ava, thanks so much for making me always smile. I love you two so much. Stay wild and free.

Much love and thanks goes out to my friends but especially Dr. Audra Pittman, thank you for taking time out of your full life to encourage me to keep focused despite what was happening around me. Your good energy is contagious and I look forward to celebrating many milestones with you in the future. Dr. Marc Lamont Hill, I appreciate you. You keep me laughing while making me realize that I am never alone in any struggle. Thank you for believing in me. To Cassandra Dobbs and family, thanks for being the recipients of my stress projects and keeping me optimistic over the past three years. Dr. Tarron Richardson, it has been a long road and I thank you for your kind words and for keeping me steady. Kellee Yates, you have been in my corner for over 20 years and I thank you for your unwavering support of my academic career. You are a blessing. To my God, I place you in the middle of these acknowledgements because you are always blended into the wonderful events of my life. You are the fabric of my being. Thank you for saving and guiding me even when I was too foolish to see it. To my Gaga, I did it. You were the personification of love. I am so grateful that our paths crossed because you taught me how to love unconditionally.

To the 2012 cohort, I thank you all but special recognition is due to Cristina Reamon, Lisa Eible, Gina Innocente, Stephanie Nathanson, and Khidhra Poole. You all may not know it, but your kindness got me through. Tom Innocente, thank you for giving me the opportunity to create the victimless crime curriculum and to see it come to fruition. You made one of my dreams come true when you allowed me to express my creativity. To the best dissertation chair in the world, Dr. Marcia Martin. Your patience is unbelievable. Thank you for remaining calm and understanding throughout this process. Dr. Tricia Bent-Goodley, thank you for being willing to sit on my committee. Your dedication to the field of social work is palpable. Dr. Corey Shdaimah, Dr. Beth Lewis, and Lisa Richardson, I am truly thankful for your assistance with this dissertation. The parish of St. Matthew’s, especially Father Joe Muth, many days I sat in the pews hoping to be refreshed and you never failed to leave me feeling renewed with your inspiring messages. The community of SP2, I will be forever grateful for the lessons I learned while at this institution. Thank you for taking a chance on me. Last but not least, I would like to thank my clients-past, present, and future. Without them, this journey would have never happened and I am forever humbled by their resilience and courage to keep pushing despite the odds.

## **ABSTRACT**

### **EDUCATING STUDENTS ABOUT THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTS OF SEX WORK: INTEGRATING A COURSE FOCUSED ON PROSTITUTION INTO THE SOCIAL WORK CURRICULUM**

Halcyon Francis, MSW, LCSW-C

Marcia Martin, Ph.D.

This dissertation explores the reasons for the inclusion of a course focused on sex work, particularly prostitution, in the social work curriculum of graduate schools of social work. An anonymous survey was distributed to field placement directors at CSWE accredited graduate social work programs. The survey asked questions about the placement of students at organizations that provide services to sex workers and the existence of courses in the curriculum that focus on sex work and sex workers. The survey confirmed the hypothesis of this exploratory dissertation that while social work interns are being placed in organizations where they are encountering sex workers, there are very few courses that provide information about how to address the specific needs of this population. In response to these survey results, a curriculum was created that includes a comprehensive compilation of sources and addresses the evolution of prostitution, the relevance of feminist, economic, and intersectionality theoretical frameworks, the use of specific teaching pedagogies, and the implications of sexual trauma and a multitude of critical psychosocial challenges. In addition, this curriculum can be adapted for use by other professionals, such as those in the fields of medicine, criminal justice, public health, and policy development as a way of educating them about the complexities involved in understanding and responding to the lives of female street-walking prostitutes.

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## **Introduction and Background**

The social work profession has been evolving in the United States since it was officially practiced in the 1800s. Charitable organizations strived to impact impoverished families by utilizing “friendly visitors” in the effort to build relationships between wealthy and poor people in society (Lubove, 1965). Both the Settlement House and Charity Organization Society (COS) movements assisted in helping disadvantaged women although both had different viewpoints about why their work was being done. The Settlement House workers, “defined problems environmentally and engaged in social melioration” (Franklin, 1986, p. 508). This movement viewed problems within communities and how they effected the development of humanity as a whole. The COS believed that the poor suffered from a sense of diminished morality and ethics and that with proper guidance from astute role models, poverty could be overcome. Their focus was on influencing struggling individuals to lead better lives in accordance with the ethical standards of that time (Franklin, 1986). Although both entities took a different stance on alleviating social ills, they both made an effort in reaching out to marginalized populations.

Over the past 200 years, attention has primarily been given to social problems that manage to become visible in different ways. For example, in the 1980s, the war on drugs, the HIV/AIDS epidemic and teen pregnancy were all viewed as social ills that elicited immense consideration by the public. Massive campaigns to raise funding for research and public service announcements were introduced in the hopes of educating society about how to address these issues. Some social workers have devoted their lives to drawing attention to certain social problems in an effort to eradicate them from the world. Despite their best intentions there are some matters that have a substantial history and that are difficult to eliminate because of their steadfast presence in society. Sex work, in all of its forms, is one of the social issues that is

interwoven into the fabric of communities all over the world. The dissertation that is being proposed is the development of a curriculum that will educate social workers about the social, emotional and health issues that sex workers, particularly prostitutes face in society. This curriculum is being designed to enhance social work curricula and provide guidance to social work students on how to address some of the issues that sex workers encounter. The curriculum will also influence how sex work interfaces with other areas of practice such as social justice, child welfare and mental health.

Although the history of sex work can be dated back to early civilizations in different parts of the world, this curriculum will focus primarily on Western society and our views towards prostitution. There is very little concrete evidence about when prostitution began. Bullough & Bullough (1987) write:

In the presence of so much speculation and so little fact, all we can now say about prostitution's origins is that it probably existed from very early in human development; that it has economic, sociological, psychological, and religious overtones that are tied with the man-woman relationship; and that neither matriarchal nor patriarchal assumptions about the nature of society fully explain it (Bullough & Bullough, 1987, p.7).

Due to the fact that prostitution has such a vast history it is challenging to add all aspects of its beginnings into the curriculum. While discussing the history of prostitution, the emphasis will be placed on how early social service agencies in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries tackled this issue and how Western society has evolved since that time in its approach to sex work.

Sex work, as defined by Weitzer (2010), “involves the exchange of sexual services, performances, or products for material compensation. It includes activities of direct physical contact between buyers and sellers (prostitution, lap dancing) as well as indirect sexual stimulation (pornography, stripping, telephone sex, live sex shows, erotic webcam

performances” (p. 1). The term sex work encompasses all forms of activities related to the sex industry. Although there are various forms of sex work, this proposed curriculum will focus heavily on street-walking female prostitutes. In an article written to focus on the critical need for programs that assist prostitutes in escaping sexually abusive situations and re-arrests mostly referred to as prostitution diversion programs (PDPs), Wiechelt & Shdaimah (2011) attempt to provide a concrete explanation of prostitution as it is viewed in the most customary way. They write, “Prostitution involves the provision of sexual services in exchange for money or other forms of compensation such as housing, food, or drugs. It is commonly referred to as the oldest profession which is indicative of its presence in human civilization for centuries” (Wiechelt & Shdaimah, 2011, p. 159). The authors continue to provide several occupational categories in prostitution, “ranging from high-end escort/call girl services to street level services” (Wiechelt & Shdaimah, 2011, p. 159). They also mention that street level prostitutes tend to experience high rates of homelessness and poverty as well as health, mental health, and substance abuse problems (Farley, 2003; Hood-Brown, 1998; Sloss & Harper, 2004; Wiechelt & Shdaimah, 2011). Prostitution diversion programs will be discussed later in detail in this author’s research about sex work. Nevertheless, Wiechelt & Shdaimah’s study makes a compelling argument for the need to place social workers into prostitution diversion programs to assist clients because social workers will be able to adequately assess the psychosocial needs of these women. If this should happen, clinicians will require adequate training on how to address the needs of this complex population.

### **Statement of the Problem**

There is a need for a course in the social work curriculum that addresses sex work and its social impact. Due to the shame associated with prostitution and the possible legal ramifications

of disclosure, specific data is difficult to gather regarding how many women are actually involved in the business of selling sex in exchange for cash or other goods. Porter and Bonilla (2010) write, “Although it is difficult to provide precise data surrounding the exact number of prostitutes in the country, some researchers have estimated that about one-fifth of prostitution in the United States is street prostitution and the remainder is spread among massage parlors, bar prostitution, outcall services and brothels” (Porter and Bonilla, 2010, p. 163). Social workers run the risk of not reaching a population of women that may need assistance with substance abuse issues, disease prevention and a multitude of other problems that exist within this subculture. The social work profession has an historical commitment to engaging in direct practice on the front lines with clients who come from a multitude of backgrounds. Providing a course for social work students about prostitution can broaden a student’s ideas about how society and numerous cultures view women and sexuality. This course will also assist social workers who may be interacting with prostitutes unknowingly thus missing the opportunity to assist these women in treatment.

The idea of integrating this topic into social work education and practice may be challenging to some traditional social workers because the need for reaching out to this population has not been made critically important until now. Goldstein (2006) writes, “Nevertheless, there are enormous gaps in evidence-based practices, serious short-comings to the use of intervention manuals that do not reflect the realities of practice, and a non-critical elevation of the quantitative research paradigm as the gold standard for practice research” (Goldstein, 2006, p. 19). Goldstein is not specifically addressing social work practice but this statement can be used to stress the need for different courses that cover a multitude of areas including prostitution. By creating a curriculum that addresses the issue of sex work, a gap will

be filled in assessing the needs of a highly vulnerable population which is often ignored. This course will not only benefit social workers but professionals in other fields who may encounter sex workers frequently. Specialists in mental health, child welfare, homelessness, criminal and juvenile justice and a multitude of other disciplines often come across sex workers in their professions. With the proper information available to them about this population, it may influence how services are offered to sex workers from the professionals in their field.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this exploratory study is to develop a course that will teach students about the social impact and construct of female sex workers in society. The goal is to enhance social work students' knowledge about female sex work and prostitution and to expose students to the challenges that these women face, in order to provide effective treatment to members of this population. The first step in considering this proposed curriculum will be to determine if a course on sex work would be useful to social work students as they enter into their careers as practitioners. This preliminary information can be gathered by evaluating data collected from several schools of social work about field work placements and content with regard to sex work and prostitution. By looking at where current students are placed, this researcher can determine to what extent social workers are coming into contact with prostitutes on a regular basis, therefore supporting the need for the proposed course. It is important for students to be aware of the issues faced by different populations and the field of social work has a commitment to serving diverse populations. This course can assist in addressing an often ostracized population of women. The aim of the course is to provide students with tools and information that will be of service to the clients they come across who are sex workers. This exploratory research study will focus on developing a course that will address the problems that female street-level

prostitutes encounter. Although male prostitution is a topic that has begun to be explored recently, both genders have specialized issues that should be addressed in separate research (Minichiello, Scott & Callander, 2013).

### **Curriculum Development & Significance of the Study**

The proposed exploratory study will examine the ways in which the integration of a course focused on prostitution will enrich and diversify the social work curriculum while preparing clinicians to interact with this population in practice. The study will identify why such a course is necessary in order to address the mental health needs of a population that is ostracized in many communities. This research study will determine how often students in their field placements are providing services to this prostitutes. This section of the study will serve to prove the need for a course on sex work in the social work curriculum.

Due to complexities of working with this population, it is imperative that social workers are properly trained. Arnold, Stewart & Mayfield (2000) write, “Because many of these women not only have backgrounds in prostitution but also experience substance abuse, mental illness, violence and homelessness, the social work practitioner is faced with finding relatively scarce interventions that are both appropriate and effective” (Arnold et al., 2000, p. 120). The proposed course will offer social work students some direction for assisting this population with a multitude of issues. The course also has the potential to address issues of human rights, social justice, policy and human behavior in the social environment due to the content and the broad range of intricacies involved with prostitution that it will cover.

## **Theoretical Frameworks**

### *Feminist Theory*

There are numerous theoretical frameworks, perspectives and paradigms that emerge from the literature surrounding sex work. Feminist theory, the economic principle of social exchange theory, and intersectionality theory are the three conceptual frameworks that will be used to provide more in-depth information about prostitution. They will also be used to provide different perspectives on sex workers and their unique issues. Scoular (2004) writes, “Prostitution is often viewed in feminist theory as the sine qua non of the female condition under patriarchy” (p. 343). There are various ways in which feminists view prostitution. Radical feminists view prostitution as a, “system of patriarchal oppression of women” (Oselin & Weitzer, 2013, p.446). Their way of viewing prostitution is aligned with the oppression paradigm, “which depicts all types of sex work as exploitative and harmful because of patriarchal conditions - irrespective of the sector (street, brothel, escort, strip club, etc.) or the socio-legal context in which commercial sex transpires” (Oselin & Weitzer, 2013, p. 447). Although it is easy to see why radical feminists may feel this way about prostitution, there are some women who participate in this profession who do not find the work to be harmful to their well-being. This viewpoint is one of the tenets held by liberal feminists.

Liberal feminists have a tendency to convey a more progressive view of prostitution. Weatherall & Priestley (2011) conducted a qualitative study where they interviewed sex workers about their views on the sex industry. They write, “Liberal feminists argue that sex is a job, much like any other, and can be a form of self-determination for women. The autonomy and freedom reported as being felt by some workers are cited as one justification for promoting a more positive view of prostitution” (Weatherall & Priestley, 2011, p. 325). Weatherall & Priestley

(2011) were able to discuss sex work with actual prostitutes and some of these women shared that at times they felt in control when they were with clients, which in turn gave them a sense of authority in their profession. This empowerment paradigm reflects the views expressed by those who see sex work as a tool that enables prostitutes to be feel more in control of what happens during their sexual interactions with their clients. Weitzer (2010) explains:

The focus is on the ways in which sexual services qualify as work, involve human agency, and may be potentially validating or empowering for workers. This paradigm holds that there is nothing inherent in sex work that would prevent it from being organized for mutual gain to all parties-just as in other economic transactions (Weitzer, 2010, p.5).

