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**The Double-Edged Sword:
Defining Prostitution in Mainstream Canadian Press**

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A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Sociology and Anthropology

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ABSTRACT

The Double-Edged Sword: Defining Prostitution in the Canadian News Media

Ainsley Claire Chapman

Relying on a sample of newspaper articles from The Toronto Star and The Montreal Gazette, this analysis examines the discourse through which prostitutes and prostitution are represented in the media. The sample (N=52) is randomly chosen from 749 articles collected between 1993 and 1994. A measurement tool is developed and used to code the articles, based on the context through which prostitution is discussed. Based on this sample, the underlying discourse being communicated provides only two perspectives to understand prostitution: an *offender* orientation portraying prostitutes as a source of crime and threat to communities, and a *victim* orientation portraying prostitutes as victims of abuse and poverty. This limited and negative discourse fails to communicate an alternative perspective, namely an orientation that examines prostitution as *work*. By promoting only negative stereotypes the media effectively marginalizes prostitutes and defines prostitution as a social problem. Since prostitutes rarely participate in this public discourse about prostitution, the ideologies behind their movement for rights and respect can not be communicated.

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Chapter 1 - Field of Inquiry

1.1 Introduction

I came into the topic of prostitution as an assistant on a research project conducted by Frances M. Shaver, Eleanor Maticka-Tyndale and Jacqueline Lewis, examining how social and legal policies affect the health and safety of all aspects of sex work. They are conducting case studies in Toronto and Montreal. This was my first encounter with a work approach to sex work. My personal and academic voyage through sociology and feminist theory has always led me to support the decriminalization of prostitution, but on the grounds that it exists only because social and economic structures prevent access to other forms of work. I understood the problems associated with prostitution as part of a system of objectification of women's bodies, the source of which was in the exchange of sexual services for money. Furthermore, I was guided by the assumption that the problems involving power inequality and lack of autonomy experienced on the job could be resolved through employment in other – more desirable – forms of work.

Since embarking on this project I have begun to understand the complex set of social processes around ideas about gender, women, sexuality, and deviance which contribute to the problems associated with prostitution. These social processes have also led me to understand that problems involving power inequality and lack of autonomy can exist in more traditional forms of employment available to women. Once I began to see these other social processes and question my own feminist sensibilities, the notion of prostitution as legitimate work began to fit well in my world-view.

1.2 Subject Position

In the beginning, my own world-view caused a number of challenges throughout this project. While I believe the following issues are part of the research experience at the Masters level, I feel it necessary to discuss my subject position. Because I am not a sex worker, I have questioned my ability, both ethically and pragmatically, to discuss the needs, desires, experiences, and voices of sex workers. I take the position of a sex-work advocate and have come to understand the importance of support for people in the industry. Nevertheless I feared that my role as an academic put me at risk of constructing an “other” by a research/subject divide. In addition, I encountered a second challenge. I have always supported the decriminalization of prostitution as a means of increasing safety prostitutes. At the same time I have also spent time caught up in a feminist rhetoric which ultimately condemns sex work and patronises those who take pride or find aspects of their work enjoyable. As a result, the work approach to sex-work is a new perspective for me. This has, however, proven to be useful by forcing me to become more critical and ask more questions of all the different areas and positions involved in prostitution.

A more positive spin on my subject position is that it is also one of a young woman who is exploring her sexuality, and this project has allowed me to challenge my own assumptions as well as those held around me. I have come to realise that this project – and any project working towards safer law and policy supporting sex work – is not simply about prostitution and law, but about challenging systems of morality, as well as

the relationships between attitudes towards women and sexuality. I do not see my research as attempting to represent or communicate the voices of men and women working in the industry. I view this study as an exercise in demonstrating the power inequality between members of the sex trade community, specifically street prostitutes, and members of the surrounding community.

1.3 Research Problem

Based on research cited in my literature review and theoretical framework (see Chapters 2 and 3), we know that the media plays a significant role in shaping public perception of social issues. These chapters demonstrate how the news media acts as a narrative for one or more interpretations of reality. The potential exists then, that subsequent public discourse will reflect ideologies evident in the source of information. While it is impossible to guarantee how the audience will respond to those ideologies – for each member of the audience may receive or interpret those messages differently based on their own subjective experiences and socialisation – the problem exists when the audience faces a lack of perspectives from which to choose. When faced with only one or two perspectives, the audience is given few ideological resources from which to shape their perspective.

We can see how the representation of prostitution in the media has the potential to play a role in influencing public perception. What makes this process of particular interest to me is when media discourse about prostitution provides a limited framework

through which we understand the issues: a framework that only allows us to conceptualise it negatively. A negative approach towards prostitution makes it difficult when participants in, and advocates of, prostitution attempt to establish and promote a sense of autonomy as individuals and as a group, seeking the respect and equal treatment as employees and employers supposedly enjoyed by other members of society. If prostitutes do not participate in this public discourse about prostitution, then the ideologies behind their movement for rights and respect can not be communicated. Furthermore, the barriers they face in the form of legislation, employment policies, and public prejudice are likely to be reinforced by counter-ideologies being promoted in the media. My research question then is *through what discourse are prostitutes and prostitution represented in the media?*

I will also be focussing on the following proposition: *the discourse communicated by the news media about prostitution is more likely to include negative references than positive references.* This discussion is to be used to test the claim that the media serves to perpetuate stereotypes by reinforcing a dominant “authoritative knowledge” of prostitution – while marginalising the voice and knowledge of prostitutes about themselves and their profession.

1.4 Terminology and Definitions

The use of the terms prostitute and prostitution versus sex worker and sex work provoke thought and discussion. Given the effort by sex workers and sex work advocates to recognise prostitution as legitimate *work* (Jenness, 1993; Pheterson, 1993; Brock,

1998), I am personally inclined to use the term sex work and sex worker rather than prostitution and prostitute. However, sex work can also be used to include other forms of work such as exotic dancing, erotic massage, telephone sex, and pornography. Because I am focussing on street prostitution and am not including escorts and other individuals who conduct prostitution indoors, I want to avoid ambiguity. As a result, I have chosen to use the terms prostitute and prostitution for this study.

That prostitute and prostitution are clearly the terms most frequently used by the news media, is also a compelling reason for relying on them in this study. The use of prostitute versus other terms in the media and the conscious or unconscious value attributed to those terms by the authors of the articles in the sample can provide more hints about the latent messages being communicated. For instance, the fact that sex work is not used by the news media may indicate a refusal to consider prostitution as work and contributes to the argument that it constructs prostitution as a social problem. Again, however, this is a semantic debate worthy of its own project. Consequently I have chosen to use the term prostitute and prostitution to refer to street prostitutes as my focus, and sex workers and sex work to other forms of work in the sex industry.

I am also focussing only on adult prostitution. Because youth under the age of 18 are considered minors by Canadian law, child and adolescent (youth) prostitution is illegal. There is also a different type of analysis involved which raises the issue of consent. Specifically, are minors able to give informed consent in prostitution related-

activities?¹ Again, this discussion is extensive enough to merit a separate research project. As a result, my analysis excludes child and adolescent prostitution.

¹ For a discussion of child and youth prostitution, please see C.S.O.A.C.Y., 1985; S.C.P.P., 1985, and Lowman, 1987.

Chapter 2 - Prostitution as a Social Problem

2.1 Introduction

The following is a review of some of the literature written about prostitution, through which I draw out different ways of understanding prostitution as a social problem. It is divided into three sections. The first provides a brief examination of historical approaches to prostitution in Canada and how they paved the way to contemporary legal and social discourse. This section establishes how evidence traditionally identifying prostitution as a problem is more dependent on systems of gender, sexuality, and morality than on concrete evidence. It identifies discriminatory enforcement practices and impact of competing political interests among groups participating in the debate. The second section explores how this legal and social discourse is translated in contemporary media. This section illustrates how the media acts as a site which communicates the ‘prostitution as a social problem’ discourse prevalent in social and legal approaches to prostitution. The predominant theme emerging from this set of literature frames prostitution as the source of social problems, either through an *offender* or a *victim* orientation. The third section presents a different approach to understanding prostitution. This ‘prostitution as *work*’ perspective challenges the victim and offender orientations framing prostitution as a social problem.

2.2 Prostitution in Canada: Historical and Contemporary Approaches

2.2.i *The Historical Development of Prostitution Law in Canada*

In her examination of the prostitutes' rights movement in the United States, Jenness argues that prostitutes have historically been charged by law enforcement as sexual criminals, framed as victims of sexual crimes by moral crusaders, and identified as contaminated women by public health officials. In addition, they have also been associated with other crime including organised crime, larceny, robbery, assault, narcotics, as well as the decay of the surrounding neighbourhood (Jenness, 1993:31). To provide a *Canadian* context in which to understand this relationship and how the tension between prostitution and morality became institutionalised as forms of social control, I would like to provide a brief history of the political and legal events leading up to the current situation of prostitution in Canada. In doing so, I rely heavily on F.M. Shaver's summary of the evolution of prostitution law in Canada. She maintains that understanding this evolution illustrates how social and legal attempts at identifying and addressing prostitution are grounded in *sexual moralism* rather than addressing the underlying causes of problems associated with prostitution (Shaver, 1994:124). Since the first prostitution law came into effect in the Nova Scotia Act of 1759, prostitution law in Canada has evolved through three types of provisions. The first period during pre-Confederation contained gender-specific-sexist-legislation, consisting of prohibitions aimed at women rather than at men or at both genders. Prostitutes as well as individuals associated with bawdy houses in this period were considered to be *social nuisances* that required social and legal control. Consequently, they could be detained by authorities

regardless of whether or not they participated in disruptive or annoying behaviour.

Enforcement during this period, however, was inconsistent. For instance in areas of Canada with a surplus male population, such as the port of Halifax and the Western frontier, prostitution was tolerated. In contrast, in areas of Canada where prostitution was seen as a threat to “respectable” members of the community, it was repressed. On all accounts, however, enforcement was directed at women prostitutes and bawdy house owners and not towards the male clientele (Shaver, 1994:128).

This first period of legislation provides a perspective of how women become integrated as part of the emerging prostitution as a social problem discourse. The double-standard, targeting women rather than all participants reveals that legislation was aimed at controlling more than a physical hazard or inconvenience. This legislation did not address the industry of prostitution as a “nuisance” problem, or identify specific elements or problems associated with the industry, or even acknowledge that it is the men of these communities soliciting their services. As a result, Canadian law held women only as responsible for these problems. Again, rather than address a physical inconvenience, this period of legislation places prostitution in a context of moral and/or social harm or threat of harm imposed on the surrounding community. Whether prostitutes offend by disrupting the social order of the community with “annoying behaviour”, or threaten the moral order by tarnishing the respectability of members in that community, they are held responsible for *generating* problems in their social environment. While the role of the prostitute as offender is clear during pre-confederation, this discourse appears to change following confederation.

The second period, following Confederation in 1867, laws were expanded to include males found to be living on the avails of prostitution as participants in the exploitation and defilement of women and children (Shaver, 1994:129). Examination of conviction rates reveal, however that there was no real attempt at eliminating a “social evil,” despite the hysteria surrounding white slavery and the exploitation of women and children. Conviction rates of women clearly outnumbered those of men and convictions for procuring were few. Subsequently the outcome was not the punishment of exploiters but the criminalization of women selling sexual services (Shaver, 1994:129).

Despite a period of waning interest in the sex trade which flourished between the 1920s and the 1970s, the social nuisance discourse of the pre-Confederation era returned as communities reacted against the visibility of prostitution (Shaver, 1994:130). During the 1970s, prostitution embodied the problems of “neighbourhood decay” and prompted movements directed at municipal, provincial, and federal levels of government for increased efforts at eliminating street prostitution (Shaver, 1994:130). Further examination of these movements reveals that rather than constructing prostitution as a simple public disturbance, this nuisance rhetoric cloaks a covert moralism condemning sexual activity. For instance, concerns which stem from public disturbance are primarily communicated by those with competing interests, namely more traditional businesses or residents whose land-use overlaps that of prostitutes. The threat of nuisance does not *impede* the legitimate activities of community residents and businesses but rather *taints* these activities simply by their proximity to immoral activities (Shaver, 1994:134).