The empowerment paradigm provides a viewpoint that contrasts from the oppression paradigm in that it places emphasis on the issue of autonomy when discussing sex work. The different feminist approaches on sex work assist in the development of this curriculum. There are many ways to view prostitution and it is important to be able to analyze this occupation from different perspectives.

According to Kesler (2002), ex-prostitutes are particularly vocal about prostitution but most do not consider themselves to be feminists. She suggests that the reason ex-prostitutes are outspoken about prostitution is because they believe, “any theory dealing with prostitution should be generated from the inside out” (St. James, 1987, p. 85; Kesler, 2002, p. 220). Kesler recommends that prostitutes be consulted about their experiences when outsiders are creating theories or plans surrounding sex work. Kesler is a former sex worker and believes that members of this population are able to provide details about what this occupation entails better than anyone else.

Black feminist theory provides a particularly important and intricate viewpoint regarding the treatment of marginalized women in society. Crenshaw (1991) has written numerous articles

on intersectionality theory and its impact on how race and gender are viewed in multiple disciplines but also in regards to women of color. In an article which addresses violence against women of color she writes:

I consider how the experiences of women of color are frequently the product of intersecting patterns of racism and sexism, and how these experiences tend not to be represented within the discourses of either feminism or antiracism. Because of their intersectional identity as both women *and* of color within discourses that are shaped to respond to one *or* the other, women of color are marginalized within both (Crenshaw, 1991, p.1244).

It can be inferred that the experiences of women of color who are prostitutes differ from Caucasian women due to many factors. Examining these variances can have implications for future research and service provision to female street-walking prostitutes. Although society may view the issues that prostitutes face as homogenous, social workers should be made aware of the differences within this group and how these differences can add to strains and conflicts within their communities (Crenshaw, 1993).

These various approaches reflect the opinions of those who have an impact on prostitution. Whether it involves working with these women at agencies or developing policies that effect their work. The proposed curriculum would permit the students to explore each theory and critically analyze them. Using these theories will assist them in understanding their own feelings about prostitution. The theories also help is supporting the initial discussion about prostitution and whether or not society has a tendency to view the issue through the oppression, empowerment or what Wietzer (2010) refers to as the polymorphous paradigm, believing that there are many intricacies involved in prostitution and that numerous societal factors contribute to how prostitution is viewed by the worker and the community (Weitzer, 2010).

### *Social Exchange Theory*

Social exchange theory states that, “each party in an interaction gives something and gets something in return. Analyzing the costs and benefits of various interpersonal behaviors furnishes a useful basis for making predictions about how people will think, feel, and choose to act” (Baumeister & Vohs, 2004, p. 340). Social exchange theory can be applied to prostitution when sex is viewed as a female resource. When men pay for sex from women, they are essentially getting something of value from the women and the market value influences how much these services are worth (Baumeister & Vohs, 2004). This is what makes sex between a prostitute and her client a part of the economic system of their particular community. If the prostitute has a pimp, then that person also becomes included in the hierarchical structure of prostitution. This view of prostitution places a lot of value on the prostitute’s worth although most individuals would not view sex workers as powerful women.

Social exchange theory is defined by Richard Emerson as, “the economic analysis of noneconomic social situations” (Emerson, 1976, p. 336). This author discusses the application of social operant behavior which essentially means that a behavior will continue if there is a consistent incentive provided by others (Emerson, 1976). Although Emerson was not specifically addressing sex work, social exchange theory can be applied to prostitution. It can be argued that if men did not desire prostitutes and did not want their services, then prostitution would cease to exist. The fact that sex work has persisted throughout the ages may imply that the exchange between a prostitute and her client is an important social process that can be of value to the economic sustainability of some communities.

This article by Richard Emerson highlights the formulation of social exchange theory and identifies unique ideas that can be associated with the theory such as rationality, tautology, and

reductionism. At the conclusion of the article, Emerson explains that exchange theory should not be viewed as an actual theory. Rather, he referred to it as a “frame of reference” that occurs through the “social process” (Emerson, 1976, p. 359). In some ways, this de-valued the concept of the social exchange theory, which is a logical philosophy when applied to many social issues that are not viewed as lawful or legitimate forms of earning income. By removing the description of social exchange as a theory, the concepts that are used to reinforce it as a legitimate social model are somewhat diminished. Nonetheless, Emerson’s article supports this author’s research by providing a deeper understanding of how and why sex work continues to thrive in many communities.

Social exchange theory can also be an explanation for why prostitutes are not highly valued in many societies. Prostitutes are viewed as women who are available to have sex whenever their services are needed. This reputation does not give the impression that sex workers are highly sought after sexual partners. The men who have sex with them know that they are not getting something exclusive. This viewpoint lends to the idea that prostitutes are disposable because there are many other women who can provide the same service, maybe even at a cheaper price (Baumeister & Vohs, 2004). Although social exchange theory was not initially meant to be applied to prostitution, students can use this economic theory to understand some of the complex socio-economic issues surrounding prostitution.

### *Intersectionality Theory*

In 1976 the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) revised its guidelines to address the role of women and their function in society. This small change allowed for the acknowledgement that women in many ways face unique hardships simply as a result of gender (Jani, Pierce, Ortiz & Sowbel, 2013). This shift also pointed out the lack of content that focused

on various social justice issues that dealt with special populations. Since that time, there have been several modifications to the CSWE guidelines which reflect an integration of material that addresses populations that are impacted by oppression of any kind. Several theories and practices have also been implemented in order to address the polymorphous nature of social work and marginalized subgroups. Intersectionality theory is an example of a concept that was developed to address the complexities behind social issues and how they overlap.

Intersectionality theory is defined as, “a multidimensional concept that refers on one level to how the intersecting experiences of multiple subordinating identities contribute to one’s sense of self, perspectives, and aspirations. On another level it refers to an individual’s multiple social locations that in some instances place him or her in the role of being both oppressed and the oppressor simultaneously” (Jani, Pierce, Ortiz & Sowbel, 2013, p.295). Intersectionality theory can be used to support the inclusion of this course on prostitution into the social work curricula because it helps in explaining the many social hardships that some women face in addition to having to make a living as street-walking prostitutes. The issue of how race, socioeconomic status, age and other factors can influence the experiences of women who are involved in prostitution are extremely important when discussing this population. Some of their motives behind seeking mental health treatment may be compounded by the fact that they are trying to cope with various social stressors along with identifying as prostitutes.

## **Literature Review**

### *Definition of Prostitution*

A consistent definition for the act of prostitution has not been agreed upon. The United States Department of Justice defines prostitution as, “a sexual act or contact with another person in return for giving or receiving a fee or a thing of value” (U.S. Department of Justice, 2008).

This a broad description of prostitution but it contains the basic conditions necessary in order for prostitution to occur. As mentioned previously there are different types of prostitutes but this exploratory research will focus on street level prostitutes. Porter & Bonilla (2010) provide a detailed description of street level prostitutes:

Some prostitutes work on the street because they have no access to private space for sex work or because there is a reluctance by escort services or massage parlors to employ women with substance dependency. Street workers are also more likely to be poor, are disproportionately members of racial minorities, and are the most likely of any group of sex workers to be arrested” (Porter & Bonilla, 2010, p. 164).

Street level prostitutes present with distinctive social issues that can be addressed in treatment.

This curriculum will highlight some of these issues and provide information to students about the challenges that these women often face.

### *Ambiguity of Sex Work*

In much of the literature on prostitution, there are differing views regarding who should be punished for participating in this act. Pettersson & Tiby explain, “The themes show how the traditional position of the bad woman as vendor and the invisible man as purchaser is preserved” (2002, p. 154). In addition, popular culture makes it incredibly difficult to discern what constitutes sex work and what doesn’t. Women are paid to disrobe in music videos and skim the edges of what would be considered pornography. The line of who fits the criteria for a sex worker is continuously being blurred. The more information there is available to the masses regarding sex work and prostitution, the more difficult it becomes to differentiate between sex worker and non-sex worker (Pettersson & Tiby, 2003). Pettersson & Tiby (2003), highlight the point that there is not a consistent definition of prostitution and that women are almost always found to be at fault when prostitution occurs between men and women. This article was useful to

this research proposal because it reinforced the fact that there is no agreed upon or concrete definition of sex work. With the lack of a solid definition it can be deduced that most people, including social workers, are ignorant to what sex work actually involves. A common misunderstanding of sex workers is that these women do this work only for cash. Money is not the only motivation behind prostitution. The exchange for any necessity, including food, clothes, and shelter, to be supplied to sex workers is all that is required for prostitution to occur as explained by the aforementioned researchers.

### *Public Perception of Sex Workers*

Perceptions of the characteristics of the average sex worker varies greatly. There is not a standard description of a female prostitute or what personality traits she should possess. “The prostitute has been variously described as a masochistic, of infantile mentality, unable to form mature interpersonal relationships, regressed, emotionally dangerous to males and as normal as the average woman” (Bryan, 1965, p. 287). These qualities may pertain to some prostitutes, but the overall perception of the personalities of the women in this profession enhance their reputation as being unworthy of compassion. The description provided by Bryan (1965) in his article about apprenticeships in prostitution, paints the picture of the prostitute as a community member who is less than valuable and easily disposed of because she contributes very little to society. Bryan’s research provides detailed qualitative examples of how sex workers are introduced to life on the streets. He offers a realistic view of how prostitutes see themselves and how pimps serve to sustain the image of the prostitute as worthless regardless of how hard the woman works to earn money.

The way in which society views prostitution varies from community to community but the topic of prostitution is heavily discussed in the general public with strong opinions for and

against it. Gurd & O'Brien (2013) write, "Within political and social arenas, prostitution continues to be a highly contested and debated issue. Generally conceptualized as a 'problem' in need of eradication, prostitution is strongly linked to immorality and deviance" (Gurd & O'Brien, 2013, p. 149). Gurd and O'Brien's research examined "John Schools", where men who are arrested for buying sexual services attend courses that aim to educate them about the dangers associated with purchasing sex for money. Unfortunately, this article does not specify the types of professionals who are teaching these courses. The authors mention psychologists providing information about mental health disorders relating to sexual intercourse but no additional occupations are mentioned. It can be inferred that social workers are involved with these programs on some level and one of the aims of this exploratory research study is to attempt to insure that social workers are kept at the forefront regarding the services that are provided when dealing with prostitution.

### *Legalization of Prostitution*

Prostitution is currently categorized as a victimless crime that disrupts how communities function. Prostitution is illegal in almost every state and is usually a misdemeanor offense (Hayes-Smith & Shekarkhar, 2010). There is currently a debate about whether prostitution should be legalized or remain illegal. Those who are in favor of legalizing prostitution argue that states may be able to include taxes and impose regulations and rules about where prostitution can occur (Hayes-Smith & Shekarkhar, 2010). Legalization would mean that, "street prostitutes could exist on any street, so long as customers did not disturb the peace or violate other ordinances (Weitzer, 2010). When addressing legal brothels in Nevada, Hausbeck & Brents (2010) provide five reasons why legalization is justified. One of the reasons includes the fact that the government can regulate prostitution and provide parameters surrounding what sexual acts

are allowed during transactions while simultaneously generating income for the state (Hausbeck & Brents (2010). The criminalization and legalization of prostitution, will be further explored in the proposed curriculum.

### *International Perspective on Prostitution*

Different cultures handle the various social issues that arise with prostitution according to the policies that govern their land. What researchers in East Asia have found while conducting studies on sex workers is that some women enter this profession mainly out of a sense of duty to their loved ones. “Necessity to provide for the family, especially children, and financial crisis overrode any resistance that women may have felt in entering the sex trade” (Panchanadeswaran, Johnson, Sivaram, Srikrishnan, Latkin, Bentley, Solomon, Go & Celentano, 2008, p. 108). The impact that economics plays on prostitution will be explored in the proposed curriculum. For many women in the United States and internationally, sex work is a means to make a decent living for their families. Unfortunately, some women are not educated and there are not enough jobs to support every woman who wishes to work in a more traditional career. The article written by Panchanadeswaran et al. (2008), primarily focuses on reducing the rate of human papilloma virus (HIV) and physical abuse among sex workers in India. HIV will not be discussed in detail in the proposed course but will be covered under a section that addresses the health risks involved in prostitution. The Panchanadeswaran et al. (2008) article identified the importance of including pertinent information about prostitution as it relates to sexual health and physical violence. The article mentions the encouragement of condom use among prostitutes and their buyers and also stresses the need for safety plans in case prostitutes are placed in dangerous situations with consumers or intimate partners.

## *Health Risks Associated with Prostitution*

Prostitution is a risky and dangerous occupation for women. If they are not having protected sex, they are placing themselves at risk for becoming pregnant or contracting sexually transmitted diseases from their clients. Although there are many diseases that can be explored, HIV is the most pressing area of concern when studying prostitution. Street prostitutes are at a greater risk for getting a disease from their clientele. Weitzer (2007) writes, “HIV infection rates are highest among street prostitutes who inject drugs and less common among others (Weitzer, 2007, p. 29). Due to the fact that most street walking prostitutes participate in some level of drug use they run the risk of spreading and contracting HIV (Inciardi & McElrath, 1998; Mayfield et al., 2000). Mayfield et al. (2000) conducted a qualitative study on female street-walking prostitutes and successfully demonstrated the need for programs that specifically treat this population due to the multitude of psychosocial challenges they face. Their research was helpful with this proposed curriculum because not only did they stress the need for specialized programs but addressed the issue of having the individuals involved in the mental health field play a major role in providing services to this population.

Social workers who work with sex workers on a regular basis should be aware that treatment for HIV should always begin with a medical physician. Taylor (2011) provides a description of what the responsibilities should be of a social worker who is providing treatment to a woman with HIV:

The role of the therapist would be to provide education to the patient about HIV and AIDS and give support, crisis counseling, information, and referrals as needed (AIDS.gov, n.d.) Baxter and Campbell (1994) suggest the counseling skills the therapist should employ consist of active listening, developing rapport, securing the patient’s confidentiality, and giving information about HIV. They further elucidate that taking the patient’s sexual history and giving accurate

information about HIV/AIDS are paramount, but checking that the information had been understood is equally important (Taylor, 2011, p. 840).

Taylor researched the relationship between sexual victimization and the psychological and physiological effects of the abuse on female patients. She addresses prostitution in her research and writes about some of the health problems they experience as a result of unprotected sex and drug use. She found that a myriad of services should be provided to these women in order to assist with their complex issues. The proposed course will provide an overview for students about female prostitutes and HIV. It will educate them about what to expect when they are treating a patient with HIV who must or who chooses to continue working in order to sustain her livelihood.

#### *Substance Abuse and Prostitution*

A great deal of research on prostitution surrounds the topic of substance abuse. The use of illicit drugs can be taught in an independent course but it is vital that it also be included in this proposed course because statistics show that it is likely that street level prostitutes engage in some level of substance use (Sallmann, 2010). The emotional and physical demands of prostitution may force some women to use illegal substances in order to make their jobs easier to tolerate. Weitzer (2007) writes, “Street workers consume drugs or alcohol to help them cope with the adversities of the job, whereas indoor workers use them both for coping and as part of their socializing with customers” (Weitzer, 2007, p. 29). Arnold, Stewart & McNeece (2008) found in their research about street-walking prostitutes that many of the women involved were substance abusers first and then had to prostitute themselves in order to support their habits. They write:

In conversations with prostitutes, staff, and community professionals, it became clear that most of these women were substance abusers first and prostitutes second. Most women reported that their addiction (generally to crack cocaine) fueled their desire to return to the streets time and time again. They spoke of their

addictions and their need to use drugs overpowering their own efforts to quit prostituting. Some reported so much desperation that they would turn a trick for crack with no monetary payment (Arnold, et al., (2008).

This excerpt provides a detailed explanation of what may drive some women to enter into prostitution.

Sallmann (2010) completed a qualitative study and interviewed 14 women about their experiences with prostitution and substance abuse. This study was conducted in order to gain a clearer perspective on how a woman's involvement in prostitution impacts her addiction and subsequently her recovery. At the conclusion of her article, Sallman stressed the need for service providers to have, "training on the socio-demographic profile of prostitution-involved women and how to assess for involvement" (Sallmann, 2010, p. 133.) She also went on to express the importance of service providers knowing about the day to day lives of these women as prostitutes and what the job actually entails (Sallmann, 2010). This article supports this proposed course because it highlights a central area of concern when covering the topic of prostitution and stresses why this proposed course is necessary to include in the social work curriculum.

### *Violence and Prostitution*

Because there are people in a given community who view sex workers unworthy of respect they are often subjected to many forms of violence. These acts include violence by pimps, customers, law enforcement and even spouses and partners. "Violence against female sex workers (FSWs) has received inadequate attention from researchers and practitioners alike" (Panchanadeswaran, Johnson, Sivaram, Srikrishnan, Zelaya, Solomon, Go & Celentano, 2012, p. 211). In the literature about sex workers, more focus is placed on the act of exchanging sex for money than on the physical, sexual and emotional abuse that some of these women regularly endure. Street prostitutes are much more susceptible to experiencing violent acts against them than any other category of sex worker. "Among sex workers, levels of violence victimization are

especially high for those individuals who work on the streets rather than in brothels, dance clubs, or other similar environments” (Romero-Daza, Weeks & Singer, 2005, p. 156). These women are not only being victimized by their pimps but by their customers and spouses or long time partners.

One reason why violence against FSWs is not taken seriously is because of the nature of the work. It is difficult to prove that rape has occurred in this occupation and when it is reported, often it is not treated as a serious offense against the victim. Romero-Daza et al., (2005) reviewed a popular substance abuse model and reviewed how substance abuse, violence, and HIV affects street walking prostitutes. When addressing violence against prostitutes they write, “It also has been reported that because of the stigma associated with prostitution and the tendency to place blame for the assault on the victim herself, police may give low priority to cases involving rape of women who prostitute” (Romero-Daza et al, 2005). Romero-Daza et al. provided a solid explanation of the physical health risks as well as the substance abuse and mental health issues that prostitutes face on the street. Their review provided this researcher with additional information that would be crucial to include in this curriculum about prostitution. Ronald Weitzer, a well-known researcher on the topic of sex work, reported this information in a paper about the popular image of prostitution: “A study by Stephanie Church and colleagues found that 27 percent of a sample of street prostitutes had been assaulted, 37 percent robbed, and 22 percent raped” (Weitzer, 2007, p. 29). These statistics demonstrate that prostitutes face a great deal of danger on the streets and as a result require assistance from informed mental health professionals if they decide to seek treatment to address their trauma.

### *Perception of Sex Workers as Social Deviants*

Despite sex workers being a vulnerable population, they are not provided with the same amount of attention, protection, and respect that is given to other at-risk individuals. Scoular (2004) takes a feminist approach to sex work and analyzes the work of several prominent feminists and their views of prostitution. She explains that there are various ways prostitution can be viewed by feminists. She also provided substantial information regarding the history of prostitution. Scoular writes, “As diverse as the work in the area of sexuality is, there is a tendency amongst the most rhetorical writers to cast the deviant category itself as normative, especially when striving for legal recognition, at the expense of more pluralistic struggles around sexuality” (Scoular, 2004, p. 347). Most communities have a tendency to shame female prostitutes and their circumstances and reasons for prostituting may not be taken into account before they are judged as unworthy of attention, protection, and respect.

The humiliation experienced by these women is present in almost every community. “The social stigma of engaging in prostitution is also very real, even if it may be lessened in communities that recognize prostitution as a logical option” (Shdaimah & Wiechelt, 2012). This excerpt demonstrates that disgrace is often placed upon prostitutes, which makes it more difficult for them to seek help from agencies when assistance is needed. This also makes it challenging for clinicians to gain access to this population because the participants may not be willing to disclose that they are sex workers which may result in their issues going unaddressed. Shdaimah & Wiechelt (2012) conducted a qualitative study that captured some of the thoughts of prostitutes and the reasons why they return to sex work in order to make a living. Many of the women stated that prostitution was their only means of survival and by labeling them as deviants and by giving them a criminal record only made their option of leaving prostitution more

difficult. This aspect of prostitution will be addressed in the proposed course, particularly as it pertains to criminalization.

Social workers must be conscious of the types of stigma that are placed on women who are involved in sex work. Society's reactions and labeling of them as pariahs can be harmful to their psyche. Prostitutes can go unnoticed or ignored in some communities and the men involved are not judged as harshly for various reasons. Douglas Raybeck (1991) provides a summary of why labeling these individuals as deviants may be more prevalent in some communities than others:

The reactions of a society's members to deviant acts are often predicated on the degree to which these acts may interfere with the members' pursuits of their own interests. Whether or not actors are labelled as deviants, if their behavior departs from cultural norms and/or values in a fashion which hinders others' attempts to realize their ends, these others will be concerned with altering the discrepant behavior toward closer conformity with cultural ideas. However, the degree of their concern and the forms it takes can vary considerably (p. 23).

In his research, Raybeck (199) looked at how society views deviance by using labeling theory. He was able to obtain qualitative data by working in a community and making his observations first hand.

Women who are involved in prostitution are viewed differently from men who seek the services of prostitutes. "Johns" are not as often labeled as deviant even though both adults usually consent to engage in the act with each other in an exchange for money (Monto 2010; Gurd & O'Brien 2013). This provides support for the idea that women are regarded as being the guilty participant in prostitution, while men are viewed merely as recipients of a sexual service that has been offered to them or that they have sought.

## *Clinical Assessment and Intervention*

A portion of the proposed course will focus on the clinical treatment of sex workers surrounding issues related to sexual trauma. “A great deal of the research on childhood maltreatment and prostitution has focused specifically on childhood sexual abuse. It has been reported that as high as 73% of women in prostitution report having experienced childhood sexual abuse” (Wiechelt & Shdaimah, 2011, p. 162). When some sex workers seek assistance from an agency, their history may include some form of sexual trauma either experienced in childhood or adulthood. It is vital that practicing social workers know how to treat these issues appropriately in order to avoid re-traumatizing the clients. The mental health treatment of sexual trauma victims is a unique practice. Courtois & Gold (2009) advocate for the inclusion of psychological trauma into the professional curriculum, specifically when addressing clients with a history of sexual trauma. Courtois & Gold (2009) stress the importance of having adequately trained professionals when treating such a delicate issue. They write:

Additionally, professionals without knowledge of trauma or sensitization to it or its consequences may experience strong negative and horrified reactions that can impact their ability to respond positively to their patients, or alternatively, they may erroneously assume that they have more competence than they have and make critical mistakes as a result. Professionals who are trauma-informed and sensitized to trauma and its common after-effects are able to offer a different type of response, one that includes the ability to empathize, to listen, and to modify procedures and protocols to make them more tolerable to important factors in assisting those who have been injured or demoralized (especially those who were hurt and suffered betrayal by human-induced trauma” (Courtois & Gold, 2009, p. 12).

When dealing with sex workers, treatment of these issues may become more complex because not only is shame involved but the client may be re-living the same trauma daily due to her occupation.

### *Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) & Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)*

Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) also play a major role in the mental health treatment of sex workers. Clinicians must be aware of the reoccurring mental health issues that are present in this population. Research has suggested that prostitutes suffer from higher rates of PTSD and depression than the general population (Chudakov, Ilan, Belmaker, & Cwikel, 2002). This data is pertinent information for social work clinicians to know in order to begin providing effective treatment to prostitutes. This data can help guide interventions and influence treatment planning. Chudakov, et al. (2002) conducted a study on 55 female prostitutes and found that several of the women fit the criteria for PTSD and depression. They concluded in their study that these two mental health disorders deserve more focus among this population. The authors also noted that the mental health struggles of prostitutes are similar to the issues found among women who have experienced childhood physical or sexual abuse.

The clinical treatment of sexual trauma, depression and PTSD will be included in the proposed course about sex work. The course will expose social workers to the mental health problems associated with sex work that are not often examined when discussing prostitution. It will also reinforce the fact that the women who participate in these acts suffer from the same mental health issues as other marginalized populations. They often have psychosocial histories that include painful childhood experiences which have led them to seek mental health treatment. It will also address appropriate intervention strategies for trauma survivors which as mentioned previously in the article by Courtois & Gold (2009) are crucial in the treatment of anyone who has experienced some form of trauma.

## *Community Programs for Sex Workers*

Most social workers are not trained in dealing with the complex issues that sex workers bring to treatment. There is not sufficient data present in the research that explains the exact type of assistance that some organizations offer sex workers. Therefore the effectiveness of these treatment programs has not been adequately explored. The organizations that provide services exclusively to prostitutes have been labeled PSOs (Prostitute-Serving Organizations). These organizations provide resources and various physical and mental health services to prostitutes (Oselin & Weitzer, 2013). These organizations are not to be confused with activist organizations that take action regarding policies that affect sex workers. Oselin & Weitzer (2013) completed an analysis of PSOs, which included interviewing employees and viewing the organizations websites to see what services are being offered to the clients. From their data they were able to categorize the PSOs into groups according to the theoretical paradigms that exist when discussing sex work. According to Oselin & Weitzer (2013), there are around 37 prostitute serving organizations in the United States and Canada (p. 449). This is a relatively small number of organizations for a population that is present in every state and province. This poses the question regarding whether or not prostitutes are getting their mental health and other needs met. If they aren't, then the issue of where sex workers are going to receive mental health treatment and who is providing them with these services should be addressed.

Proper information and training is vital for new social workers who will encounter this population upon entering the work force. In their research pertaining to PSOs, Leon & Shdaimah (2012) found that clients were very sensitive to how their treatment providers interacted with them. The prostitutes shared that they found some of the professionals they encountered as being "intrusive" in their dealings with them (p. 259). Leon & Shdaimah (2012) provide support to the

idea that professionals who work with this population should be able to build trusting relationships with the clients in order to provide the most appropriate method of treatment to assist these women.

Paying attention to the needs of each prostitute is vitally important. As mentioned previously, there are subgroups within each community and differences as they pertain to race should be paid adequate attention when providing services to these women within PSOs.

Crenshaw (1991) highlights the role of structural intersectionality and how it can affect organizations and the staff that are trying to assist clients. She writes:

Women of color are differently situated in the economic, social, and political worlds. When reform efforts undertaken on behalf of women neglect this fact, women of color are less likely to have their needs met than women who are racially privileged. For example, counselors who provide rape crisis services to women on color report that a significant proportion of the resources allocated to them must be spent handling problems other than rape itself. Meeting these needs often places these counselors at odds with their funding agencies, which allocate funds according to standards of need that are largely white and middle class. These uniform standards of need ignore the fact that different needs often demand different priorities in terms of resource allocation, and consequently, these standards hinder the ability of counselors to address the needs of nonwhite and poor women. A case in point: women of color occupy positions both physically and culturally marginalized within dominant society, and so information must be targeted directly to them in order to reach them (Crenshaw, 1991).

The example of the rape crisis counselors can be applied to social workers who are providing services to prostitutes in PSOs. Adequate resources must be identified that can address the needs that women of color may require when receiving services from these organizations. Social work student must be educated regarding how to navigate the industrial systems specific to PSOs in order to get their jobs done effectively.