2.2.ii *Contemporary Discourse: Enforcement of Canadian Prostitution Law*

Examination of the current legal status of sex work in Canada reveals that little has changed in terms of how prostitution continues to be a controversial, yet institutionalised area of social control. N. Larsen maintains that much of the controversy around establishing prostitution law which occurred during the last twenty-five years can be attributed to the 1978 *Hutt* decision (Larsen, 1992:169). This decision represents the Supreme Court of Canada ruling that soliciting sexual services in public is illegal only if it is shown to be ‘pressing and persistent’, or rather that it creates a public nuisance. A debate ensued between police, courts, prostitutes, residents’ groups, and politicians over the next five years. This debate, Larsen argues, prompted the establishment of the Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution (S.C.P.P., or Fraser Committee) (Larsen, 1992:199).

The Fraser Committee was established by the Minister of Justice in 1983 to review the issues around prostitution and pornography in Canada. Among the recommendations in its 1985 final report is a call to repeal section 195.1 (“solicitation”) and amend section 171 of the criminal code to impede the disturbance and nuisance caused by prostitution. In the discussion following this recommendation, the committee opined:

[...] it is the nuisance caused to citizens, whether by harassment or obstruction on the street, or by unreasonable interference with their use and enjoyment of property, which is the ill to be addressed. (S.C.P.P. 1985:540)

The recommendation took the form of Bill C-49, which was enacted in 1985 as section 213 in the Canadian Criminal Code. This law functions to control prostitution by forbidding all means of communication in public for the purposes of prostitution, from both prostitutes as sellers and clients as buyers. Prostitution as an act of buying and selling sexual services, however, continues to be legal under current federal law in Canada. It is the secondary activities facilitating this exchange that are included in the Canadian Criminal Code (see Appendix A). In addition to “communicating for the purposes of prostitution” (s.213), these secondary activities include “procuring” (s. 212), and “bawdy houses” (s. 210 and s. 211).

While the evolution of the legal status of prostitution and related activities reveal changing attitudes grounded in gender systems, sexuality, and morality, current enforcement practices reveal that many of these old attitudes are still in place. F.M. Shaver’s examination of Canadian enforcement statistics for example, reveals that enforcement practices are primarily directed at female prostitutes (Shaver, 1993). This is evident in three sets of statistics. Charge statistics illustrate that female prostitutes are arrested at higher rates than male prostitutes. Prostitutes (female and male) are charged more often and are held in pre-trial detention more often than their male clients. Sentencing patterns reveal more severe penalties against prostitutes than clients: female prostitutes are the primary recipients of criminal records and receive more severe sentences than male clients (Shaver, 1993:163-4).

The gender and morality issues around law enforcement raised by Shaver contribute to one piece of the picture when examining discriminatory and inconsistent

enforcement practices. More structural and politico-economic forces must be considered as well. Larsen (1992) applied this perspective to prostitution and law enforcement by examining the interest group practices in four major Canadian cities: Toronto, Ontario; Vancouver, British Columbia; Edmonton, Alberta; and Winnipeg, Manitoba. Relying on a collection of news articles and interviews with individuals participating in the prostitution debate, Larsen examines the urban political scene of each city, identifies the different interest groups participating in the issue of street prostitution, and evaluates the types of relationships between these groups.

Overall Larsen reveals two primary types of relationships. The first is grounded in the role of the socio-economic status of each interest group involved in the debate. Prostitution is put on (or shifted away from) the political agenda of a community by interest groups with high socio-economic status. For example, in Vancouver BC, police and politicians had the most positive response to complaints against prostitution put forth by business and hotel interests. The lobbying by these groups was done in the interest of protecting the civil image and business district, particularly during the tourist season (Larsen, 1992:187). Interest groups in Winnipeg MA, however, present a slightly different perspective. Despite attempts by police to draw attention to visible prostitution, the local business community initially felt not only that street prostitution did *not* disrupt business, but that it provided business. It is not clear in Larsen's study why there is a difference in response from the business community in Winnipeg. He does note that later efforts by residents were effective in drawing attention to the issue. Although street prostitution was present in a number of communities, it was only in the middle-class

areas that the issue was raised (Larsen, 1992:187). This leads Larsen to identify a second issue in his study: the role of class in the context of prostitution. The process of gentrification saw the increase of middle-class professionals in problem neighbourhoods. As mentioned, prostitution became an issue in Winnipeg only after the influx of middle-class professionals into poor communities hosting prostitution. Areas where street prostitution existed with little conflict were now being inhabited by residents who did not want prostitutes in their neighbourhood. Prostitution became framed as a problem only when it entered a middle-class context (Larsen, 1992:187).

Contemporary enforcement practices appear to reflect the same type of social and legal discourse evident in the events leading up to current prostitution law. Through discriminatory enforcement practices, we can see how integrated prostitution is to systems of gender. By virtue of being female and selling sexual services, women working as prostitutes are condemned and silenced through the issuing of fines and jail terms. We can also see how prostitution is maintained as a political issue. The role prostitution plays in a community, either as a threat and nuisance or as a source of revenue, depends on the political and economic influence of the various groups involved. Again, prostitutes are silenced in the public debate as groups wielding political and economic influence in the community are able to prioritize their discourse on the public agenda. In the following section I would like to illustrate how various media studies document how these themes are maintained in news media discourse.

2.3 Contemporary Discourse in the Media

2.3.i *The Prostitute as a Social Problem*

The media, identified as an important source for understanding how the public identity of prostitutes is constructed, contributes to the organisation of prostitution as a social problem (Brock, 1998; Van Brunschot et. al., 1999). D. Brock's investigation of prostitution examines the different ways it has been, and continues to be, problematised, citing the media among sites where prostitution is communicated as problematic. In her examination of prostitution as a social problem in Canada, she relies on a number of sources, including interviews with activist and non-activist prostitutes, social movements (both supportive and unsupportive of prostitution), trends in urban development, as well as the media's response to these developments and changes. Based on this media response, Brock suggests that through a collection of standpoints, including 'authorised knowers' (police, social workers, politicians, and government commissions) and 'average citizens' whose lives are affected by prostitution, the news media organises prostitution in a way that constructs it as a social problem (Brock, 1998:10). This process of organization builds this problem by allowing certain groups to claim legitimacy while silencing other participating groups:

Those who do not play in a role in the organization of prostitution as a social problem and in suggesting strategies for its resolution, are those persons actually being named as the problem (Brock, 1998:11).

By defining them as the problem, Brock maintains that prostitutes are excluded from the debate (Brock, 1998:11).

The identity of the prostitute in media discourse has also been said to be “...an enduring symbol of the problems of modern, urban environments” (Van Brunshot et. al., 1999:48). Van Brunshot et. al. conduct a systematic analysis of newspapers from five major Canadian cities between 1981 and 1995. Despite evolving legal contexts during this period, and the various political orientations of each news paper, imagery of the prostitute and prostitution was found by Van Brunshot et. al. to be overall consistent and homogeneous. Evaluating their findings, Van Brunshot et. al. conclude (italics added):

Overall the general claim was that sympathy and rescue was required for the *victims* – the child prostitute – and regulation and control for the *deviant*, apparently drug addicted, adrift prostitute who represents the diseased underbelly of the metropolis (Van Brunshot et. al., 1999:67).

Van Brunshot et. al. include a provocative suggestion in this quote. They suggest a dichotomy exists in how prostitutes are constructed. The media provides the opportunity to perceive the prostitute as a victim – which in their study was through the exploitation of children. The media also provides the second option of perceiving the prostitute as deviant, embodying a number of undesirable qualities. While this dichotomy plays only a minor role in their analysis, I find it a provocative and useful tool for framing a discussion of media imagery of prostitutes and prostitution. Drawing on the principle of this dichotomy I would like to examine how the media communicates prostitution from a *victim* orientation, and from a deviant, or what I will identify as an *offender* orientation. I employ the term *offender* rather than *deviant*, as is done by Van Brunshot et.al (1999), since deviant is a more general term and can include a variety of deviant behaviour that is not necessarily offensive or threatening. Consequently, offender more adequately reflects

the data than does deviant. The following sections outline examples of how these orientations are constructed and used by the media.

2.3.ii *The Prostitute as Offender*

A number of studies illustrate the different ways prostitutes are represented in the media as offenders (Van Brunshot et. al. 1999; Brock, 1998; King, 1990; Sacks, 1996). Prostitutes conceptualized through the *offender* orientation provide examples of prostitutes breaking the law, threatening the safety of communities, and acting as a general nuisance. Among the themes identified in Van Brunshot et. al.'s long-term study, articles published between 1982-1986 communicate *prostitution as nuisance*. These articles cite visible evidence of prostitution activity: prostitutes on the streets, condoms and needles, and nighttime noise (Van Brunshot et. al., 1999:53). These articles also communicated a “rhetoric of comfort”, which the authors use to describe the sentiments of the surrounding community. This rhetoric depicts the threat prostitution poses to non-prostitutes in their streets and homes, increased traffic and noise, as well as complaints by community members having to explain these visible signs to children (Van Brunshot et. al., 1999:54).

Van Brunshot et. al. identify a slight change in the latter part of this “nuisance” period. The change in prostitution laws between 1984 and 1985 following the Badgley

Committee² and Fraser Committee reports allowed for easier prosecution of prostitute activities and established law as a deterrent. As visibility became less of a problem, the “moral outrage” found less to react against (Van Brunschot et. al., 1999:55-56, 66). As a result, coverage of prostitution as “nuisance” became regionally specific. Once this occurred, it began to be converged with other issues already considered to be a problem. In some municipalities these social problems included organised crime, addiction, and illicit drug trade. Van Brunschot et. al. suggest that by making this association almost natural, prostitution is even further held responsible for the problems in the streets (Van Brunschot et. al., 1999:55-56).

While crime and nuisance are clear ways of framing prostitutes as offenders, the relationship between prostitution and HIV/AIDS also frequently involves an offender orientation. Coverage during this period also included association between prostitution and disease. Articles express concerns about the communication of disease citing problems with condoms on the street, as well as the transmission of AIDS via prostitutes. This association is enforced as articles constructed relationships between prostitution, intravenous drug use, and the communication of disease with the larger Native and transient prostitution population (Van Brunschot et. al. 1999:60). This connection is cited throughout a number of other studies. For example, J. Irvine maintains that among other

2 Similar to the Fraser Committee, the Committee on Sexual Offences Against Children and Youths (C.S.O.A.C.Y or Badgley Committee) was established in 1980 by the Minister of Justice to evaluate the adequacy of Canadian law protecting children and youths from sexual offences. The committee produced a report in 1985 with recommendations for changes to the criminal code regarding child prostitution (see C.S.O.A.C.Y., 1985)

“socially disfavoured groups” such as immigrants, drug users, the mentally ill or impaired, and the urban poor, prostitutes have and continue to be scapegoats for disease and the transmission of HIV/AIDS (Irvine, 1999:66). Irvine continues to argue that studies of HIV positivity among prostitute and non-prostitute women indicate similar infection rates. Studies which indicate a higher seropositive rate among prostitutes also strongly associate HIV infection with intravenous drug use (IDU). Among non-IDU prostitutes, Irvine notes that HIV infection has been cited at 5%. She continues to caution that this study was conducted using accessible samples of prostitutes found in jails, prisons, STD clinics, methadone clinics, and the street. This sample, she maintains, over-represent women at risk for HIV infection (1999:66). Brock argues that the association between prostitution and HIV is clearly evident in Canadian news media coverage promoting what she terms as “hate propaganda” (Brock, 1998:13).