## *Human Trafficking*

Sex work, specifically prostitution, has been around since the beginning of time but has been garnering much more attention in recent years due to the human trafficking crisis. Prostitution, stripping, pornography and other acts included under the umbrella of sex work are now being magnified because of the forced entry of young girls and women into these professions. Although human trafficking is important and the involuntary entry of any human being into a sex act is wrong, there are sex workers who participate in their occupations willingly. While the reason to enter into prostitution may be influenced by economic factors or other unfavorable situations, there are numerous circumstances under which a woman would willingly enter into this occupation. The dissertation that is being proposed will focus on prostitution and will only touch on the issue of human trafficking as it impacts the way in which sex work is viewed.

Human trafficking is an important aspect in the discussion about sex work. The definition of this act is as follows:

Human trafficking according to the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) specifically addresses sex trafficking. It states that this type of trafficking occurs when a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age (Fight Slavery Now, 2013).

Although human trafficking is a heinous crime, this proposed course will not place significant emphasis on the human trafficking component of sex work. The ultimate goal of the proposed course is to teach social work students about the issues that affect all sex workers, not just those who have been trafficked, therefore taking a polymorphous approach to the issue. This author feels that the psychological and social impact on the victims of human trafficking should have a

separate course designated to that topic. The issues that human trafficking victims experience are also unique in that trafficking involves displacement and often being brought into the life of sex work at a younger age (Weitzer, 2007). The proposed course will devote a section to human trafficking victims but will maintain a broader perspective surrounding sex work.

### *Course Development*

Curriculum development surrounding prostitution has to be approached with an open mind regarding how the course can unfold. The conversations that occur during class will help social work students learn how to effectively assist clients whose lifestyles they may not support. While social work ethics classes clearly teach the importance of valuing and respecting others it can be difficult for some students to provide services to clients who contradict their moral principles. In order to move beyond those challenges, curriculum should be developed that helps students understand how to further confront feelings of judgement when dealing with clients who they believe contrast their own beliefs.

Sugawara writes:

Curriculum development is crucial to preparing the professional social worker to function competently within the rapidly changing human service environment. In attempting to address the complex challenges of curriculum change in today's world, social work educators concentrate their discourse around the content of social work curriculum: What skills and values do students need to face complex societal issues? What model or framework works best and for which curricula? What knowledge ought curriculum to require? How can students connect "thinking" with "doing? (2009, p. 446).

In her study, Sugawara administered surveys to social workers to determine the most effective way to promote curriculum changes through enhancing the quality of social work conferences. She concluded that by encouraging social work professionals to engage in social interaction, ideas are formed, colleagues collaborate and then new course designs are created. It is important for social work schools to invest in the development of new courses because it forces the schools

and faculty to take responsibility for advancing social work practice by addressing the current needs of society. Cook-Sather, Cohen & Alter (2010) discuss the importance of pressing for institutional change. They write:

We conceptualize social justice as a process of becoming, not a state of being or a fixed set of beliefs and practices. Our preliminary findings suggest that this process involves such moves as gaining perspective and raising awareness, developing our capacities as learners and communicators across our differences, increasing our comfort with discomfort, engaging in deeper critical thinking, and enhancing our sense of agency and empowerment (Cook-Sather et al, 2010, p. 170).

By integrating the discussion of sex work and prostitution into the curriculum, social work schools will enhance the skills that are provided to students for dealing with vulnerable populations. This will also allow for the conversation about prostitution to enter more arenas and come to the forefront of many policy discussions.

### *Student Learning Process*

This proposed course will approach the issues that sex workers encounter from a non-judgmental standpoint and theories that can produce the least amount of bias towards the subject matter have been chosen. Learning theory and developmental systems theory (DST) will both be used to support this curriculum to reinforce the benefit of this course for social work students. Learning theory asserts that students must be mentally prepared and willing to learn new subject matter in order to gain the benefits from a particular curriculum (Blair, 1948). This theory will help to provide backing for the hypothesis that students who elect to take a class on sex work are prepared to learn more about this marginalized population. An overview of DST and how it relates to the field of social work's perspective on reaching out to vulnerable populations is below:

DST also explicates levels that are located largely within the individual, such as biological, cognitive, and emotional systems. As Lerner (2002) summarizes, 'In developmental systems (theory), the person is neither biologized, psychologized, nor sociologized. Rather the individual is "systematized", that is his or her development is embedded within an integrated matrix of variables derived from multiple levels or organization' (p. 186). This emphasis on multiple levels of person-environment systems is congruent with social work's biopsychosocial approach, which considers strengths and vulnerabilities across biological, psychological, and multiple levels of social processes and physical environments (Greenfield, 2010, p. 532).

DST offers a rationale for why a course on sex work should be integrated into the social work curriculum. By providing this class as an elective to students, schools of social work can assist in advancing the profession by diving deeper into the impact of ostracized populations on the greater community. These frameworks serve to bring out a different view of sex workers and how they impact society. Some perspectives that will be covered briefly in the curriculum include the feminist, economic and international view of sex work. Intertwined into these frameworks and perspectives the curriculum will provide an overview of three social theories: capitalism, consumerism and leisure and tourism.

In an article based on Paulo Freire's philosophy regarding education and how his progressive approach to social change can be used in social work schools, Hegar (2012) discusses why schools of social work may be reluctant to implement more aggressive and probing social change courses. She explained that the social work profession has moved away from tackling the more pressing societal issues in exchange for a more "clinical" and "psychotherapeutic" stance which has closely linked social workers with the medical model instead of grassroots advocacy work (2012, p. 169). The proposal of the inclusion of a class on sex work into the social work curriculum will encourage most social work schools to expand upon their traditional curriculum of teaching their students.

Although *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was written over 40 years ago it possesses a modern and holistic view about education and offers an intriguing analysis about the responsibility of educators and how they relate to students. Paulo Friere (1970) encourages teachers to bring mindfulness to the classroom and allow students to view how new concepts, can be integrated and applied to their own lives. By taking this action, the instructor opens the door for the student to take social action on any issues they feel are affecting their society (Friere, 1970). Friere writes:

Education as the practice of freedom-as opposed to education as the practice of domination-denies that man is abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world; it also denies that the world exists as a reality apart from people. Authentic reflection considers neither abstract man nor the world without people, but people in their relations with the world. In these relations consciousness and world are simultaneous: consciousness neither precedes the world nor follows it (Friere, 1970, p. 81).

Friere's philosophy on education pinpoints exactly what this researcher would like to accomplish with the inclusion of this proposed curriculum into the social work profession: a non-judgmental approach to the issues of a stigmatized population of women. By taking this stance, social work students to will be able to use the skills that they are provided to assist these women with all of the issues they bring to treatment.

Hegar (2012) heavily encourages the integration of Freire's philosophy about social change into the social work curriculum. Although Freire was an educator and geared most of his literature towards teachers, Hegar's argument is strong and begs the reader to investigate more into Freire and what contributions his writings can make to the social work profession. This course on sex work that is being proposed will aim to bridge both the clinical and grassroots elements of social work, which are both important. The content will focus on an almost invisible population with a unique set of mental health issues. This course on prostitution will provide

social workers the opportunity to think critically about how they can better assess women's involvement in sex work and also formulate suitable treatment plans to address their needs.

### *Teaching Methodology*

The contents of this course can be taught using traditional teaching methods such as lecture or seminars and can include case studies if available. It is this researcher's opinion that this course should not be provided as an on-line class due to the subject matter and the fact that the course will be new to the social work core curriculum. It is important to assess whether or not the course is successful using traditional instructional methods before online courses are introduced. Hisle-Gorman and Zuravin (2006) conducted a quasi-experimental research study examining the academic performance of social work students who were enrolled in lecture only, lecture with access to blackboard, and an online class. The researchers found that for new course material the students who were enrolled in the lecture only class were able to learn more concepts in the course when compared to the students who took the class online (2006). The authors concluded their research with this statement, "The examination of on-line instruction is relatively new to the field of social work, and more research in the area is needed. Future research on the use of on-line teaching in the social work field is needed to better understand the technology as a teaching instrument" (2008, p. 91). This article was helpful in determining if teaching an on-line section of this course on sex-work would be beneficial to the students. Since this is a new concept being introduced into the social work curriculum, lecture with the assistance of other teaching methods would be best. The course proposed for this study will be designed with the traditional lecture teaching methodology to frame the content.

## *Human Behavior in the Social Environment and CSWE Specifications*

Human Behavior in the Social Environment (HBSE) courses have been described as, “intended to provide students an applicable framework in order to describe, explain and ultimately predict human behavior, while taking into consideration the intricate and complex nature of each individual” (Zaparanick & Wodarski, 2005, p.4). Unfortunately, the push to include more courses that focus on sexuality has not been very effective. Dating back to the 1960s, researchers have been advocating for the addition of “sexuality-related content” to be included in social work education (Laverman & Skiba, 2012, p. 87). Most of the research from then until now emphasizes the need for social work students to be provided with knowledge about human sexuality in order to strengthen their practice skills. Laverman & Skiba (2012) conducted a study with Bachelor of Social Work candidates and their ability to identify any sexuality content within their curriculum. The authors state that in today’s society, students are constantly exposed to sexuality issues and need to be comfortable discussing sex with their clients in practice. They write:

Yet the question remains whether students have sufficient understanding of the full depth and breadth of human sexuality. In other words, the issue is not whether sexuality has been discussed at all, but whether a contemporary picture of human sexuality is reflected in present-day social work curricula and whether students have been equipped to deal with client matters that involve sexuality (Laverman & Skiba, 2012, p. 86).

One might speculate that during the course of a social worker’s career she/he will encounter a female client who has had some involvement with sex work. It is in the best interest of the social work profession to begin preparing social workers properly for these interactions.

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) is the entity that ensures that the quality of curriculums in schools of social work meet professional standards. The proposed course will

follow the guidelines specified in the CSWE's requirements for curriculum design. In the statement of purpose provided by CSWE regarding the council's principal responsibilities, it states that the council, "permits programs to use traditional and emerging models of curriculum design by balancing requirements that promote comparability across programs with a level of flexibility that encourages programs to differentiate" (CSWE, 2012). This statement allows for the creation of the proposed course in this dissertation. All policies and procedures set forth by the CSWE will be followed which will allow for the successful integration of a course on prostitution into the social work curriculum. The CSWE Education and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) addresses program context under its educational policy 1.2. It states:

Context encompasses the mission of the institution in which the program is located and the needs and opportunities associated with the setting. Programs are further influenced by their historical, political, economic, social, cultural, demographic, and global contexts and by the ways they elect to engage these factors. Additional factors include new knowledge, technology, and ideas that may have a bearing on contemporary and future social work education and practice (EPAS, 2008).

A course for social workers focused on prostitution will address many of the components in the policy provided by EPAS (Appendix D). The proposed course will engage students in studying about a population that is overlooked in society. The course is proposing a new way to look at this topic and how it could have an impact on the future of social work practice.

This proposed course will attempt to enrich the social work curriculum by addressing significant social issues such as substance abuse, MDD, PTSD and health risks as they pertain to women's involvement in street level prostitution. This author believes that there is a necessity for a course that addresses sex work and prostitution in social work programs. The inclusion of this course can assist future social workers in providing treatment to this population. This proposed curriculum is being designed in order to address this gap with the hopes of garnering more

attention for the experiences and needs of sex workers as well as their impact on societies. It will also allow for a deeper understanding of the challenges that this population faces. Unfortunately, these challenges often go unnoticed due to their marginalization in many communities.

## **Methods and Procedures**

### *Course Development*

A course focused on sex work was developed in order to address the mental health, physical and psychosocial needs of prostitutes. The course adheres to the guidelines and policies set forth by the EPAS as it pertains to “human rights and social and economic justice” (EPAS, 2008, p.5). Under educational policy 2.1.5 it states that, “social workers recognize the global interconnections of oppression and are knowledgeable about theories of justice and strategies to promote human and civil rights” (EPAS, 2008, p.5). The course will undoubtedly assist social work students in making the necessary associations between sex work and various forms of oppression. The overall objective is to educate and enlighten social work students about the needs of sex workers, primarily prostitutes. The skills that they will acquire from this course will be useful to them upon encountering clients who are sex workers and seeking services. Lectures and group discussions will be the teaching methods utilized for this course as well as assignments and readings that explore each topic closely.

### *Data Set: Identifying Trends in Field Placement Settings*

The data consisted of information about field placement settings gathered from field directors at CSWE accredited master’s level schools of social work in the United States and its territories. Brief surveys were distributed to these field directors through the email lists of the North American Network of Field Educators and Directors (NANFED) and CSWE to determine

the number of field placements being offered to students that include work with sex workers (Appendices C and D). The data set was used to assist in determining if students are being placed in agencies where they regularly come into contact with sex workers. The specific focus was on evaluating whether or not students are encountering this population regularly. If the findings showed that students are working with this population, I was proposing that this reflects the diversity of the clients with whom they work. Therefore, this demonstrated the need to provide students with the skills required to provide services to these women.

*Protection of Data and Method of Analysis:*

This data set did not require protection of human subjects. Surveys were distributed electronically and completed anonymously. Participation in the survey was completely voluntary.

**Timeline**

<b>Dissertation Component</b>	<b>Month of Completion</b>
Human Subjects/IRB Approval	October 2014
Online Distribution of Survey to Field Instructors	November 2014
Analysis of Data	January 2015
Write Up of Findings	February 2015-March 2015

*Human Subjects/IRB Approval*

This study did not meet the definition of human subject and was determined to be exempt from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process. Human subject means a living individual about whom an investigator (whether professional or student) conducting research obtains: (1)

data through intervention or interaction with the individual, or (2) identifiable private information. The methods of data collection used did not include any person to person interviews. The survey was anonymously completed online by participants.

#### *Review and Analysis of Data/ Write-Up of Findings*

The field instructors were given a month to complete the brief survey and submit it, with one additional email during the month reminding them to participate in the survey. The findings from the data collected was documented after the data had been examined for possible errors. The findings were included in the final dissertation and used to either accept or reject the hypothesis that there is a need for the inclusion in the curriculum of graduate programs in social work, a course focused on sex work.

#### **Implications for Social Work Practice**

The research suggests that while a significant number of graduate social work students work with sex workers as a part of their practicums, there is a lack of courses in social work programs that address sex work. This researcher will stress the importance of including a course on sex work within the curricula of graduate programs in social work, and take a stance that the implementation of such a course addressing the needs of this marginalized population of sex workers should be explored. Sex workers are members of the community and are often stigmatized because of the work they perform. The CSWE's statement of purpose states, "The purpose of the social work profession is to promote human and community well-being. Guided by a person and environment construct, a global perspective, respect for human diversity, and knowledge based on scientific inquiry" (CSWE, 2012). By offering this course, graduate programs in social work will assist students in recognizing the social, physical and mental health

challenges that sex workers encounter which will undoubtedly make an impact in how social work practice is implemented in communities with high numbers of street walking prostitutes. The syllabus for the course focused on sex work can be found in Appendix E. The contents of this course analyzes the major issues that sex workers face in communities.

The creation and implementation of this course into the social work curriculum will enrich and diversify the social work profession. Although the course can be utilized by other professionals who encounter sex workers in their careers the origins of its creation and implementation will belong to the social work field. Further research on how race and culture impact prostitution can also be explored, paying close attention to how numerous disadvantages impacts the experiences of women of color who are prostitutes. Research on the life experiences of the children of sex workers can be evaluated to enhance the literature about the impact of this occupation on society. This proposed course will also assist in opening the doors for the design and inclusion of additional courses that address taboo topics and marginalized populations.

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Appendix A. **Statement Provided to Field Placement Supervisors for Participation in the Survey**

*This statement was placed online for the field placement supervisors at accredited social work schools within the United States or its territories to read before completing the survey.*

Dear Field Placement Supervisor/Director:

My name is Halcyon Francis and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Pennsylvania's School of Social Policy and Practice. I am inviting you to participate in this online survey about the placement of MSW students in agencies that provide services to sex workers, particularly prostitutes. You are receiving this survey because your name is included in the NANFED email list. Only field directors from accredited schools of social work are eligible to complete this survey.

Participation in this study involves completing and returning this electronic survey. Completion of the survey should take approximately 10 minutes and your participation is voluntary. Any information identifying your specific social work program will not be reported in the results. By completing and returning the survey you are giving consent for your responses to be included in the study in aggregate form.

Please complete the survey by December 19, 2014. A summary of the survey results will be available upon request. If you have any questions regarding the nature of the study or research procedures, please contact Halcyon Francis at 443-326-8192 or email me at [halcyon@sp2.upenn.edu](mailto:halcyon@sp2.upenn.edu). Thank you for your consideration.

## Appendix B.

*These questions were distributed through the NANFED and CSWE email lists of field instruction directors at CSWE accredited master's level social work schools within the United States or its territories.*

### **Survey Questions for Field Placement Supervisors**

*For the purposes of this study, the term sex work is defined as direct sexual contact from a female to a male in exchange for cash or other material goods. Prostitution is being used to specifically identify street-walking prostitutes, as opposed to women who work indoors for brothels or other agencies.*

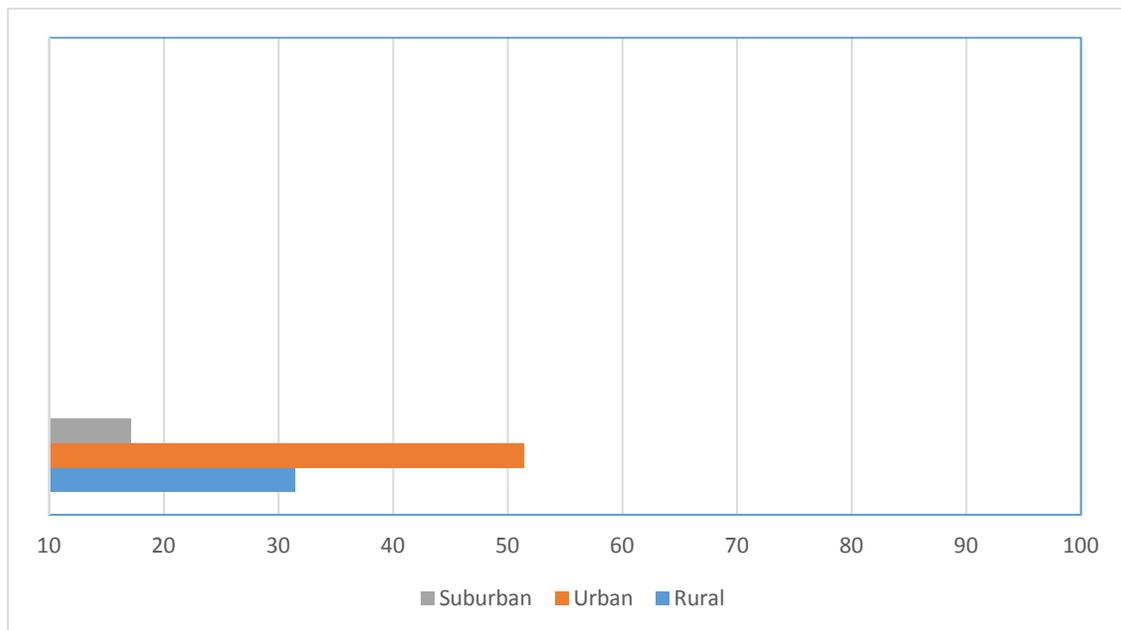
1. Is your school located in a rural, urban or suburban setting?
2. How many MSW students are currently assigned to a field placement?
3. Are any of your current students placed in agencies that provide services to sex workers? If so, how many?
4. Have you ever placed a student in a program that specifically served street-level prostitutes?
5. Are you aware of any agencies in the region your school serves that provide services to female sex workers?
6. Have you ever been contacted by an agency that specifically requested that social work interns work with sex workers?
7. Have you received any requests from students to work specifically with sex workers?
8. Are you aware of any courses in your school's curriculum that specifically address the topic of sex work and sex workers? If so, what specific courses include this content?

## Appendix C.

### Analysis and Results

The purpose of the exploratory study was to determine if a course focused on sex work should be integrated into the social work curriculum. The survey was distributed to the NANFED and CSWE email lists. There are 235 accredited MSW programs, each with a field placement requirement but not all of them are represented in the email lists. The survey captured data from 15% of the programs. The findings are as follows:

#### **Question 1. Is your school located in a rural, urban or suburban setting?**

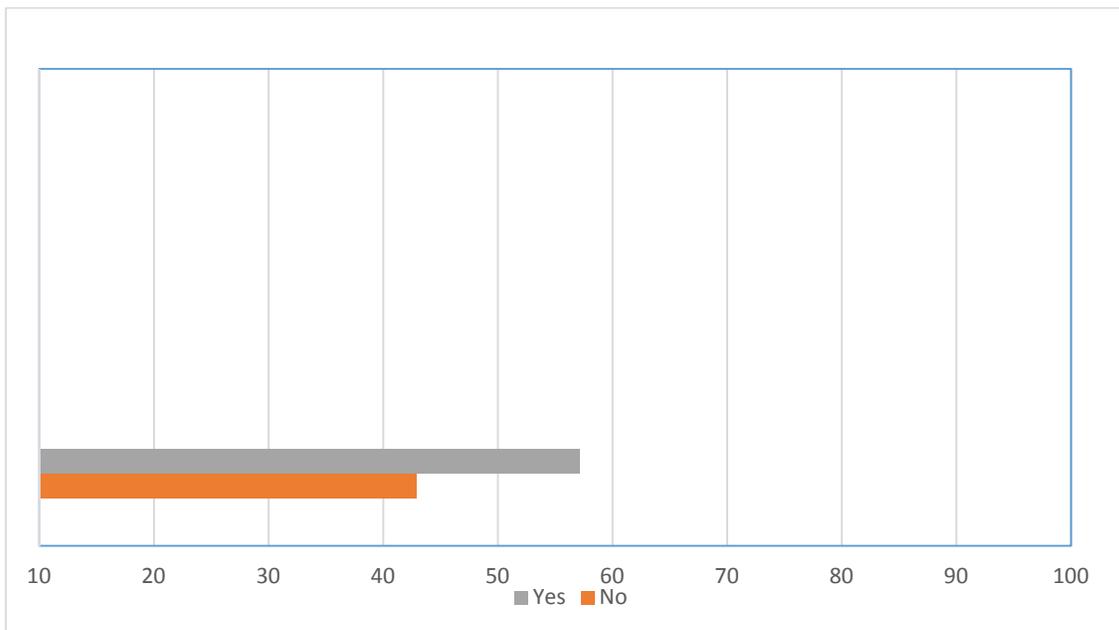


The results showed that over 50 % of the social work schools that responded were located in urban settings. A little over 30% of the schools were located in rural settings and the remainder of the schools were located in the suburbs.

**Question 2. Approximately how many MSW students are currently assigned to field placements?**

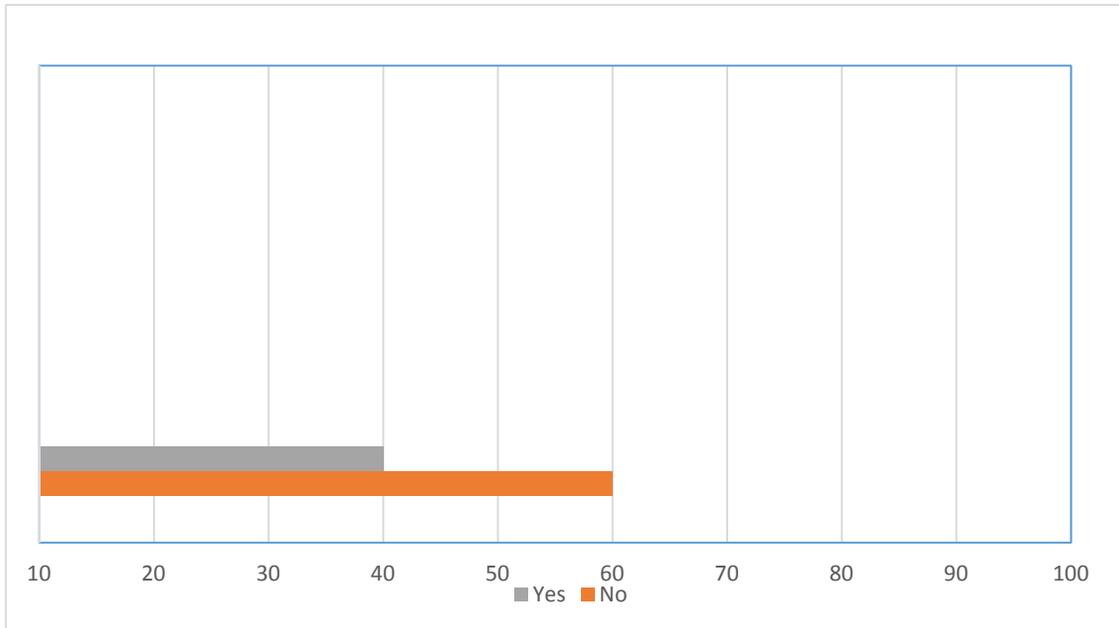
The majority of the social work schools had between 50-250 or more students working in field placements at the time of the survey.

**Question 3. Are any of your current students placed in agencies that provide services to sex workers? If so, how many?**



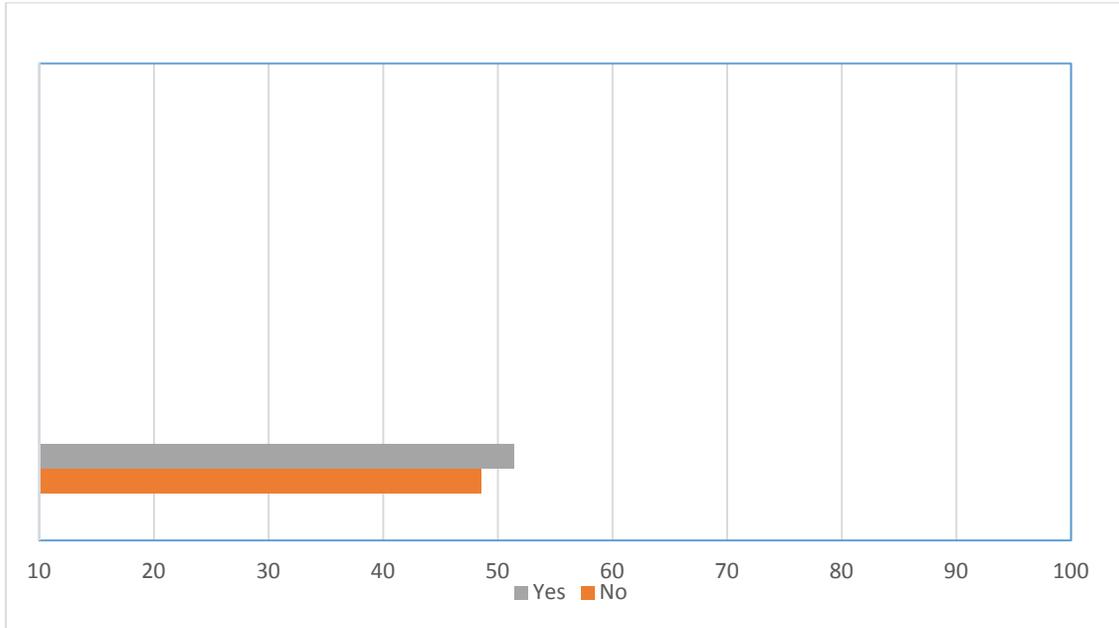
Over half (55%) of the schools had students who were placed in agencies that provided services to sex workers. The field directors were given the opportunity to provide comments to all questions. Most respondents answered that they have between 1-5 students placed in agencies that serve sex workers among other populations. Other field directors specified that some students are placed in homeless shelters and agencies that provide services to HIV/AIDS patients and their students interact with sex workers in these types of settings.