Other media research appears to support these connections. For example, D. King’s examination of prostitutes and HIV transmission in the New York Times and the Washington Post reveals that prostitutes are indeed targeted as sources of transmission. King suggests that based on a pre-established understanding of prostitutes as a threat to social order, prostitutes are vulnerable as targets for fears of AIDS transmission. These fears, she continues, are rooted in stigma attached to prostitutes as a marginal group rather than in a reality. The evidence she uses to support this claim is a lack of evidence of prostitutes as transmitters of HIV (King, 1990:157). Data on female-to-male AIDS transmission available during her study report that there is “no substantiation of bi-directional transmission of AIDS by female prostitutes” (King, 1990:158). Yet female

prostitutes were present on the list of high-risk groups for AIDS directed by the Centre for Disease Control (King, 1990:158). Despite the lack of evidence of prostitutes as vectors for transmission, the overwhelming response of the news media in her study communicated explicitly and implicitly that sex with a prostitute is a high risk activity (King, 1990:160).

Other studies conducted with media examines coverage of HIV infection rates among prostitutes, such as the study conducted by V. Sacks. Based on her analysis of the aforementioned study of HIV transmission in the New York Times and the Washington post, Sacks concludes that prostitutes in North America are cited as being HIV positive at “rates quite disproportionate to their actual importance as disease vectors” (Sacks, 1996:60). She provides more detailed hypotheses of why prostitutes are associated with HIV infection than does King. She argues that this representation reveals a historical association between prostitution and impurity or disease. This association she states, is grounded in their “obvious and public refusal to attempt to conform to ideals of femininity” (Sacks, 1996:60). In an attempt at uncovering how this association is made successful, she concludes that one of the ways the media achieves this association is by promoting the idea of a homogeneous prostitute population. The news media conflates two categories of prostitutes (albeit these categories themselves are neither discrete nor homogeneous): the professional prostitute and the prostitute working to support a drug habit. Each of these categories have different clientele, different patterns of condom use, and consequently face different levels of risk for infection. For example, infection among non-intravenous-drug-using prostitutes is minimal. Condom use among non-IV-drug-

users is standard, and in fact has been cited as higher than among non-prostitutes (Sacks, 1996:61-62). J. Irvine supports this claim, by maintaining that low condom failure rates among prostitutes in brothels can be attributed to professional experience with condom use (Irvine, 1999:67). Furthermore, infection among IV-drug-using prostitutes may be more likely to be the result of needle-sharing than through sexual contact (Sacks, 1996:61-62).

2.3.iii *The Prostitute as Victim*

We have seen how prostitutes are represented as *offenders* in the news media. Yet this orientation represents only half of the picture. The following examples illustrate how the prostitute comes to be represented as a *victim*. Victim oriented coverage is different from offender oriented coverage in that, based on the research described below, it appears to occur much less frequently.

Among the themes identified in the study conducted by Van Brunschot et. al., is a discourse around violence or the rhetoric of “safety on the job” (Van Brunschot et. al., 1999:67). This discourse, spanning 1986 to 1995, includes direct quotes from prostitutes speaking for themselves. These quotes articulate the fear and violence they experience working on the street. Fear and violence is identified as the context in which the voice of prostitutes is most often communicated (Van Brunschot et.al., 1999:61). There are underlying discourses often communicated in coverage of violence against prostitutes that are not cited in this study.

The media analysis conducted by J. Gordon (1996) differs from other media studies of prostitution in that it is both long term (examining articles between 1975 and 1993) and quantitative (N=1067). This allowed her to identify a number of trends or themes over this span of almost 20 years. The first theme identified in this study is the phenomena whereby journalists blame prostitutes for the violence they experience while on the job. She suggests that based on the dichotomisation of femininity into “good-girl” and “bad-girl”, women working as prostitutes are placed in to a “bad-girl” category and subsequently held responsible for violence committed against them. Elements about the crime are reported such that this deviant image is reinforced. For instance, provocative clothing, her relationship with the assailant, the victim’s attractiveness, the use of a weapon, and details alluding to behaviour deviating form a traditional role in the home and with family: “...by virtue of being a woman who prostitutes, the credibility of the victim of violence is damaged” (Gordon, 1996:68).

The second element which emerges in Gordon’s analysis is the way complex individual crimes are simplified and isolated from a social and historical context. For instance, stories are focussed on what the victim did or did not do to prevent the assault. The “drug-addicted” prostitute stereotype that suggests she made herself available for assault ignores that it was an opportunistic or perhaps even premeditated crime (Gordon, 1996:70-71).

A third trend identified by Gordon includes the individualisation of the victimisation of female prostitutes. A number of articles communicating this theme imply that women who violate the norms of proper behaviour should expect violence as a

natural consequence. One of the ways this is achieved is through the media's use of the word hooker to emphasise the culpability of women working as prostitutes. This terminology Gordon maintains, not only effectively "absolves men's guilt for illicit sex, but also society's responsibility for the lack of viable economic choices for women" (Gordon, 1996:72, 76).

J. Lowman (2000), who expands on this theme of violence against prostitutes, presents data from a study conducted on print news media in British Columbia, examining news coverage of the murder of sexworkers between 1964 and 1998. The overall theme of coverage during this period is what Lowman terms a "discourse of disposal". What is particularly unique in this analysis is that Lowman draws a direct connection between this discourse communicated by the media and the actual events in the community. He explains that this discourse is the media interpretation of efforts by police, residents, and politicians to eliminate street prostitution. The consequence of communicating this discourse in the media is that it contributes to the public discourse outside of the media. It fuels a hostile social milieu whereby street prostitutes are constructed by police, residents, and politicians as a nuisance to be disposed of. Once the idea that prostitutes are disposable is publically established, prostitutes working on the street become more vulnerable to violence by clients, vigilante residents, and by predatory men seeking to hurt and kill female street workers.

This discourse of disposal has formed an important part of the ideological context in which male violence against women is played out. A woman working the street is particularly vulnerable to predatory misogynist violence, and all the more so in a milieu in which she runs the risk of criminal prosecution (Lowman, 2000:10).

By contributing to this discourse of disposal, the media communicates an ideology about gender, prostitution, and culpability similar to that driving discriminatory enforcement practices targeting women prostitutes. What is interesting about this victim oriented discourse when examined closely, is that it appears to resemble more of an offender discourse. As illustrated by Gordon (1996) and Lowman (2000), news media appears to simultaneously report on prostitutes as victims of violence, while holding them responsible *and* justifying the violence directed against them.

2.4 Prostitution as Work Discourse

The victim and offender orientations highlight a number of negative aspects of life as a street prostitute. Yet, as argued by Van Brunschot et. al, media coverage communicates a homogenized image to the consumer. This imagery, they maintain, reinforces negative stereotypes about women working on the street, yet fails to contribute in any way to resolving many of the “economic and socially disadvantageous situations” experienced in this environment (Van Brunschot et.al. 1999: 67). We, as the audience, appear to be given only one way of perceiving prostitution – either as a victim or as an offender the prostitute is framed negatively. Yet, as the following section outlines, this homogeneous image of the prostitute and of prostitution is incomplete. There is a diversity of experiences with more positive ways of perceiving and understanding these experiences. The prostitution as work discourse plays two roles in this analysis. Foremost, as an alternative discourse it provides an additional option from which to

choose when examining prostitution. Secondly, it provides an opportunity to challenge the offender and victim orientations.

The *prostitution as work* perspective provides an alternative way of understanding sex work, one that allows for agency and self-definition among prostitutes. By affirming their positive experiences, this perspective allows for a positive conceptualisation of prostitution. Furthermore it challenges the offender and victim identities assigned to prostitutes when prostitution is framed as a social problem. By providing a third option, as the following authors illustrate, prostitution itself ceases to be defined as a social problem.

In her examination of the evolution of prostitutes' rights organizations, V. Jenness emphasises that this social movement is an attempt at gaining control of the definition of prostitution as a social problem associated with deviance and social control. National prostitutes' rights groups such as COYOTE (an acronym for Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics) in the United States as well its Canadian national and regional counterparts such as CORP (Canadian Organization for the Rights of Prostitutes – founded in 1983), Sex Workers Alliances of Toronto, Niagara, Vancouver, and Halifax, have worked towards redefining the “problem” in the prostitution problem and normalising their work (Jenness, 1993:6-7).

Brock maintains that taking a sex-work as work approach, or viewing prostitution as a work relation, can be challenging given the traditional “feminist rejection of the use of women as sexual commodities” (Brock, 1998:12). Brock challenges this standpoint by illustrating that the organisation of prostitution as a work relation is similar to the

organization of other occupations available to women, particularly those from a working class (Brock, 1998:12). Understanding prostitution in the context of work is understanding the social and economic power relations of capitalism governing women's chances when entering prostitution. This, Brock argues, requires two steps: the first is to recognise that prostitution as a form of female labour is analytically separate from the institution of prostitution. Conflating prostitutes as individuals working in an industry with the industry itself "lends itself to standpoints which portray a prostitute as either a helpless victim or a social pariah who embodies what we perceive as the worst features of the institution" (Brock, 1998:12). The metaphor she uses to illustrate her point is that of a support picket for factory workers. A picket in support of factory workers negotiating better contracts does not necessarily entail support for the employing corporation.

The second step involves contextualising the experience of women working as prostitutes with those of women in other forms of labour. By examining commonalities among women's employment, it becomes evident how race, class, and gender become primary determinants of type of employment rather than individual choice and initiative (Brock, 1998:12). Through asking women how they became involved in prostitution, Brock suggests that the events leading to one's involvement in prostitution are often dependent upon race, class and gender, and not on choice. These, she notes, are the same uncontrollable factors leading women into working class jobs such as factory work or domestic service (Brock, 1998:15).

G. Pheterson's (1993) examination of prostitute identities suggests that prostitutes face a number of challenges when attempting to manage their identity. The legal system

is set up so that women working as prostitutes are assigned dishonourable status. Women are able to provide sex for free, with no legal restrictions or institutionalised moral judgements on their behaviour. However, when a prostitute earns money from her sexuality she is perceived to be selling her honour. In this act of negotiating her sexuality she forfeits her civil liberties and human rights. Prostitution law aimed at preventing and controlling prostitution (such as s. 213 in Canadian prostitution law) forfeits her freedom of speech, she jeopardises or loses her freedom to travel or immigrate, and most importantly when considering the building of self and identity, she forfeits her right to sexual self-determination and sex privacy (Pheterson 1993:43). Furthermore, Brock maintains that the sexual nature of business transactions in prostitution subject it to special forms of regulation. “Women working in prostitution *become* prostitutes in the eyes of others; that is, publically they are more identified with their work than are people in other jobs (Brock, 1998:11).

These arguments illustrate the impact that stereotypes and discriminatory law and law enforcement have on the lives of prostitutes. Efforts put forth by these researchers, as well as other prostitutes’ rights groups and advocates, articulate a perspective that allows and encourages agency and autonomy on behalf of prostitutes. When prostitution is removed from the boundaries or definitions of a social problem, prostitutes are able to communicate their individual experiences, concerns, and voices. They become effective political players and they are able to identify the elements of their work that are dangerous, unhealthy, or uncomfortable in a way that promotes productive solutions and strategies for change. The following sections illustrate ways in which this has been

attempted. By challenging the victim and offender perspectives of prostitution, prostitutes and prostitution advocates are able to communicate strategies that benefit them as members of the community.