**Question 4. Have you ever placed a student in an agency that specifically served street-level prostitutes?**



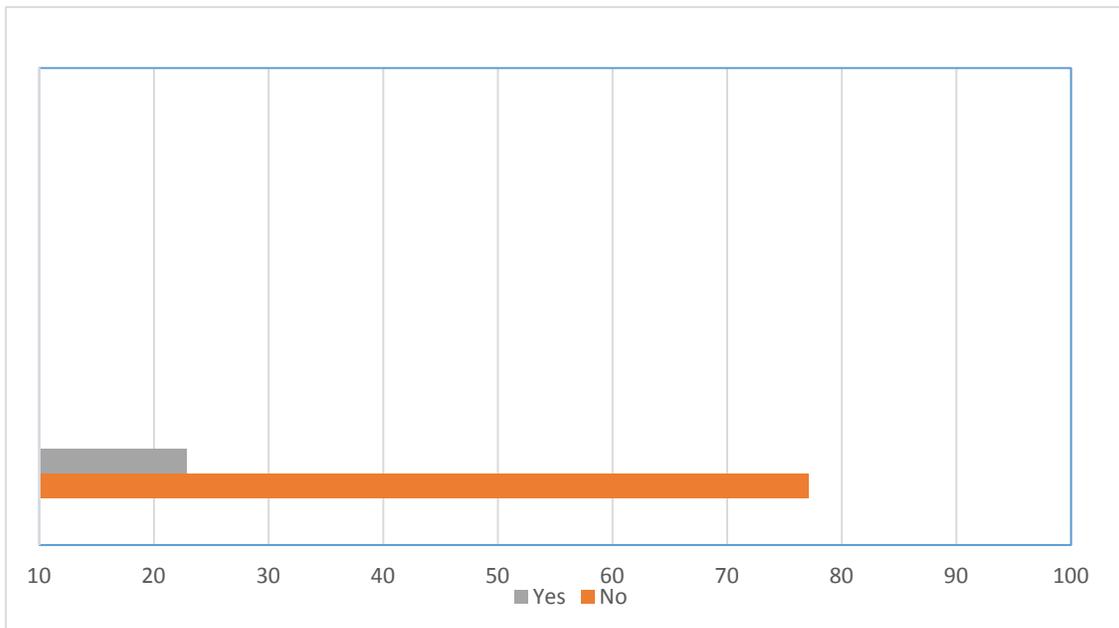
Forty percent of the field directors replied that they have placed a student in an agency that specifically served street-level prostitutes. A few of the field directors commented that they have placed their students in agencies that serve the homeless population and human trafficking victims and in these settings their students encounter sex workers. One field director shared that their social work program facilitates international placements with agencies in Australia that specifically serve street-walking prostitutes.

**Question 5. Are you aware of any agencies in your region that provide services to female sex workers?**



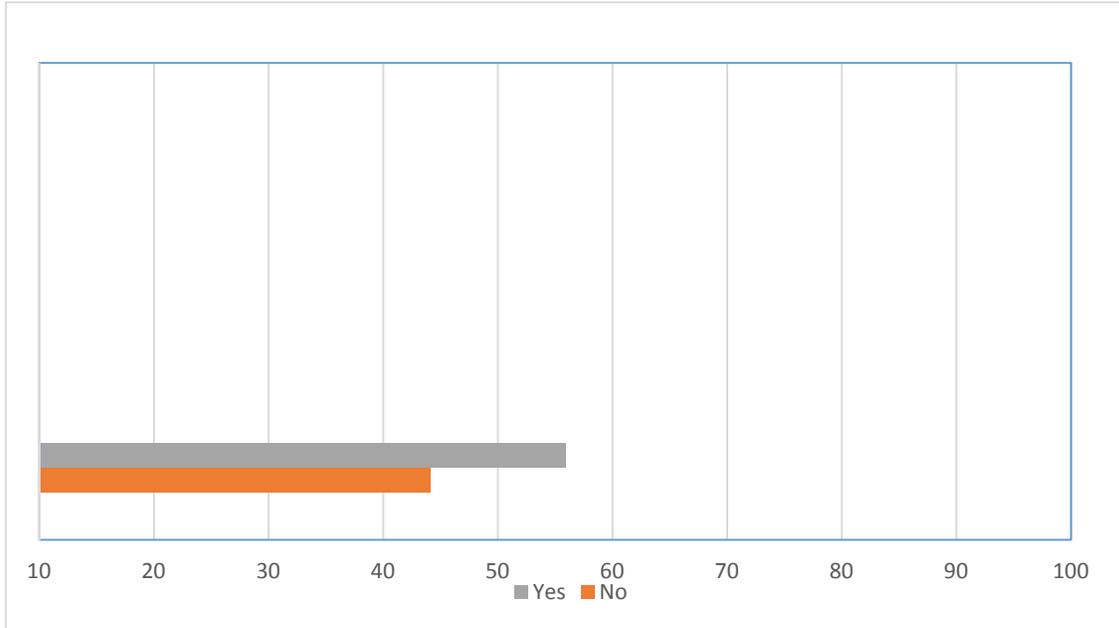
Half (51.43%) of the respondents were aware of agencies that provided services to female sex workers.

**Question 6. Have you ever been contacted by an agency that specifically requested social work interns for the purpose of providing mental health support for sex workers?**



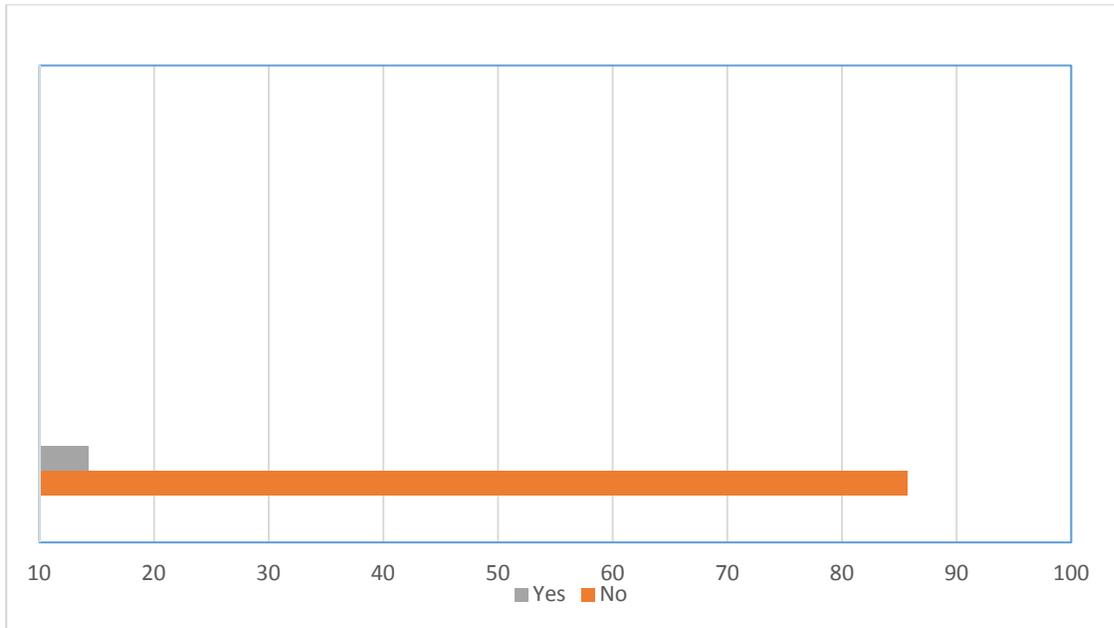
Approximately 15% of field directors responded that they have been contacted by agencies specifically requesting social work interns to provide clinical services for sex workers.

**Question 7. Have you ever received requests from students to work specifically with sex workers?**



A little over half (55.88%) of the field instructors have received requests from students to work specifically with sex workers.

**Question 8. Are you aware of any courses in your school’s curriculum that specifically address the topic of sex work and/or sex workers?**



More than 75% replied that they are not aware of any courses in their school’s social work program that specifically addresses the topic of sex work and/or sex workers. A few field directors explained that the topic of sex work was embedded in courses that focused on addictions, trauma and working with diverse populations.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

Based on the data received from the survey it can be concluded that there is a need for a course based on prostitution to be included into the social work curriculum. The responses from the field directors supports the hypothesis that social work students are interning in agencies where they are regularly encountering sex workers but are not being provided with sufficient guidance about how to deliver services to this specialized population. Also of significance is the fact that over fifty percent of the responses indicated that students have requested to work with sex workers. This provides backing to the idea that students will be interested in taking a course that focuses on sex work in order to enhance their overall clinical skills.

These preliminary findings regarding the need to include a course focused on sex work into the social work curriculum have two key implications. One implication is that social work schools, particularly those placed in both urban and rural settings should consider offering a course focused on sex workers to their MSW students to assist in furthering their understanding of this population. The other implication is that although prostitute serving agencies are not actively seeking interns to work with their clients, the need is evident for social workers to interact with sex workers even if the agencies have a primary focus on serving the homeless or those infected with HIV/AIDS.

Additional implications include the need for issues surrounding sex work to be integrated into other social work courses such as those that focus on health and communicable diseases or other marginalized populations. In these courses a distinction should be made between sex workers who are human trafficked and non-trafficked sex workers. While the topic of prostitution is being explored in the educational setting, it is important that social workers are made aware that there are some women who do this work as a means of providing for their families, not because they are being forced to do it against their will. There are many reasons behind why prostitutes work in this profession and a non-judgmental perspective is required when discussing these issues. Weitzer(2010) writes, “Victimization, exploitation, choice, job satisfaction, self-esteem, and other dimensions should be treated as variables (not constants) that differ between types of sex work, geographical locations, and other structural and organizational conditions (2010, p. 6). For some women, prostitution is the only feasible way they know how to make money and that particular belief system should be respected. The proposed course on prostitution is designed to tackle all facets of social work from basic human rights to social justice. It will evolve as the attitudes and trends surrounding sex workers changes in society but

it encompasses a lot of major social work components not just pertaining to mental health. This course can also be used to assist other occupations in understanding the societal issues that impact the lives of sex workers.

The limitations of this study is that the number of field directors that responded to the survey was relatively small. Although this was an exploratory analysis about the inclusion of the topic of sex work in the social work curricula, a larger sample would have helped to establish more validity in the findings. Also, it would have been helpful to know in what region of the country these master's programs were located. Knowing the geographical locations would have provided more insight into where this course might be most useful to students. As this research unfolded it became clear that there is a blurred line for many professionals regarding the difference between sex workers who are trafficked and prostitutes who engage in this profession out of their own economic necessity. The field director's responses may have reflected answers based on their students' interactions with human trafficking victims. This further provides support to the idea that more information would be useful to social workers regarding prostitution and the intersectionality of various elements included in the profession.

To further develop this course on sex work, a qualitative study involving prostitutes would assist in establishing what services they believe they should receive from social workers in clinical settings. Having their perspective will strengthen the clinical skills that are taught to the students and the course content will move from more generalized to specific research-based information. The manner in which HIV/AIDS, substance abuse and homelessness can impact sex workers should be heavily focused on in the course or can be made into a module to provide clinicians with background information about how these three social issues intersect and effect communities. Although its foundation is based on economic principles, social exchange theory

should not be dismissed but regarded as a critical theory that can be applied to sex workers to further explain their function and importance in society. Race, gender and sexual trauma among women and men involved in sex work can all be researched in order to reinforce the idea that sex workers are a marginalized and overlooked subculture in many communities. With the addition of a course focused on prostitution into the social work curriculum, the profession will become one of the few that truly recognize the need and value of caring for sex workers in our culture. By including this course, social work clinicians will be better prepared to serve this population regardless of the setting.