2.4.i *Prostitution as Work: Challenging the Victim Identity*

While social policy or social service programs do not emerge in available media analyses of prostitution, it is a part of the social discourse around prostitution, as the following researchers illustrate. In his critical evaluation of the report produced by the Badgley committee, J. Lowman (1987) raises some questions about how, in the context of social services or agencies, the subjectivity of the individual working as a prostitute is perceived. While his research takes place in the context of juvenile prostitution, he suggests that it can be carried over to the experience of non-juvenile prostitutes. Based on this study, he argues that while many prostitutes, both adult and juvenile, have spent considerable time using state-run social services throughout their lives, this exposure has led them to perceive these services or agencies as forms of control rather than support. While specific social workers did receive positive feedback from prostitutes in this Vancouver study, the overall perspective from prostitutes towards state-run service institutions was negative (Lowman, 1987:105). Lowman suggests that some of the problems cited stem from the use of an authoritative approach when representing prostitutes rather than a subjectivist approach communicating the experiences of individuals working in the industry. For instance, the Badgley Committee report, he notes, was “quick to evaluate its subjects’ perceptions of the world, but failed to provide a

measure for judging the influence of its moral metaphysics on its interpretation of survey data” (Lowman, 1987:108). Lowman asserts that throughout this report, the observations made by the Badgley committee of the experiences of self and identity among young prostitutes communicated a homogenous portrayal of these youth. Any self-image which strayed from the theme “troubled background” or was not centred around an identity as a prostitute was cited as ‘fictitious’ and a ‘self-deception’ (Lowman, 1987:108). He suggests that ‘guidance and assistance’ programs offered by the state often take the form of a system of correctional programs while law subjects young prostitutes to the stigma of a criminal label. This approach, he maintains, only serves to solidify the illegality of prostitution and creates conditions that may force dependency on individuals in the trade rather than assist them. Furthermore, it fails to address the already marginal position held by women and youth in the labour force (Lowman, 1987:109).

Pheterson (1993) challenges the victim identity from a different approach by condemning the psychological model profiling prostitution as dependent and psychologically dysfunctional. Stereotypes based on the assumption that prostitutes are subject to abuse and exploitation by pimps, and that they are helpless, drug addicted, and dependent are challenged by the prostitution-as-work model (Pheterson, 1993:49). She continues to suggest that the psychological profile frequently assigned to female prostitutes focuses on psychological dysfunction. Examples of this dysfunction include childhood deprivation and abuse, sexual frigidity, hostility towards men, and homosexuality. More socially oriented profiles attempting to explain the motivation behind the decision to work in prostitution centre on economic factors such as female

poverty and unemployment, and patriarchal power structures that involve coercion and violence. Pheterson maintains that these approaches to prostitution establish a dichotomy distinguishing “normal” women from prostitutes. Supporters of these approaches argue that it is through being psychologically dysfunctional or victimized by social structures that women are forced into the industry (Pheterson, 1993:51). Often the research which has led to reinforcing these stereotypes are derived from small segments of prostitute populations such as those in prison, hospitals, or on the street. Consequently, juveniles and women with drug problems are over-represented yet are used to generalise about prostitute demographics. These generalisations disguise the heterogeneity of the prostitute experience (Pheterson, 1993:53).

In Brock’s exploration of prostitute as a social problem, she argues that her examinations of autonomy and subjectivity reveal that prostitutes are assertive and independent. “They express resistance to forms of oppression in, for example, refusing to be poor, and by attempting to maintain control over their working conditions” (Brock, 1998:22). By assessing the advantages and disadvantages of their work in a context of other forms of labour in the female ghetto, prostitutes are able to critically examine the degree to which they experience their subjectivity as objects. Given the power relations inherent in female labour, all women experience at various points in their lives their subjectivity as objects (Brock, 1998:17). This relationship between objectivity and subjectivity provides some interesting questions about power relations in prostitution. While power operates at the level of individual experience, the individual and collective are affected by power existing at the social/institutional level. It is how the individual

and the collective participate on a continuum of resistance and acceptance. Brock continues to maintain that as active subjects, women are not inherently objects of control. Simply because the institution of prostitution may be a product of female oppression, women participating in that institution are not condemned to be vulnerable, and can use it as a source of power. The dialectical relationship between the subject and object is one where “our bodies and our lives are not hopelessly determined by patriarchal oppression, but neither are they capable of complete individual autonomy” (Valverde as cited in Brock, 1998:22).

While the news media appears to communicate a victim orientation, however weak it may be, this alternative discussion provides evidence that prostitutes can communicate their experiences as empowering and independent. Through challenging traditional victim-oriented arguments, researchers such as Lowman (1987), Brock (1998) and Pheterson (1993) introduce a perspective presenting prostitutes as women who are highly integrated and subjective, rather than vulnerable, victimized girls. The following section provides a second dimension to this alternative discourse by challenging traditional offender-oriented arguments.

2.4.ii *Prostitution as Work: Challenging the Offender Identity*

Pheterson (1993) argues that the victim approach not only forces prostitutes into “aid” programs ensuring further marginalisation, it has even further consequences. For example, one of the challenges faced by prostitutes under the victim label is when women working as prostitutes attempt to claim self-determination. Unlike other workers whose

efforts at organization and demands for better working conditions are applauded by many feminists and socialists, these groups advocate empowerment as reformation, rather than resistance. Pheterson maintains that attempts at self-determination by prostitutes, as prostitutes, are viewed as a threat to women and women's liberation:

...a whore is viewed either as a casualty of the system or as a collaborator with the system. Regardless, she is not considered an ally in the struggle for survival and liberation (Pheterson, 1993:58).

Prostitution in popular media also illustrates how deviance is often pathologised. For instance, McLaughlin (1991) argues that a popular element on talk shows featuring 'deviant' (sic) sexuality such as prostitution or homosexuality often involves a 'ritual confession', and is accompanied by a public psychoanalytic treatment. Part of this treatment process includes participation from the audience through voicing their fear of 'contagion', or as McLaughlin infers, "that the illness may have leaped the boundaries of the personal to create disorder at a social level" (McLaughlin, 1991:262). The emphasis placed on holding prostitutes responsible for harm allows us to sidestep an examination of the underlying social order. This is part of the "mystification of ideological process" – constructing the illusion of an ordered world while hiding that which has been excluded. The news media contributes to this by creating an 'ideological effect'. For example, this effect is illustrated in news coverage of prostitution which constructs a discourse of danger. By associating prostitution with prostitute deaths, drug use, and HIV/AIDS, the population, the community, and the social order become threatened. Yet rather than bring attention to and repair the social order, the discussion centres on eliminating prostitutes and their clients from the community (McLaughlin, 1991:258).

While the offender and victim binary provide useful frameworks when examining prostitution in the media, it is also evident that they are not mutually exclusive. What is consistent throughout the literature and media research, however, is the presentation of prostitution as a social problem. Whether prostitutes are victims in need of social assistance programs, or are offenders responsible for threatening the community, they are problematized. We also see that this is not the only way of understanding prostitution. An alternative discourse exists which communicates a heterogeneous and positive dimension to prostitution. Furthermore, I suggest that it is the very problematization of prostitution that is the problem. In the following chapter present a theoretical framework to describe what is occurring.

Chapter 3 - Theoretical Framework

3.1 The Sociology of Knowledge: Ideology and Authoritative Knowledge

By examining the origin, production, and reproduction of knowledge, the sociology of knowledge as a theoretical approach addresses some of the issues raised in the literature review (Chapter 2). That is, it enables us to explore how competing interests and power relationships between interest groups, such as prostitutes, residents, businesses, police, and politicians, participate in the production and communication of knowledge, in this case knowledge about prostitution. It also examines how new knowledges enter pre-existing collections of knowledge, and provides a framework in which social relations, inequality, social movements, as well as issues such as gender, power, and dominance may be framed, conceptualised, and understood. As suggested by E.D. McCarthy, a sociology of knowledge approach allows us to examine the ways in which social environments acquire social meanings. Knowledge, he continues, constitutes a social order wherein knowledge is not simply a product of social order but is also responsible for establishing and communicating a social order (McCarthy, 1996:12). In the context of prostitution and the media, we can use this perspective to understand the role played by the media in ascribing or assigning meaning to prostitution, and how these meanings are derived from and produce a social order. More specifically, what the news media communicates overtly or covertly as objective truths or facts in reality is the representation of the different competing interests and their subsequent worldviews on the issue. As discussed in Chapter 2, Larsen (1992) illustrated this process in his exploration of group interest politics and prostitution law enforcement practices.

Given the role of competing knowledge and the construction of meaning in the sociology of knowledge, ideology becomes useful as a key concept in this politic. E. Steuter presents an interesting examination of ideology by focussing on the examination of the power relations between two competing groups: homeopathic practitioners and allopathic practitioners. In her narrative of the history of homeopathic medicine and its marginalisation by allopathic medical bodies, Steuter illustrates the *process* by which competing ideologies engage in a struggle for monopoly and domination, and how one group is legitimised over another. This monopoly is achieved through the process of rationalisation where the dominant group, allopathic medicine, creates an ideology to support its practices. The dominant group legitimises its monopoly by creating a need for its ideology, and universalises itself by delegitimising and marginalising competing ideologies. Furthermore, Steuter argues, it actively maintains its authority by dehistoricising itself and creating the illusion that it is and always has been the only ideology from which to choose (Steuter, 1998:8).

Brigitte Jordan (1997) brings a similar discussion of ideology and the process of marginalisation into the forum of alternative childbirth and midwifery, examining the marginalisation of midwives and the silencing of women's voices during childbirth. This discussion provides an account of the process by which communities and social groups come to endorse an ideology or set of ideologies as knowledge, and how that knowledge comes to play a central role as a source of authority within that community. To set up her argument, Jordan argues that knowledge is not a substantive entity that can be claimed by a single individual, but a state that is achieved by a collective of participating individuals

(1997:58). The analysis of knowledge therefore is an attempt to understand the ways in which participants of a community draw attention to the fact that they “have” knowledge, further modify and elaborate their knowledge, as well as enforce it in the collective social environment (Jordan, 1997: 58).

Jordan’s contribution to this discussion of knowledge is an elaboration of knowledge into a realm of “authoritative” knowledge and the role it plays in the production and communication of knowledge in the social community. Jordan argues that every area of culture is characterised by multiple systems of knowledge, each of which are responsible for communicating and explaining the state of the world. She claims that authoritative knowledge is the knowledge which is considered and agreed upon by participants in a specific situation to be of importance. This agreement serves to distinguish this knowledge as legitimate, worthy of consideration and discussion, and provides it with the ability to justify decision-making and courses of action (1997:56). This framework becomes useful in approaching prostitution. Given the variety of interest groups competing in the prostitution debate, such as residents, businesses, police, politicians, and prostitutes, there are a number of world views trying to be communicated. Each worldview is based on a set of experiences or perceived experiences that, from the perspective of each group, require protection, or when problematic, require a solution. The challenge in this situation arises when that which is agreed upon to be important and is subject to decision-making benefits only one or two groups.

Using the concept of dominant ideology, Jordan outlines a phenomenon whereby one type of knowledge gains domination and authority. This knowledge achieves this

domination by providing a better understanding of the world for a specific time and purpose, or because it is more closely linked with a power structure although it is often for both reasons (Jordan, 1997:58). This dominance often results in the discrediting and marginalisation of competing ways of knowing. In this light, proponents of other ways of knowing are dismissed and their visions are considered unfounded. Those proponents are subsequently labelled as backward, or often dangerous, if they challenge or threaten the dominant knowledge. This, Jordan argues, is a perpetual social process which serves to establish and to reflect power-relations so that participants of a community come to understand the immediate social order as the natural and logical order. The discrediting and dismissing is the agency propagating hierarchal structures of knowledge and maintains the understanding that the natural order is unvariable, dissuading change and revolution. She continues arguing that the power behind its persuasion lies in its frame of apparent sensibility and rationality as well as its apparent consensual construction. The authority garnered by this knowledge serves to sustain the community's understanding of morality and rationality. For this to occur, an accessible set of practices and reasonings which serves to systematically instruct the social interaction and work of participants is required (Jordan, 1997: 56-8).

Each of the parties or groups participating in the prostitution debate hold a different social, political, and economic position. Given the power inequalities between these interest groups, we can see how prostitutes as a marginal group can easily be targeted and undermined by groups with more economic, social, and political influence in the community. Because prostitutes present an alternative vision of sexuality, femininity,

and morality and violate norms for social interaction, particularly when arguing for prostitution as legitimate work, prostitutes clearly challenge and threaten the dominant social order. While this represents a process that exists outside of the news media, the news media is also a site where this process takes place. Through examining the discourse communicated in the news media, we can see how one ideology about prostitution becomes dominant while an alternative ideology is marginalized.

Jordan maintains that authoritative knowledge, despite its efforts at eliminating competing forms of knowledge, is not hegemonic as other forms of knowledge continue to exist on the margins of discourse. When dominant knowledge fails to meet the needs of its proponents, it begins to be questioned and to lose its legitimacy. Subsequently, marginal knowledge which serves to meet those needs gains support. The authoritative knowledge theory states that social groups and networks play a role in the successful legitimation or rejection of knowledge. Authoritative knowledge may also be rejected and marginal knowledge effectively maintained, albeit on the margins, through these groups and networks. In her field-work observations in American delivery rooms, Jordan found that women whose views conflicted with those of her birth attendant were more successful in carrying through with their personal decisions when surrounded by a network of supportive people than when isolated (Jordan, 1997:59).

As argued in the literature review, there is a supportive network at the academic level promoting alternative perspectives of prostitution at the institutional level. Prostitutes' rights organizations such as COYOTE in the United States, Maggie's in Toronto, and Stella in Montreal, act as supportive networks fostering an alternative

discourse at the community level. So what appears to be occurring in the literature review is a struggle between multiple ideologies or knowledges about prostitution. Among residents, businesses, police, lawmakers, psychologists and social program providers, prostitution is communicated as a social problem. Whether it is through a victim discourse or an offender discourse, prostitution is problematized. Competing against this ideology is the 'prostitution as work' perspective, challenging the victim and offender discourses and promoting a more positive and empowering approach to prostitution.

Having clearly established that knowledge is culturally constructed, that multiple knowledges compete for dominance in a hierarchical setting whereby one becomes dominant and others become marginalised, and that the dominant or authoritative knowledge requires collective agreement to distinguish it as legitimate, the question arises: how does the collective establish and maintain the agreement? Collective agreement implies that a particular knowledge or ideology must be communicated among the collective, whereby members are able to acknowledge their understanding of a particular ideology to each other, as well as reaffirm each others belief. This means of communication must be so prevalent that it is able to transcend the communicative abilities of small collections of alternative groups and networks. It must also be supportive of the knowledge it is communicating, sharing the key elements of its underlying ideology. What means of communication fulfills all of these requirements in a culture and population as large as North America? The answer that emerges is the media. This certainly appears to be the case for prostitution discourse. While the various

perspectives of the prostitution debate are available to myself as a researcher, they do not appear to be communicated at the public news level. As the media analyses illustrate, only one set of ideologies about prostitution is communicated to the public². This raises a number of questions about the role of the news media and public communication.

3.2 Communication Theory

The media is a forum where information is communicated to a large group of people. It is also a social institution embedded in an elitist system of politics and economics often serving to maintain the status quo (Ericson, et al., 1989; Gans, 1979; McQuail, 1993). This latter agenda has already become evident in critical analyses of the legal system and its approach to sex work (Larsen, 1992; King, 1990; Hegarty, 1998; Lowman, 2000). So we can see how the news media can be a good source for investigating power relations and dominant ideologies. In his discussion of media theory, McQuail argues that despite variation in theoretical explanations and methodological approaches to media analysis, a number of themes emerge surrounding media content and reality (McQuail 1993:193). He demonstrates that regardless of the degree of reality expectation, media has the routine of deviating from a conventionally understood form of reality. Analyses of *news* media demonstrate the consistent over-representation of the social elite such as governments, and public relations representatives, whereby their versions of reality are more frequently presented than those of the more numerous yet less

² Since the samples used for this and other studies of prostitution in the media are limited to mainstream media, we are unlikely to see an alternative orientation. As a result, the binary between victim and offender will be prominent.

prestigious population of people. These groups of social elites are disproportionately the object of news. The increase in size and level of drama, violence, and suddenness of events increases their degree of newsworthiness, and consistently articulate dominant consensual social and community values (McQuail, 1993:194).

News media when analysed reveals the knowledge structure of society (Erickson, et al. 1989:395). It provides a presentation of 'authorised knowers', how they fit into the hierarchy of knowledge, and how they claim their knowledge. Organisations which act as sources predetermine their position in the hierarchy and choose the news organisation which best serves these interests. The news media also presents an illusion of the public conversation, a forum for the public discovery of knowledge that is in fact constructed. It maintains this illusion of an ideological democracy through forums such as letters to the editor. Erickson argues, however, that 'authoritative knowers' receive preferential publication to other knowers in these forums (Erickson, et al, 1989:397). News media acts to articulate social events that represent or threaten community and democracy, order, and change, serving to reflect constructed dramatisations employed by 'authoritative knowers'. Our knowledge is affected by these dramatisations as they become fixed in our consciousness, directing our ways of knowing and reinforcing the knowledge structure of society. The order it presents has been informed by knowledge elites (Erickson et al, 1989:398).

Berkowitz (1997) extends the argument of the construction of news by presenting an analysis of news as folklore. This analysis argues that news coverage of specific details of an event bundle a core myth or folklore narrative. In his model, news stories

about reality are presented through a framework of social understanding, rather than act as a reflection of objective reality. One of the implications of news coverage in this folklore model is that it reproduces and reinforces social stereotypes (Berkowitz, 1997:322).

What has become clear in this discussion is that the news media sets the agenda, it is informed by and reinforces the authoritative knowledge of social organisations and institutions. The literature review outlines a relationship of conflict between the different groups involved in the prostitution debate. It also makes clear that, while incomplete, this struggle manifests in the media, a forum where sex workers are subjected to the myths and stereotypes embraced by individuals, institutions and organisations to whom they pose a threat.

Based on this discussion, as well as patterns in the media analyses found in the literature review, I anticipate a number of trends in my data. Foremost, I expect that we will continue to see only one perspective of prostitution – themes of victim and offender will dominate throughout this discourse.

Chapter 4 - Research Design

4.1 Research Question, Primary Proposition, and Operational Definitions

Before discussing the methodology, I would like to locate my research question and answer in the theoretical framework I have elaborated. My research question is as follows: *Through what discourse are prostitutes and prostitution represented in the print news media?* The response to this question is found in the following proposition: *The discourse communicated by the news media about prostitutes and prostitution is more likely to include negative references than positive references.*

I propose that two processes accompany this context of negative representation. The first is the construction of prostitution as a *social problem*, whereby these negative references illustrate the aspects of prostitution which may be seen as problematic. We have already observed in the literature review (see Chapter 2) how prostitutes are directly associated with a number of legal, social and economic problems. These affiliations include criminal behaviour, substance abuse and addiction, psychological and/or emotional dysfunction, health problems such as sexually transmitted diseases, and risks to the economic health of the community (Brock, 1998; Gordon, 1996; Irvine, 1999; Jenness, 1993; King, 1990; Larsen, 1992; Lowman, 2000; Sacks, 1996; Van brunschot, et. al. 1999). This context communicates one way of understanding prostitution whose ideology is primarily negative and that conceptualises prostitution as a social problem.

However, we have also seen in the literature that prostitution can be viewed very differently. Research challenging the victim and offender orientations suggest that prostitutes are integrated and subjective, articulate their choices and experience as

empowering and independent, and that prostitution can actually provide a sense of autonomy and control in the lives of many individuals working as prostitutes (Brock, 1998; Jenness, 1993; Lowman, 1987; Pheterson 1993). This alternative way of understanding prostitution, whose ideology is more supportive, challenges the contexts framing prostitution as a social problem.

The second process that accompanies the context of negative representation involves the *marginalisation* of this alternative way of understanding prostitution. Through marginalisation, the alternative ideology which challenges the problematization of prostitution is pushed outside the boundaries of legitimate social groups and social processes. Prostitutes, as effective players in the debate around the problems associated with prostitution, become marginalised. The effect of these processes together is such that the ideologies constructing prostitution as a social problem are readily accessible in popular and mass communication medias such as the news. Simultaneously, however, ideologies more supportive of prostitution that challenge this discourse are omitted, undermined, or presented as alternatives which do not fit into acceptable social norms. Once prostitution is established as a social problem, the process of marginalisation is highly effective. I have documented evidence of the same process with respect to the representation of midwifery in the media (Chapman, 1999). My study established the presence of two opposing frameworks of midwifery. One framework argues that it is dangerous and irresponsible, while the second provides evidence refuting these claims. The framework communicating the ideology of childbirth as dangerous dominated popular media, while the ideology claiming that midwives are safe and often preferable

approach to childbirth emerged infrequently. Furthermore, attempts at presenting it in a supportive manner actually undermined its legitimacy (Chapman, 1999).

What I find most intriguing about these processes – and what I argue is central to the success of these processes – is the concept of *authoritative knowledge*. Within these two processes is a struggle between different ways of understanding prostitution, or different knowledges about prostitution. These sets of knowledge are competing against each other, yet only the knowledge of prostitution as a social problem is being communicated. The result is that the news media audience is exposed to an incomplete picture of prostitution, just as the media in my earlier study was effective in constructing an incomplete picture of childbirth and midwifery. With limited frameworks from which to choose, it is relatively easy for the audience to support the dominant ideology that is being communicated. The consequence of this process for prostitution is that it becomes difficult for prostitutes (and prostitute advocates), who share an alternative vision of prostitution, to participate as autonomous and respected players in public discourse about prostitution.

4.1.i *Contextual Frameworks*

As a way of illustrating how prostitution and prostitutes are problematised and marginalised, I frame the data using five settings drawn from previous research. Based on my critical review of the literature outlining historical and current prostitution law and enforcement and the evaluation of issues emerging from previous media analyses, I compiled the following five frameworks through which to conceptualise prostitution:

Legal Framework – This framework examines prostitution coverage as it pertains to legal issues. This includes discussion around changing federal, provincial, and/or municipal laws intersecting with prostitution and prostitution practices; the direct violation of these laws by prostitutes; association with crime unrelated to prostitution such as organized crime, robbery, vandalism, loitering, panhandling, squeegees, disturbing the peace; and violent crime such as harassment, assault, the presence of weapons. The five categories used to code the articles include:

1. Offenders of non-violent crime
2. Victims of non-violent crime
3. Offenders of violent crime
4. Victims of violent crime
5. Organized crime

Social Policy Framework – This framework examines some of the more socially oriented issues discussed in association with prostitution. This section focuses on issues such as health and illness, social service, personal development and economic assistance programs, involvement with drugs, and personal relationships. The five categories used to code the articles include the following:

1. Victims of STDs and/or HIV/AIDS
2. Source of transmission of STDs and/or HIV/AIDS
3. Social service or assistance programs
4. Previous abuse (not-related to prostitution)
5. Drugs

Economic Framework – This framework examines coverage of prostitution in terms of economics, such as how it relates to the economic environment of a community, region or nation. The four categories used to the code articles include:

1. Evidence of a faltering economy
2. Victims of a faltering economy
3. Low property value
4. Gambling

Occupational Framework – This framework examines coverage of prostitution as it relates to employment, or as an occupation, and identifies issues around prostitutes' rights. It includes the following three categories:

1. Legitimate work
2. Prostitutes' rights
3. Legal employment

Characteristics of Prostitution/Prostitutes Framework – This framework attempts to examine some of the apparent characteristics of *prostitution* and *prostitutes* overtly and covertly present in coverage of prostitution in different contexts. The categories used to determine the presence of these characteristics include the following:

1. Degradation/Humiliation
2. Exploitation/Vulnerability
3. Entered by force
4. Lack of values and/or morals
5. Desire to leave prostitution
6. Slang
7. Freedom/Autonomy
8. Minors

Building on these structural or contextual frameworks, we can further examine ways in which each of these contexts communicates a role for prostitution and prostitutes as part of, or not part of, a social problem. To facilitate this analysis I developed a set of

analytic frameworks which allows me to highlight the ideologies being communicated throughout the contexts.