## Appendix D. Adherence to EPAS Core Competencies

<b><u>Class Title</u></b>	<b><u>Core Competency Addressed</u></b>
<b>Class 1:</b> History of Sex Work & Its Relationship w/Charitable Organizations	<b>Educational Policy 2.1.1</b> —Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly. Social workers serve as representatives of the profession, its mission, and its core values. They know the profession’s history.
<b>Class 2:</b> Defining Sex Work & Prostitution	<b>Educational Policy 2.1.4</b> —Engage diversity and difference in practice. Social workers appreciate that, as a consequence of difference, a person’s life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim.
<b>Class 3:</b> Feminist Theories: Radical Feminism vs. Liberal Feminism and their Perspectives on Sex Work and Prostitution	<b>Educational Policy 2.1.6</b> —Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research. Social workers use practice experience to inform research, employ evidence-based interventions, evaluate their own practice, and use research findings to improve practice, policy, and social service delivery. Social workers comprehend quantitative and qualitative research and understand scientific and ethical approaches to building knowledge.
<b>Class 4:</b> Social Exchange Theory & Intersectionality Theory: Connection to Prostitution	<b>Educational Policy 2.1.6</b> —Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research. Social workers use practice experience to inform research, employ evidence-based interventions, evaluate their own practice, and use research findings to improve practice, policy, and social service delivery. Social workers comprehend quantitative and qualitative research and understand scientific and ethical approaches to building knowledge.
<b>Class 5:</b> Prostitution in the Media: Perception as Social Deviants	<b>Educational Policy 2.1.7</b> —Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment. Social workers are knowledgeable about human behavior across the life course; the range of social systems in which people live; and the ways social systems promote or deter people in maintaining or achieving health and

	<p>well-being. Social workers apply theories and knowledge from the liberal arts to understand biological, social, cultural, psychological, and spiritual development.</p> <p><b>Educational Policy 2.1.9</b>—Respond to contexts that shape practice. Social workers are informed, resourceful, and proactive in responding to evolving organizational, community, and societal contexts at all levels of practice. Social workers recognize that the context of practice is dynamic, and use knowledge and skill to respond proactively.</p>
<b>Class 6:</b> Criminalization vs. Legalization of Prostitution	<p><b>Educational Policy 2.1.8</b>—Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services. Social work practitioners understand that policy affects service delivery, and they actively engage in policy practice. Social workers know the history and current structures of social policies and services; the role of policy in service delivery; and the role of practice in policy development.</p>
<b>Class 7:</b> Human Trafficking and International Perspectives on Prostitution	<p><b>Educational Policy 2.1.4</b>—Engage diversity and difference in practice. Social workers appreciate that, as a consequence of difference, a person’s life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim.</p>
<b>Class 8:</b> Health Risks Associated with Prostitution	<p><b>Educational Policy 2.1.7</b>—Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment. Social workers are knowledgeable about human behavior across the life course; the range of social systems in which people live; and the ways social systems promote or deter people in maintaining or achieving health and well-being. Social workers apply theories and knowledge from the liberal arts to understand biological, social, cultural, psychological, and spiritual development.</p>
<b>Class 9:</b> Substance Abuse & Prostitution	<p><b>Educational Policy 2.1.7</b>—Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment. Social workers are knowledgeable about human behavior across the life course; the range of social systems in which people live; and the ways social systems promote or deter</p>

	<p>people in maintaining or achieving health and well-being. Social workers apply theories and knowledge from the liberal arts to understand biological, social, cultural, psychological, and spiritual development.</p>
<p><b>Class 10:</b> Violence Against Sex Workers</p>	<p><b>Educational Policy 2.1.7</b>—Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment. Social workers are knowledgeable about human behavior across the life course; the range of social systems in which people live; and the ways social systems promote or deter people in maintaining or achieving health and well-being. Social workers apply theories and knowledge from the liberal arts to understand biological, social, cultural, psychological, and spiritual development.</p>
<p><b>Class 11:</b> The Clinical Mental Health Treatment of Sex Workers: A Focus on Sexual Trauma</p>	<p><b>Educational Policy 2.1.10(a)–(d)</b>—Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Professional practice involves the dynamic and interactive processes of engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation at multiple levels. Social workers have the knowledge and skills to practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Practice knowledge includes identifying, analyzing, and implementing evidence-based interventions designed to achieve client goals; using research and technological advances; evaluating program outcomes and practice effectiveness; developing, analyzing, advocating, and providing leadership for policies and services; and promoting social and economic justice.</p>
<p><b>Class 12:</b> The Clinical Mental Health Treatment of Sex Workers: A Focus on Major Depressive Disorder and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder</p>	<p><b>Educational Policy 2.1.10(a)–(d)</b>—Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Professional practice involves the dynamic and interactive processes of engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation at multiple levels. Social workers have the knowledge and skills to practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Practice knowledge includes identifying, analyzing, and implementing evidence-based interventions designed to</p>

	<p>achieve client goals; using research and technological advances; evaluating program outcomes and practice effectiveness; developing, analyzing, advocating, and providing leadership for policies and services; and promoting social and economic justice.</p>
<p><b>Class 13:</b> Community Programs for Sex Workers Including Prostitution Diversion Programs (PDPs) &amp; Prostitute Serving Organizations (PSOs)</p>	<p><b>Educational Policy 2.1.10(a)–(d)</b>—Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Professional practice involves the dynamic and interactive processes of engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation at multiple levels. Social workers have the knowledge and skills to practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Practice knowledge includes identifying, analyzing, and implementing evidence-based interventions designed to achieve client goals; using research and technological advances; evaluating program outcomes and practice effectiveness; developing, analyzing, advocating, and providing leadership for policies and services; and promoting social and economic justice.</p>
<p><b>Class 14:</b> Evaluating Social Work Practice and Its Obligation to Sex Workers</p>	<p>Educational Policy 2.1.5—Advance human rights and social and economic justice. Each person, regardless of position in society, has basic human rights, such as freedom, safety, privacy, an adequate standard of living, health care, and education. Social workers recognize the global interconnections of oppression and are knowledgeable about theories of justice and strategies to promote human and civil rights. Social work incorporates social justice practices in organizations, institutions, and society to ensure that these basic human rights are distributed equitably and without prejudice.</p>

Appendix E.

**Sex Work Course Syllabus**

Sex Work: The Social Constructs of Women Involved in Prostitution

Fall 2015

**Course Description**

**Halcyon Francis, LCSW-C**

This course addresses the myriad of issues that sex workers, specifically street-level prostitutes, experience while working; it also will provide an historical perspective on prostitution and focus on related policy and legal issues. This course will allow students to consider the mental health and psychosocial needs of the women who participate in this profession. In addition, the content will examine how communities in the United States and internationally view prostitution and address the risks of being involved in this line of work. The effects of trauma, economic status, and a history of substance abuse that can contribute to the stigmatization of this population will be explored. This course will use lecture, assigned readings, film, and other media to explore the many facets of prostitution. Some of the readings and/or media content in this course may feel uncomfortable for some class members. Please prepare yourself for this by following the syllabus closely. The intention of this class is to explore prostitution and complete a critical analysis while simultaneously learning how to address this population's needs during treatment.

**Course Objectives**

Through reading, writing and class discussion students will be able to:

1. Learn the historical beginnings of sex work and its relationship with some of the early key figures in the field of social work.
2. Define prostitution and identify additional occupations that are associated with sex work.
3. Analyze and assess theories associated with sex work, specifically feminist theories and social exchange theory.
4. Critically appraise the principles behind deviance as they relate to prostitution.
5. Recognize the differences and similarities between how prostitution is viewed domestically and internationally.
6. Develop a critical analysis regarding the health risks related to sex work including but not limited to HIV/AIDS and STDs.
7. Examine the psychosocial and mental health components associated with this population such as substance abuse, sexual trauma, PTSD and MDD.
8. Identify organizations that assist this population and assess how they can provide effective services to these women if required in practice.

## Assignments

### 1. **Leadership Assignments**

Each student will be assigned to a group for the semester. Each group is responsible for providing a brief presentation (5 minutes) of the reading assignment that week and then leading a discussion for the class. Each group will develop four (4) questions relevant to that week's readings. Questions should encourage critical thinking and promote thoughtful conversation.

### 2. **Term Paper Proposal** (no extensions)

A 3-4 page, double spaced proposal surrounding a specific topic related to prostitution. This proposal should describe the topic of your final paper. It should also include an outline (1 page) of how you plan to develop your paper. *Please include a reference page.*

### 3. **Term Paper** (no extensions) *\*Include Reference Page\**

The term paper should be an 11-15 page paper which includes a thoughtful analysis of the topic identified in your proposal. It should include why you chose this topic and how it relates to sex work. It should also address the history of the issue, laws and regulations governing it and if it viewed differently in different countries.

### 4. **Final Presentation and Discussion**

During the last class each student will provide a presentation focusing on their final paper.

## Texts

### Required

Weitzer, Ronald (2010). Sex for sale: prostitution, pornography, and the sex industry (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Addams, Jane (1912). A New Conscience and an Ancient Evil: Women's Suffrage. Chicago: University of Illinois Press

In addition to these required texts, journal articles and textbook excerpts will be placed online for each class.

## COURSE OUTLINE

### **Class 1: History of Sex Work & Its Relationship w/Charitable Organizations**

Addams, Jane (1912). *A New Conscience and an Ancient Evil: Women's Suffrage*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press

### **Class 2: Defining Sex Work & Prostitution**

Bullough, V. & Bullough, B. (1987). *Women and Prostitution: A Social History*. New York: Prometheus Books

Chapter 1: Origins of Prostitution, pp. 9-14.

Weitzer, Ronald (2010). *Sex for sale: prostitution, pornography, and the sex industry* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Chapter 1: Sex Work: Policies and Paradigms, pp. 1-43

### **Class 3: Feminist Theories: Radical Feminism vs. Liberal Feminism and their Perspectives on Sex Work and Prostitution**

Weatherall, A., & Priestley, A. (2001). A feminist discourse analysis of sex 'work'. *Feminism and Psychology, 11*(3), 323-340.

Kesler, K. (2002). Is a feminist stance in support of prostitution possible? An exploration of current trends. *Sexualities, 5*(2), 219-235.

### **Class 4: Social Exchange Theory & Intersectionality Theory: Connection to Prostitution**

Emerson, R. (1976). Social exchange theory. *Annual Review of Sociology, 2*, 335-362.

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review, 43*(1241), 1241-1299.

Nord, R. (1969). Social exchange theory: an integrative approach to social conformity. *Psychological Bulletin, 71* (3), 174-208

Jani, J., Pierce, D., Ortiz, L., & Sowbel, L. (2013). Access to intersectionality, content to competence: Deconstructing social work education diversity standards. *Journal of Social Work Education, 47*(2), 283-301.

### **Class 5: Prostitution in the Media: Perception as Social Deviants**

In class film analysis of Hooker & Johns: Trick or Treat directed by Brent Owens

*Hookers & Johns: Trick or Treat*. Dir. Brent Owens. HBO, 2000. [DVD].

### **Class 6: Criminalization vs. Legalization of Prostitution**

Hayes-Smith, R. & Shekarkhar, Z. (2010) Why is prostitution criminalized? An alternative viewpoint on the construction of sex work. *Contemporary Justice Review*, 13 (1), 43-55

Weitzer, R. (2010) The movement to criminalize sex work in the United States. *Journal of Law and Society*, 37 (1), 61-84

Weitzer, Ronald (2010). Sex for sale: prostitution, pornography, and the sex industry (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.  
Chapter 1: Sex Work: Policies and Paradigms, pp. 21-43

**Class 7: Human Trafficking and International Perspectives on Prostitution**

Weitzer, R. (2010). The movement to criminalize sex work in the United States. *Journal of Law and Society*, 37 (1), 61-84

**\*MIDTERM PROPOSAL DUE\***

**Class 8: Health Risks Associated with Prostitution**

Porter, J., & Bonilla, L. (2010). The ecology of street prostitution. *Sex for sale: Prostitution, pornography, and the sex industry* (2nd ed. ed., pp. 163-185). New York: Routledge.

**Class 9: Substance Abuse & Prostitution**

Sallmann, J. (2010). "Going hand-in-hand": Connections between women's prostitution and substance abuse. *Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions*, 10, 115-138.

Weichelt, A., & Shdaimah, C. (2011). Trauma and substance abuse among women in prostitution: Implications for a specialized diversion program. *Journal of Forensic Social Work*, 1, 159-184.

**Class 10: Violence Against Sex Workers**

Panchanadeswaran, S., Johnson, S., Sivaram, S., Srikrishnan, A. K., Latkin, C., Bentley, M., Celentano, D. (2008). Intimate partner violence is as important as client violence in increasing street-based female sex workers' vulnerability to HIV in India. *The International Journal of Drug Policy*, 19, 106-112.

Panchanadeswaran, S., Johnson, S., Sivaram, S., Srikrishnan, A. K., Zelaya, C., Solomon, S., Celentano, D. (2010). A descriptive profile of abused female sex workers in India. *Journal of Health and Population & Nutrition*, 3, 211-220.

**Class 11: The Clinical Mental Health Treatment of Sex Workers: A Focus on Sexual Trauma**

- Gladstone, G., Parker, G., Mitchell, M. D., Malhi, G., Wilhelm, K., & Austin, M. (2004). Implications of childhood trauma for depressed women: An analysis of pathways from childhood sexual abuse to deliberate self-harm and revictimization. *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, *161*, 1417-1425.
- Schoedl, A., Costa, M., Mari, J., Mello, M., Tyrka, A., Carpenter, L., & Price, L. (2010). The clinical correlates of reported childhood sexual abuse: An association between age at trauma onset and severity of depression and PTSD in adults. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, *19*(2), 156-170.
- Courtois, C., & Gold, S. (2009). The need for inclusion of psychological trauma in the professional curriculum: A call to action. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, *1*(1), 3-23.

**Class 12: The Clinical Mental Health Treatment of Sex Workers: A Focus on Major Depressive Disorder and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**

- Nasir, R., Zamani, Z. A., Khairudin, R., Ismail, R., Yusoff, F., & Zawawi, Z. M. (2012). Female adolescent prostitutes' cognitive distortion, self-esteem and depression. *Pertanika J. Social Sciences and Humanities*, *20*(1), 155-163.
- Roxburgh, A., Degenhardt, L., & Copeland, J. (2006). Posttraumatic stress disorder among female street-based sex workers in the greater Sydney area, Australia. *BMC Psychiatry*, *6*(24), 1-12.
- van der Kolk, B. (2002). Posttraumatic therapy in the age of neuroscience. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, *12*(3), 381-392.

**Class 13: Community Programs for Sex Workers Including Prostitution Diversion Programs (PDPs) & Prostitute Serving Organizations (PSOs) \*TERM PAPER DUE\***

- Leon, C., & Shdaimah, C. (2012). JUSTifying scrutiny: State power in prostitution diversion programs. *Journal of Poverty*, *16*, 250-273.
- Oselin, S. (2009). Leaving the streets: Transformation of prostitute identity within the prostitution rehabilitation program. *Deviant Behavior*, *30*(4), 379-406.
- Oselin, S., & Weitzer, R. (2013). Organizations working on behalf of prostitutes: An analysis of goals, practices, and strategies. *Sexualities*, *16*(3/4), 445-466.
- Shdaimah, C., & Weichelt, S. (2012). Converging on empathy: Perspectives on Baltimore City's specialized prostitution diversion program. *Women & Criminal Justice*, *22*(2), 156-173.

**Class 14: Evaluating Social Work Practice and Its Obligation to Sex Workers**

\*Review of important concepts from class and class presentations.\*

## Appendix F.

### **Overview and Brief Description of the Sources Used in the Course**

#### **Class 1: History of Sex Work & Its Relationship w/Charitable Organizations**

Addams, J. (1912). *A New Conscience and an Ancient Evil: Women's Suffrage*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press

Jane Addams wrote this book to highlight the experiences of young women in Chicago who were being forced into white slavery. She described how women become involved in human trafficking not only for sex but also for use in sweat shops and domestic labor. Addams also described the lack of laws and regulations regarding the trading of women in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and credits Chicago as being the first city to make a stand against obtaining women with the intentions of selling them (Addams, 1912). This source will emphasize that sex work has a long standing history in the United States. It will also explain how charitable organizations came to be involved in assisting sex workers who were forced into labor against their will.

#### **Class 2: Defining Sex Work & Prostitution**

Bullough, V. & Bullough, B. (1987). *Women and Prostitution: A Social History*. New York: Prometheus Books

Chapter 1: Origins of Prostitution, pp. 9-14.

Weitzer, Ronald (2010). *Sex for sale: prostitution, pornography, and the sex industry* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Chapter 1: Sex Work: Policies and Paradigms, pp. 1-43

Bullough & Bullough attempt to trace the origin of prostitution both in the United States and abroad. They discuss how patriarchy may have played a major role in how prostitution was formed. They also try to define prostitution but conclude that prostitution has different meanings for every culture and that moral codes often impact how prostitution is defined in different communities. Ronald Weitzer provides a concrete definition of sex work and provides an

overview of the sex industry. He writes about the various paradigms associated with sex work and explains how they are used to support or negate sex work as a profession. He provides explanations about prostitution and other types of sex work including stripping and pornography. This chapter will serve as a good introduction to sex work for those students who are unfamiliar with the term.

### **Class 3: Feminist Theories: Radical Feminism vs. Liberal Feminism and their Perspectives on Sex Work and Prostitution**

Weatherall, A., & Priestley, A. (2001). A feminist discourse analysis of sex 'work'. *Feminism and Psychology, 11*(3), 323-340.

Kesler, K. (2002). Is a feminist stance in support of prostitution possible? An exploration of current trends. *Sexualities, 5*(2), 219-235.

Weatherall & Priestley (2001) write specifically about radical feminism and liberal feminism. The authors explain that radical feminists are against prostitution and that liberal feminists are pro-prostitution. Weatherall & Priestly (2001) conducted a qualitative research study in New Zealand and analyzed the participants' responses to determine if they could be viewed from a radical or liberal point of view. Kesler (2002) provides a more simplistic explanation of various feminist theories that can apply to prostitution. She writes about the criticisms of prostitution in addition to the support that the profession has been given from groups that advocate for sex worker's rights. Both of these sources will be used to generate conversation in class about being anti-prostitution or pro-prostitution.

### **Class 4: Social Exchange Theory & Intersectionality Theory: Connection to Prostitution**

Emerson, R. (1976). Social exchange theory. *Annual Review of Sociology, 2*, 335-362.

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review, 43*(1241), 1241-1299.

Nord, R. (1969). Social exchange theory: an integrative approach to social conformity. *Psychological Bulletin*, 71 (3), 174-208

Jani, J., Pierce, D., Ortiz, L., & Sowbel, L. (2013). Access to intersectionality, content to competence: Deconstructing social work education diversity standards. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 47(2), 283-301.

The articles chosen for this section of the class focus on social exchange theory and intersectionality theory. In the article written by Nord (1969), the author provides a look at social exchange theory as an economic principal. He then explains how the theory can be used to assist in understanding social conformity and norms. Emerson (1976) asserts that social exchange theory can be applied to “noneconomic social situations” (p. 336). These articles will be used in the course to examine the theory of supply and demand as it relates to sex work and why prostitution still exists despite the social stigma that is placed upon it in many communities. Jani et al. (2013) discuss intersectionality theory and the reasons why the topic of diversity in clinical practice needs to be integrated into the social work curriculum. The authors provide an overview of how the issue of diversity evolved in recent social work practice and explain the change that occurred during the 1970s in the CSWE guidelines as they pertain to issues that impact women. This source helps in supporting the aim of this course, which is to shed light on a population of women that are stigmatized by most communities. Crenshaw (1991) approaches intersectionality by examining how race and gender impact the experiences of women of color who have been victims of rape or domestic violence. This author provides an important view of victimization and provides insight regarding how the unique issues involving women of color can be addressed.

### **Class 5: Prostitution in the Media: Perception as Social Deviants**

In class film analysis of *Hookers & Johns: Trick or Treat* directed by Brent Owens

*Hookers & Johns: Trick or Treat*. Dir. Brent Owens. HBO, 2000. [DVD].

The documentary *Hookers and Johns: Trick or Treat* follows the lives of several prostitutes in Bronx, New York. The film also briefly documents a young man and his pursuit to find a prostitute after he is released from prison. During this segment the viewer get the opportunity to hear his rudimentary thoughts about women involved in sex work. This documentary is gritty but real because it demonstrates how prostitution is justified in many communities but also shunned. The women in the film face complex issues and are matter-of-fact in their expression about how they feel about sex work. This is a documentary that has the power to leave an indelible impression on those who are not knowledgeable about the lives of sex workers.

#### **Class 6: Criminalization vs. Legalization of Prostitution**

Hayes-Smith, R. & Shekarkhar, Z. (2010) Why is prostitution criminalized? An alternative viewpoint on the construction of sex work. *Contemporary Justice Review*, 13 (1), 43-55

Weitzer, Ronald (2010). *Sex for sale: prostitution, pornography, and the sex industry* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.  
Chapter 1: Sex Work: Policies and Paradigms, pp. 21-43

The article written by Hayes Smith & Shekarkhar (2010) provides a brief history of how prostitution came to be illegal in the United States. The article offers an overview of prostitution policy in the United States and assumptions about the current laws prohibiting the act of selling sex. Hayes Smith & Shekarkhar discuss the pros and cons of prostitution and how the laws can benefit and hurt society. The class will review the first chapter of Ronald Weitzer's book about sex work, specifically the section titled, "Prostitution: Decriminalization and Legalization" because the author provides the explanation of important legal terms that apply to sex work. The terms are used to explain the policies that are enacted in each state surrounding prostitution.

## **Class 7: Human Trafficking and International Perspectives on Prostitution**

Weitzer, R. (2010). The movement to criminalize sex work in the United States. *Journal of Law and Society*, 37 (1), 61-84

Weitzer, Ronald (2010). *Sex for sale: prostitution, pornography, and the sex industry* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.  
Chapter 14: Sex Trafficking: Facts and Fictions, pp. 325-351

Weitzer, Ronald (2010). *Sex for sale: prostitution, pornography, and the sex industry* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.  
Chapter Tourism and Sex Workers' Aspirations, pp. 307—323

The first two readings about human trafficking written by Weitzer assist in separating human trafficking from prostitution. Weitzer makes a compelling argument for why sex trafficking is vastly different from prostitution. In the book, he dispels myths about sex trafficking and again maintains his stance that women who are trafficked for the purpose of selling sex should not be placed into the same category as women who willingly sell sex in order to make a living. In the chapter that covers sex tourism, the author discusses economically disadvantaged women in third world countries and why they opt to sell sex for money. Weitzer also explains that many of these women try to form personal relationships with their clients out of desperation to leave their countries of origin. This last aspect highlights one of the complexities involved in prostitution.

## **Class 8: Health Risks Associated with Prostitution**

Porter, J., & Bonilla, L. (2010). The ecology of street prostitution. *Sex for sale: Prostitution, pornography, and the sex industry* (2nd ed. ed., pp. 163-185). New York: Routledge.

Taylor, O. (2011). The sexual victimization of women: Substance abuse, HIV, prostitution, and intimate partner violence and underlying correlates. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 21(7), 834-848.

Porter and Bonilla (2010) discuss the prevention of HIV/AIDS and how to target prostitutes to encourage HIV/AIDS awareness. The authors provide an analysis of different types

of street-walking prostitutes and offer guidance on how to find these women in order to give them access to HIV/AIDS prevention services. Taylor (2014) explains what the role of the mental health clinician should be when working with clients who are infected with HIV/AIDS. The author specifically focuses on women who have a history of sexual trauma and/or prostitution.

### **Class 9: Substance Abuse & Prostitution**

Sallmann, J. (2010). "Going hand-in-hand": Connections between women's prostitution and substance abuse. *Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions, 10*, 115-138.

Weichelt, A., & Shdaimah, C. (2011). Trauma and substance abuse among women in prostitution: Implications for a specialized diversion program. *Journal of Forensic Social Work, 1*, 159-184.

Sallman (2010) writes about the connection of substance abuse with prostitution. The author explains that not enough is known about the experiences of substance abusers that have to exchange sex for money in order to sustain a living. Sallman also explores the possibility that taking illicit substances may be necessary in order to continue prostituting. Weichelt & Shdaimah (2011) make the connection between having a history of trauma and PTSD among street-walking prostitutes who use illicit substances. The authors provide useful information about how to assist this special population when they enter diversion programs.

### **Class 10: Violence Against Sex Workers**

Panchanadeswaran, S., Johnson, S., Sivaram, S., Srikrishnan, A. K., Latkin, C., Bentley, M., Celentano, D. (2008). Intimate partner violence is as important as client violence in increasing street-based female sex workers' vulnerability to HIV in India. *The International Journal of Drug Policy, 19*, 106-112.

Panchanadeswaran, S., Johnson, S., Sivaram, S., Srikrishnan, A. K., Zelaya, C., Solomon, S., Celentano, D. (2010). A descriptive profile of abused female

sex workers in India. *Journal of Health and Population & Nutrition*, 3, 211-220.

These readings are assigned for this class because they describe the experiences of sex workers in India where extensive research is being done by these authors on violence against female sex workers. The content of the articles also focuses on HIV/AIDS prevention, poverty, and the necessity for prostitution in these countries to assist with economic sustainability for families. The first article also discusses the complexities behind intimate partner violence and the marriages and/or partnerships that street prostitutes maintain with significant others while they exchange sex for money.

### **Class 11: The Clinical Mental Health Treatment of Sex Workers: A Focus on Sexual Trauma**

Courtois, C., & Gold, S. (2009). The need for inclusion of psychological trauma in the professional curriculum: A call to action. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 1(1), 3-23.

Gladstone, G., Parker, G., Mitchell, M. D., Malhi, G., Wilhelm, K., & Austin, M. (2004). Implications of childhood trauma for depressed women: An analysis of pathways from childhood sexual abuse to deliberate self-harm and revictimization. *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, 161, 1417-1425.

Schoedl, A., Costa, M., Mari, J., Mello, M., Tyrka, A., Carpenter, L., & Price, L. (2010). The clinical correlates of reported childhood sexual abuse: An association between age at trauma onset and severity of depression and PTSD in adults. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 19(2), 156-170.

As mentioned previously, the research on prostitutes indicates that a substantial number of these women have experienced childhood sexual abuse/trauma. These readings examine childhood sexual abuse and their link to mental health disorders in women. The article written by Courtois (2009) calls for the provision of psychological trauma training for clinicians in order to better assist clients who enter treatment with histories of trauma. This reading can be connected to street-walking prostitutes because when social workers meet with them in the clinical setting

they will be knowledgeable about trauma and how it has impacts the mental health functioning of these women.

### **Class 12: The Clinical Mental Health Treatment of Sex Workers: A Focus on Major Depressive Disorder and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**

Nasir, R., Zamani, Z. A., Khairudin, R., Ismail, R., Yusooff, F., & Zawawi, Z. M. (2012). Female adolescent prostitutes' cognitive distortion, self-esteem and depression. *Pertanika J. Social Sciences and Humanities*, 20(1), 155-163.

Roxburgh, A., Degenhardt, L., & Copeland, J. (2006). Posttraumatic stress disorder among female street-based sex workers in the greater Sydney area, Australia. *BMC Psychiatry*, 6(24), 1-12.

van der Kolk, B. (2002). Posttraumatic therapy in the age of neuroscience. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 12(3), 381-392.

These articles address the mental health issues of depression and PTSD as they relate to street-walking prostitutes. The articles about PTSD emphasize the importance of addressing trauma with vulnerable populations. Both articles provide insight into what methods would be most effective when dealing with patients who have a history of trauma. The article based on depression was derived from a study on prostitutes and depression. It is an overview of how female prostitutes see themselves and their work and how their self-image can influence their depression levels. These articles are strong resources for social work students to gather an idea of how PTSD and depression can affect this population.

### **Class 13: Community Programs for Sex Workers Including Prostitution Diversion Programs (PDPs) & Prostitute Serving Organizations (PSOs)**

Leon, C., & Shdaimah, C. (2012). JUSTifying scrutiny: State power in prostitution diversion programs. *Journal of Poverty*, 16, 250-273.

Oselin, S. (2009). Leaving the streets: Transformation of prostitute identity within the prostitution rehabilitation program. *Deviant Behavior*, 30(4), 379-406.

Oselin, S., & Weitzer, R. (2013). Organizations working on behalf of prostitutes: An analysis of goals, practices, and strategies. *Sexualities*, 16(3/4), 445-466.

Shdaimah, C., & Weichelt, S. (2012). Converging on empathy: Perspectives on Baltimore City's specialized prostitution diversion program. *Women & Criminal Justice*, 22(2), 156-173.

These articles address programs that are established to assist street-walking prostitutes. They include critiques and evaluations of these programs and they provide guidelines and strategies on how to strengthen the services offered to prostitutes. These articles are essential for any social work students that have intentions of working with this population. It will assist the student in obtaining much needed insight on the inner workings of these agencies and the policies that govern them.

#### **Class 14: Evaluating Social Work Practice and Its Obligation to Sex Workers**

This last class will be used to review important concepts from the material. The role of the clinician when serving prostitutes will be reviewed. Students will be encouraged to ask questions and give a short presentation to the class about their topics chosen for the final paper.