4.1.ii Analytical Frameworks

While a content analysis examining the contexts associated with prostitution in the media is valuable in itself, I would like to expand this effort to include a *discourse* analysis. As a way of uncovering what *ideas* about prostitution are being communicated, I will examine the *orientation* each of these categories is communicating. As my proposition states, I anticipate that the discourse framing these contexts will be much more negatively oriented (unsupportive of prostitution) than positively oriented. As some of the sub-categories illustrate, I will be examining what role prostitution/the prostitute play in these contexts. Building on the dichotomy of victim/deviant proposed by Van Bruschoot et. al. (1999) (see Chapter 2 - Literature Review), I would like to expand my analysis to examine the ways in which prostitution and prostitutes are assigned the role of *offender* and *victim*, as well as whether (if at all) they are ever assigned through the third, *prostitution as work* orientation that was in evidence in the scientific literature.

Offender Orientation – This orientation examines how prostitutes are held responsible for, or associated with actual or potential crime, nuisance, violence, and specific health problems in the community.

Victim Orientation – This orientation examines how prostitutes are framed as victims of problems in the community or their social environment (such as a poor economy and lack of employment; abuse and violence or threat of violence, and emotional dysfunction).

Prostitution as Work Orientation – This third category will include references that promote the more positive or supportive work-based ideology about prostitution. I anticipate that this discourse will cite law and social policy framing prostitutes and prostitution as victims and as offenders as harmful to the safety and well-being of individuals working in the industry.

4.2 Population and Sample

I rely on secondary data collected in 1997 as part of a larger research project conducted by Frances M. Shaver, comparing the work experiences of street prostitutes with those of hospital aides. The data set consists of 749 full text news articles published in the *Montreal Gazette* and the *Toronto Star* between January first, 1993 and December thirty-first, 1994. These papers and time frame were chosen to correspond with the field work sites and data collection periods of a research project conducted in Montreal and Toronto in 1993 and 1994, respectively. The 1997 proposal was designed to compare the content of these news articles with the content of interviews conducted with the prostitutes. Although both sets of data were available, I decided to focus on the newspaper data. This decision was made in part due to the time constraints of an MA thesis and impart to a personal interest in developing the theoretical framework and methodology used in my previous research project (Chapman, 1999). Since the 1997 proposal was never carried out, this is the first use of this newspaper data for analysis.

The *Montreal Gazette* and the *Toronto Star* are the most popular English language newspaper for each city respectively, with a combined weekday readership of 915, 827,

with varying readership on Saturdays and Sundays (*Toronto Star*, 2001; *Montreal Gazette*, 2001)³. The articles from 1993 and 1994 were collected and downloaded in full text form from Canada Newdisk using a keyword search with the following terms; SEX TRADE, SEX WORKER(S), HOOKER(S), PROSTITUT* . The articles include short stories (<200 words), long stories and feature articles (>200 words), editorials, letters to the editor, book reviews, and collections of short news stories. The search was then edited to remove unrelated stories by scanning through each article for the keywords. Unfortunately, the total number of articles including those which were discarded is unavailable. We do know, however, that these discarded articles contained the following subjects:

- T.J. Hooker (television character)
- Thomas Hooker (Deceased artist)
- Review of plays with prostitute characters
- Duplicate copies of same article
- Jack the Ripper's Diary
- Rugby (Hooker is a field position)

The articles which are left, totalling 749, include some of the following subjects:

- Heidi Fleiss (Hollywood Madam convicted of procuring)
- Changing laws around contact in Exotic Dancing
- The Toronto Parkdale Murders
- Articles not directly about sex work, but that refer to prostitution when discussing the social problems of a neighbourhood, in reference to another crime, or in a scandal where a prominent figure has been charged or convicted of soliciting the services of a sex worker.

³ While Toronto and Montreal are independent cities, it is reasonable to argue that the content of these two newspapers can be compared; both of these cities are major urban centres, and share a number of syndicated news sources such as Reuters, Associated Press, and Canadian Press.

4.3 Sample Parameter and Limitations

Using each article as a unit of analysis, I was faced with the challenge of achieving manageable sample. Given the limited time frame of an MA thesis, I opted for a small systematic sample. I selected 7% of the 749 articles (with a sampling interval of 14), for a total of 52 articles⁴. I have chosen a relatively small sample of 7% rather than the 30% recommended for populations under 1000 (Newman, 1997:222). The smaller sample size enables me to develop a more flexible analytic framework, as well as design a measurement tool for future research. It is important to mention that given the small size of my population and the subsequent small sample ratio, I face limitations in the degree to which I can generalize. Consequently, I will conduct an exploratory⁵, qualitative analysis and will examine these articles for discourse themes rather than attempt to use this as a representative sample.

4.4 Measurement Tool and Coding Procedures

The measurement tool was developed through a combination of strategies. The first of these strategies included an initial coding of the original population, loosely classifying them by theme. Some of the initial categories included violence, rape, drugs, illness, and law enforcement. While I was able to gain an understanding of the overall

4 Because this data had been untouched since its collection, there was some difficulty in establishing how many articles were collected and where they were stored. As a result, articles numbering 300-399 were not included in the population when the sample was chosen. I do not believe that this will affect the findings.

5 Exploratory research is chosen by researchers because it allows creative freedom (Newman, 1997:19-20).

kinds of issues included in the population, I found it quite useful to apply the concepts which emerged in the literature review. This secondary strategy allowed me to condense many of my original categories into more analytically favourable categories. I was then able to more effectively operationalize my research question by creating a meaningful index of words, phrases and themes to categorize or measure my concepts (see Appendix B).

The criteria used to determine how an article is coded involved a careful examination of the paragraphs, and occasionally specific sentences, to evaluate if there was mention of the items on the coding sheet. Each article was then identified as containing references to the respective items. It was then determined whether each context communicated an *offender*, *victim*, or *prostitution as work orientation*. This was achieved by examining the role assigned to prostitution in each particular context. For example, if an article contained a reference to violent crime and cited a prostitute as responsible for that crime, then this reference or context communicated an *offender* orientation. More specific criteria used to determine the framework and orientation are discussed throughout Chapter 5 (Findings and Discussion). I also documented if the article contained references to prostitution communicating more than one orientation. For example, some articles discussed prostitution as a source of crime (offender), yet included a reference to prostitutes as victim. These articles were explored individually.

4.5 Data Discussion

The unit of analysis in the data discussion is the article. When referring to a number of articles, I refer to the number of articles containing one or more reference to a particular structural framework or analytic orientation. This approach does not allow the evaluation of the strength a particular orientation. That is, an article is coded as communicating a victim orientation whether it contains a short sentence or a long paragraph discussing prostitutes as victims. As I will illustrate, the articles are overwhelmingly homogeneous in the discourse they communicate. Consequently, not including this aspect in my methodology will not result in a loss of significant data. If the articles in this sample had been more heterogeneous I would have advised including a comparison of how much of each article is dedicated to each orientation. The method I use to display this coded data is through a series of tables. Each of the tables provided in the discussion have been standardized in the direction of the five structural frameworks.

Chapter 5 - Findings and Discussion

5.1 Data Overview

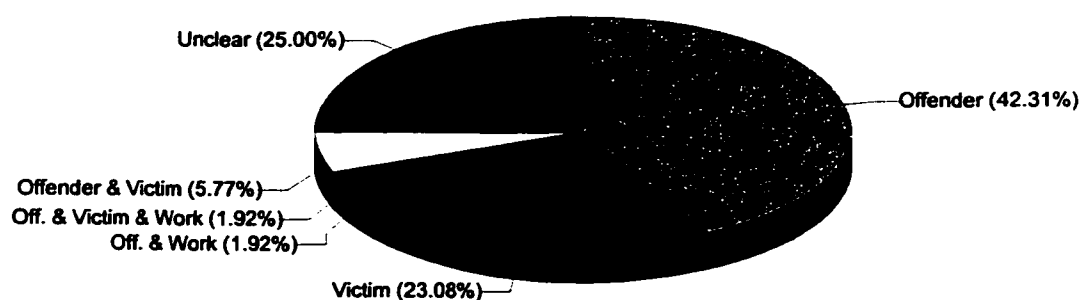
The following section illustrates the various contexts and types of imagery produced about prostitutes and prostitution. This discussion establishes the success of the news media in constructing a homogenous discourse around the industry which, I argue, is achieved through two strategies. The first of these strategies involves the context in which prostitution is discussed. I demonstrate this by organizing the data into five Contextual Frameworks: Legal Framework; Social Policy Framework; Economic Framework; Occupational Framework; and Characteristics of Prostitution and Prostitutes Framework. Organizing news coverage of prostitution by context enables us to see what types of issues or problems are most frequently associated with prostitution. The second of these strategies is evident in how the article portrays the role played by the prostitute or by prostitution in each context, or more specifically the *orientation* that is assigned. Organizing the data by orientation provides more direct access to the messages being communicated by the news media about prostitutes and prostitution.

Figure 1 provides a breakdown of the 52 articles in the sample by orientation⁶. Articles containing references to prostitutes from an offender orientation dominate the sample. In fact, the number of articles communicating only an offender orientation (42%) almost double those including references only to prostitutes as victims (23%). Five

⁶ Thirteen articles in the original sample were unclear in terms of orientation. These articles include references to prostitution that are very brief, or remain strictly narrative with no apparent connotations. Some of these articles contain references to prostitution that clearly perceive it negatively, however, they are not specific enough to fit into my analytic framework and are dropped from further analysis.

articles, (approximately 10%) of the sample include more than one orientation when discussing prostitution. Three of these communicate both an offender and victim orientation, one communicates an offender and work orientation, and another an offender, victim, and work orientation.

Figure 1 - Total articles and their orientation



N=52

This distribution indicates that within each article there is a homogeneity in the representation of prostitutes. When providing an account of each story or topic, the role of the prostitute in each article is predominantly consistent. Not only is the audience not provided with a variety of perspectives across articles, but each article communicates only one perspective. In terms of offering a *work* orientation, only two articles in the entire sample provide references suggesting this perspective. Furthermore, as noted above, both of these articles also contain references to an offender orientation.

Clearly this sample is homogeneous in that it only communicates prostitution as a social problem. The audience is provided with an offender or a victim orientation dramatically more often than the work orientation. Furthermore, when this alternative is present in an article, it is embedded in or accompanied by an offender orientation, a context which weakens the strength of the alternative argument. This reflects the media research available in the Literature Review (Chapter 2), which found the representation of prostitutes as offenders to be significantly more present than one of prostitutes as victims.

Table 1 – Orientation by Framework					
Orientation	Legal Framework	Social Policy Framework	Economic Framework	Occupational Framework	Characteristics Framework
Offender	54.5% ⁷	63.6%	66.7%	0.0%	42.3%
Victim	27.2%	18.2%	33.3%	0.0%	50.0%
Victim & Offender	9.0%	13.6%	0.0%	0.0%	7.7%
Offender & Work	4.5%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%
Victim & Offender & Work	4.5%	4.5%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N*	18	16	8	2	29

* Because some of the articles are coded in more than one framework, N equals 73

Table 1 provides an overview of the five structural frameworks and the different orientations and combinations of orientations communicated within each. The table has been standardized to facilitate a comparison of orientation across the different frameworks. As we can see there is some association between the framework and the

7 Rounded to one decimal place

orientation communicated. For example, in comparison to the Occupational and Characteristics Frameworks, the Legal, Social Policy, and Economic Frameworks are more likely to communicate an offender orientation (55% percent of articles in the Legal Framework, 64% in the Social Policy Framework and 67% in the Economic Framework contain an offender orientation in comparison to 42% of those in the Characteristics Framework and 0% in the Occupational Framework). On the other hand, the articles communicating a victim orientation are more likely to be grounded in a discussion of perceived personal characteristics of prostitutes and characteristics of prostitution (50%) than in any of the other frameworks. It is also a significant distribution as it illustrates that articles contain discourse of prostitutes and prostitution on a personal level, that is in the context of constructing prostitutes as victims through their personal characteristics, or through the general characteristics of prostitution. This is particularly interesting as it supports the claims made by Brock – that prostitute identities are constructed by conflating the individual with (negative) aspects of the industry (Brock, 1998:13). Articles communicating an offender discourse do so through a more evenly distributed variety of contexts (three in fact).

The following sections examine the orientation reflected throughout the various structural contexts. This discussion provides us with insight into how the media succeeds in communicating prostitutes as victims or offenders.

5.2 Legal Framework

Because the act of buying and selling sexual services in Canada is legal, attempts at preventing and controlling prostitution through legal means can only address secondary issues. This involves establishing federal statutes such as section 213, *communicating for the purposes of prostitution* and section 210, *keeping a common bawdy house* (see Appendix A). As I outline in the literature review (Chapter 2), media coverage of prostitution not only associates it with prostitution law, but with various forms of violent and non-violent crime ranging from “nuisance” to robbery, organized crime, and weapon related offences. The association between prostitution and these crimes has already been documented in the news media in the studies conducted by Van Brunshot et. al. (1999) Sacks (1996), King (1990), Gordon (1992), and Lowman (2000).

What is analytically interesting about this association is that much of the prostitution literature critiques the validity of these claims by demonstrating that they are more likely linked to the construction of prostitution as a social problem than to factual data. Popular media does not appear to extend its coverage of prostitution and crime beyond suggesting that they are linked. This claim is made despite a lack of supportive data, inaccurate statistics and factual discrepancies. This is best illustrated in Brock’s account of media coverage of street prostitution in Niagara falls, Ontario. Suggestions circulating among residents and politicians in the community maintained that tourism in the area was being threatened by visible signs of prostitution. Although these claims could not be supported with evidence that it had been affected at all, the media continued to report the alleged problem. In addition, it began associating isolated violent and non-

violent crime with the presence of prostitution, regardless of any actual connection.

These crimes were used to claim that the women working as prostitutes were responsible for the increase in drug, weapon-related, and robbery offences (Brock, 1999:11).

I would like to further examine the ways in which news media constructs this discourse of crime and prostitution. The following sections describe some of the more frequent legal contexts in which prostitution is discussed. What the following data illustrate is that the legal problems associated with prostitution extend far beyond its basic legal status. It appears that prostitution is merged with a number of other independent crimes into one homogeneous social problem.

The Legal Framework can be subdivided into three issues, each relating to a different type of crime: Violent Crime, Non-Violent Crime, and Organized Crime. Table 2 provides an overview of how the orientations of these articles are distributed across these three categories. When examining associations between prostitution and violent crime, I searched for direct and indirect suggestions that prostitutes are, or the presence of prostitution is, accompanied by violence or threat of violence. This includes references to harassment, mugging, assault (sexual and non-sexual), the presence of weapons, as well as references to fear or threatened safety. In total, fifteen articles include an association or direct reference to violent crime. The criteria used when identifying articles for Non-Violent Crime include references to robbery without a weapon, loitering, panhandling, squeegees, spitting and disturbing the peace through yelling and swearing. In total, seven articles contain references to both prostitution and Non-Violent Crime. The criteria used when identifying articles for Organized Crime include references to organized crime,

mafia, and gangs. In total, five articles contain references to prostitution and organized crime.

As can be seen in Table 2, the frameworks involving non-violent and organized crime are more likely to result in an offender orientation than are those grounded in a context of violent crime. Conversely, articles grounded in references to violent crime are more likely to communicate victim orientations than are the other two.

Table 2 - Orientation by Legal Framework			
Orientation	Violent Crime	Non-Violent Crime	Organized Crime
Offender	60.0%	85.7%	80.0%
Victim	26.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Victim & Offender	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Offender & Work	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Victim & Offender & Work	6.7%	14.3%	20.0%
Totals	100%	100%	100%
N*	15	7	5

* Because some of the articles are coded in more than one framework, N equals 27

5.2.i Violent Crime

Articles falling in the Violent Crime framework are distributed throughout four orientations: most communicate an offender orientation (60%), a quarter communicate a victim orientation (27%), and the remainder communicate a mixed orientation (7% in both victim-offender orientation, and victim-offender-work orientation). The types of contexts in which the references are made in this category include general issues of

gambling, poverty, and attempts at controlling crime. Prostitution is mentioned in two articles in the context of Violent Crime associated with gambling:

Prostitution, muggings, drugs, hotel room theft and house break-ins are some of the crimes that places like Atlantic city have seen increase. (#295, The Toronto Star, 06/07/93)

Two articles written about problems with poverty include references to prostitution such as seen in this article on a low-income, children's daycare program:

Some of the 56 children who go to the nursery have limited language skills and behavior problems. They are from low income families and many are subjected almost daily to the sight of drug dealing and prostitution in their neighborhoods. (#518, The Toronto Star, 17/11/94)

Three articles address the need for crime prevention by covering debate on a proposed anti-loitering by-law, and a municipal election in the city of Toronto, Ontario
The following example is taken from an article discussing the by-law as an effort aimed at controlling problems in areas with high levels of crime:

"I have a problem with hookers and drug dealers in my neighborhood" Korwin-Kuczyinski told a heated neighborhoods committee meeting yesterday. "There are people in my ward who feel they can't walk the streets at night." (#731, The Toronto Star, 28/04/94)

In addition to references to violent crime, these articles also contain some references to various forms of non-violent crime (3 articles), and to organized crime (3 articles), and are consequently double-counted. An excellent example of how these themes are connected is found in an article outlining the "hot" issues during a municipal election in Toronto:

Everyone's talking about crime, whether its booze cans, prostitutes, or drugs. York has had some problems with shootings and disturbances at after-hours boozecans. Prostitution, which in some areas goes on in broad daylight, has some residents feeling frustrated. Almost every candidate is pledging to take a hard line on the problems, and many are calling for more police foot patrols in problem spots. (#476, The Toronto Star, 09/10/94)

While an article such as this does not hold prostitutes directly responsible for these other crimes, it establishes that this particular area of the city is affected by all of these problems. Prostitution is one crime among many offences regularly occurring in the York area and is part of a homogenous package of crime being targeted by residents, politicians, and police.

Two articles cite a prostitute as directly responsible for a violent crime. One of these articles features a debate over whether or not a dangerous female offender (and former prostitute) should keep her label. While the article presents arguments from both sides, the author refers to a list of violent and non-violent crimes committed by the offender. What is interesting, however, is that the author only *details* one actual crime committed against another prostitute:

The former prostitute has had 22 convictions since she was 15. Last February she was convicted of robbery after leaving a prostitute nude and stranded in a field during cold weather in May 1991. (#434, The Gazette, 30/11/94)

In this case, prostitutes are represented as both victims of crime and perpetrators. The strength of the article, however, rests on the suggestion that the offender poses a threat to the community. The second article citing a prostitute as directly responsible for violence covers the conviction of a prostitute charged with a number of counts of assault and theft

for “grabbing men’s genitals while an accomplice stole their wallets” (#127, The Gazette, 21/09/93).

None of these articles provide conclusive evidence that prostitutes, by virtue of their occupation, are directly responsible for violent crime. Nor is there evidence that the presence of prostitution is directly responsible for violent crime. Nevertheless, all suggest that violent crime in the community is related to the presence of street prostitution.

Twenty-six percent of the articles associating prostitution with violent crime communicate a victim orientation. All of these articles describe violent crime committed against prostitutes. Half of the articles in this category detail the murder of women the news identify as prostitutes. Two of these particular articles focus on the murder of an identified prostitute, while the third details the murder of a woman who “had no criminal record, was not known to police, and there is no indication she was a prostitute.” (#462, The Toronto Star, 16/11/94). The article continues, however, to detail previous murders of identified prostitutes, which may or may not have been related.

What is not made clear in these articles is whether there is any concrete connection between the fact the women were prostitutes and their murder. While there is the suggestion in one article that police are facing a serial killer, the motive is not indicated. The murder of all of the prostitute and non-prostitute women may be attributed to any number of motives to which other types of women are susceptible. While not all of the women who were assaulted or killed were prostitutes, these articles contain references to violence against prostitutes regardless of any connection to the original

story. What I would like to highlight in this set of articles is the attempt the news media make to connect prostitutes as victims of violent crime to their job as prostitutes. This connection is most clearly illustrated in the following excerpt:

Prostitutes in Canada are murdered more than three times as much as other women who are not in the business. (#616, The Gazette, 19/08/94)

If prostitutes as a group do face a higher risk for murder than non-prostitutes, as the article states, still does not raise the question of *why* there is a connection. For example, are these prostitutes killed while they are working? Or was it the result of domestic violence from a partner? Do these statistics include only women who were currently working as prostitutes, or women who at one time worked as prostitutes?

Half of the articles describe the assault against women who the media identifies as prostitutes. Two articles cite instances of when a prostitute experienced violence on behalf of a client. However, the context in which this is done is somewhat challenging. For example, one article describes the drug problems and unpredictable behaviour of a celebrity who was convicted of assaulting a transvestite prostitute (#183). In terms of orientation of the article, it is not clear if it is condemning the fact that he assaulted a prostitute, or if the fact that he was associated with a prostitute in the first place is being used to undermine his character.

The second article citing violence on behalf of the client outlines the abuses suffered by “comfort women” in Japan during WWII at the hands of clients (#239). This is also a challenging article because the women in the article were forced into prostitution, such as is the case for the woman identified in the third article (#29). This article outlines the abduction and forced prostitution of a teenager. In these two cases

(half of the articles communicating prostitutes as victims of violent crime), the fact that these women were *forced* indicates that their involvement in prostitution constitutes a different type of relationship than of women choosing to engage in prostitution.

5.2.ii *Non-Violent Crime and Organized Crime*

The vast majority of the articles within the Non-Violent Crime and Organized Crime categories communicate an offender orientation. The balance communicate a victim-offender-work orientation (14% and 20% respectively). Only three of the seven articles provide a reference to a specific crime committed by a prostitute, while one article cites “illegal immigration” as a problem directly associated with prostitution (#574, The Gazette, 15/09/94). The rest of the articles are more indirect, and include references to prostitution among other non-violent crimes, such as seen in the following example of an article reviewing a book.

He describes post-Soviet Russia as a world of gang warfare and streetcorner assassinations, of “protection and bribery, prostitution and drug smuggling. (#406, The Toronto Star, 24/12/94)

One particular crime which is cited in five of these Non-Violent crime articles is that of Organized Crime. All of these articles address ways of minimizing crime in a particular region, listing organized crime among the problems. In four of the articles, the

connection between prostitution and organized crime is indirect, and only includes the mention of both as evident in the following example:

And one of the most outspoken casino critics of incoming casinos is former mob overseer of gambling in Chicago... “will next be every pimp, burglar, drifter, car thief, booster, arsonist, counterfeiter, whore, dope dealer, con man, hi-jacker, extortionist and worse.” (#295, Toronto Star, 07/06/93).

While two of the articles make a more direct connection between the presence of prostitution and the presence of organized crime:

Supporters, including many members of parliament, say [the proposed legislation legalizing brothels] would be a way to check prostitutes for AIDS and break the influence of pimps and organized crime. (#574, The Gazette, 15/09/94)

While the presence of prostitution itself is not being held responsible, it appears to go hand in hand with organized crime. This coverage presents prostitution in a way that assures the audience that where you find one of these crimes, you are likely to find the other.

5.3 Social Policy Framework

In terms of providing support or social services, the literature outlines a discourse of protection for women working as prostitutes. From the late 19th century white slavery hysteria to current prostitute prevention and rehabilitation programs, this discourse is couched in terms of protection. However, it is more frequently directed at protecting the prostitute from herself than at protecting her from clients or police or dangerous working conditions. It is also often directed at protecting society from the prostitute’s social problems. In terms of a context of Social Policy in my sample, there was little variety in

the issues that emerged. While I had allowed for discussion of social assistance or psychological development programs, these issues barely had a presence in this sample. The predominant social policy issues which emerged were the transmission of HIV/AIDS and drug use.

Table 3 provides an overview of how the orientations of these articles are distributed across four categories of social policy: STDs, HIV/AIDS, Drugs, Social Services/Assistance, Previous Abuse. In examining references to STDs and HIV/AIDS, I looked for the use of the term sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), as well as specific infections (ie. Gonorrhea, Syphilis, etc.), and HIV and/or AIDS. Six articles include discussion of STD/HIV infection with prostitution. Thirteen articles involve drug use, drug addiction (including use of the term 'junkie') and drug smuggling/dealing. One article discusses the use of social assistance when discussing prostitution, and two articles claim that prostitutes experienced previous abuse, either from family or partners. These last two categories contain such a small number of articles they are not included in this discussion.

Table 3 - Orientation by Social Policy Framework				
Orientation	STDs, HIV/AIDS	Drugs	Social Services/ Assistance	Previous Abuse
Offender	60.0%	61.5%	100%	0.0%
Victim	26.7%	7.7%	0.0%	50.0%
Victim & Offender	6.7%	23.1%	0.0%	50.0%
Offender & Work	0%	0%	0.0%	0.0%
Victim & Offender & Work	6.7%	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%
N*	5	13	1	2

* Because some articles are included in more than one category, N equals 21

The overall orientation communicated by articles in both the categories of STDs, HIV/AIDS (60%) and Drugs (62%) is that of offender (c.f. Table 3). On the other hand, 27% of the STDs, HIV/AIDS category contain a victim orientation compared to only 8% of the Drugs category. In contrast, only 7% of the STDs, HIV/AIDS category contain a victim and offender orientation compared to 23% of articles in the Drugs category.

5.3.i *STDs and HIV/AIDS*

Almost all of the contextualized STDs, HIV/AIDS references take place in an international context. For example, one article discusses proposed legislation legalizing brothels in Italy (#574) while another discusses a conference on HIV/AIDS held in Japan (#630).

Two articles are primarily about HIV/AIDS and mention prostitutes only briefly. While they may receive comparatively little space, the implication can be very clear as seen in one article outlining HIV/AIDS research:

And from Nairobi last year came an astonishing report: 25 prostitutes were HIV-negative despite having sex repeatedly with HIV-infected men who did not use condoms. (#773, The Toronto Star, 06/03/94)

While this particular group of prostitutes are HIV-negative, it is made explicit that they are not using condoms. The impression left to the reader is that prostitutes are involved in HIV transmission because of their irresponsible behavior (not using condoms to prevent transmission). Other types of references, such as the following found in an article about legalizing brothels in Italy, make the connection between prostitution and the transmission of HIV/AIDS even more clear:

Supporters, including many members of parliament, say it would be a way to check prostitutes for AIDS (#574, The Gazette, 15/09/94).

This is a particularly poignant statement because it assures the audience that checking for HIV status is supported by authoritative and representative community figures. The state authorization reinforces the suggestion that prostitutes are a risk for communicating HIV infection and require monitoring and control.

While all of the articles implicate prostitutes as a source of transmission, or rather take an offender orientation, two articles also involve an orientation that outlines the unfortunate circumstances that have led individuals into putting themselves at risk. These articles, however, also address the issue of children working as prostitutes. This raises a difficult issue in terms of how to address this data. Minors are subject to a different set of law and social policy because they are under the age of 18. Activities that are legal for

adults 18 and older (such as prostitution) are illegal when conducted by minors. Due to the difference in their legal and social status, the analysis of minors requires a different approach from one examining adult prostitution. Consequently, although I will not examine the representation of minors in detail, that minors are being represented is important. In this case, the discussion of minors has implications for how adult prostitutes are represented. For example, one article included the following reference:

The report said young girls, who were earning money for their poor families, told aid workers that the soldiers preferred them because they believed children were less likely to be infected with the AIDS virus. (#815, The Gazette, 29/01/94)

This quote is noteworthy because it makes an implicit comparison between children and adults. The suggestion that soldiers can avoid HIV infection by soliciting sexual services from children rather than adults implies that adults, in comparison to children, pose a risk for transmission. Furthermore, articles such as this one absolve children of responsibility for acquiring HIV/AIDS because of their innocence and the exploitation involved. In contrast, adults working as prostitutes (such as the group of prostitutes not using condoms) are responsible for their own infection of HIV/AIDS.

On a more local level, prostitutes are also directly associated with other STDs.

One article discussing the historical demography of Quebec cites the following:

There was no penicillin, and prostitutes were frequently infertile due to venereal disease. (#267, The Gazette, 31/07/93)

While this is referred to in a historical context, it still contributes to contemporary discourse. The association, like prostitution and HIV/AIDS in international contexts, is still being made available to the audience. As we have seen in the literature review,

historical attitudes and practices around other areas of prostitution have continued throughout a number of centuries. Discourse is a product of particular social and historical contexts and can not be isolated.

5.3.ii *Drugs*

Overall, eleven of the articles within the Drugs category take an offender orientation. Seven of these articles include prostitution and drugs, drug use, or drug trade among social problems or crime cited as afflicting a community. For example, changes in China's political structure and influence in the media prompted the following article:

Few Chinese publications have had the courage to criticize the government directly. But some have started to delve into sensitive social issues such as graft, prostitution, drug abuse, homosexuality and unemployment. (#169, The Toronto Star, 05/09/93)

Another example of the indirect association between prostitution and drugs is available in the following article detailing a municipal election in Montreal, QC:

Still, the concerns throughout the arrondissement are largely the same: economic development, with added emphasis in the wards of Hochelaga, Maisonneuve and Pierre-de-Coubertin on growing unemployment, drug crimes and prostitution. (#504, The Gazette, 26/11/94)

Three articles identify prostitutes directly as drug users, similar to the following example found in an article outlining the murder of a prostitute in Toronto, ON:

[Detective] Gibson also did not rule out that she might have been a drug user, who, after overdosing on high-grade heroin, was dumped in the river by companions who did not want to report her death. (#462, The Toronto Star, 16/11/94)

What is also interesting is that two articles in this sample outline the murder of prostitutes. While it is established that the police are treating the deaths as murder, the authors suggest that drugs may be involved.

In contrast, only two articles involve a victim orientation. Both of these articles appear to suggest that drug use is a consequence of an unfortunate lifestyle:

Lau's opening story, "Fresh Girls" introduces us to the drug-soaked massage parlor where twenty something girls are passed over by clients in search of *teenage* bodies. (#99, The Toronto Star, 16/11/93) [italics added]

Rio's street *children*, at risk of AIDS through drug abuse and prostitution, have to beg, steal or sell something just to eat...Their misery, as they lay huddled in blankets at night, was the reality of street life. (#197, The Gazette, 21/08/93) [italics added]

What is interesting in these articles is that they both refer to the use of teenagers and children as prostitutes rather than adults.

5.4 Economic Framework

The third framework is one whereby prostitution is understood in economic terms. Overall, the Economic Framework can be subdivided into two categories: Faltering Economy and Gambling. The first category, Faltering Economy, refers to articles which discuss prostitution in the context of the economic health of an area or region, and local property values. The second category, Gambling, refers to articles which include a reference to prostitution in discussion of the increase in community wealth through gambling, as well as in the context of a proposed casino in Windsor, ON.

As illustrated in Table 4, there are twice as many articles involving issues related to a faltering economy (6 articles in total) than articles discussing gambling (3 articles in

total). Articles containing a Gambling Framework are more likely to communicate an offender orientation than those with a Faltering Economy Framework. Conversely, those with a Faltering Economy Framework are more likely to communicate a victim framework.

Table 4 - Orientation by Economic Framework		
Orientation	Faltering Economy	Gambling
Offender	50.0%	100.0%
Victim	50.0%	0.0%
Victim & Offender	0.0%	0.0%
Offender & Work	0.0%	0.0%
Victim & Offender & Work	0.0%	0.0%
Totals	100%	100%
N*	6	3

N* Because some articles are included in more than one category, N = 9

5.4.i *Faltering Economy*

Half of the Faltering Economy articles communicate an offender orientation, discussing the problems prostitution causes to the economic health of the community and using them as indicators that the local economy is suffering. Prostitution is associated with the economic decline of regions or neighborhoods, and is often in the context of municipal representatives and community groups condemning the problems associated with the industry. These articles refer to prostitution as evidence of a faltering economy, addressing issues such as the decrease in safety of an area experiencing prostitution, or as seen in the following example in Paris, France in the decrease in local property value:

“The area was getting seedier and seedier, and with every turn down market, the residents were leaving...Sex shops and prostitutes are not illegal so we can’t simply throw them out,” [the district council leader] said. “But we hope they will at least move further north.” (#686, The Gazette, 02/06/94)

This is a very reflective quote, acknowledging that when the law can not intervene, other means such as “urban improvement” can be used to address the problem. What is also interesting is that this reflects a “not in my backyard” approach. While local groups are upset by the apparent association between the declining local economy and prostitution, they demonstrate a short term and local solution to their problem. Pushing prostitutes further north only situates the same issues in a different location.

Half of the articles framed by a discussion of a faltering economy communicate a victim orientation by discussing prostitutes as victims of poor local economic health. For example, one article addressed the issue of poverty in Montreal by discussing the presence of panhandlers:

But a lot of these young panhandlers are runaways, with no idea how to get themselves off the street. They live hand-to-mouth, day-to-day. It’s a tough grind to break out of. Maybe your extra coin will keep that young person away from prostitution for one more day. (#759, The Gazette, 20/3/94)

An article such as this suggests that the situation leading to poverty and subsequently prostitution is out of the control of the prostitute. Furthermore, it communicates a sense of responsibility on behalf of the audience. By appealing to readers to contribute to panhandlers the author suggests that the audience can participate in the prevention of prostitution.

5.4.ii *Gambling*

Three articles address prostitution in the context of Gambling, and were written in reaction to a proposal for a government controlled casino in Windsor, ON. Two of these articles condemn the proposal, arguing that casino gambling can not exist without crime:

Apparently, the NDP have decided against all evidence that gambling will be squeaky clean in Windsor... (#281, *The Toronto Star*, 17/07/93).

While two of these articles also contain references to problems with crime (see section 5.1), the third casino article is slightly different. The author agreed that gambling may rightfully be associated with crime and prostitution, adding that “Toronto has always had its share of crime and corruption – soft, fleshy rot that may seem tame compared to American standards, but has always been there for anyone who cared to roll back the rug” (#560, *The Toronto Star*, 24/09/94). The article emphasizes, however, that the problems are not so damaging that they should be used to prevent the establishment of casinos. Ultimately the social and economic benefits of casinos outweigh any associated problems. While this is certainly no plea for the legitimacy of prostitution, it is one step away from charging it as an abominable social problem.

5.5 Occupational Framework

The Occupational Framework examines prostitution as an occupation or in terms of employment. The literature contains considerable discussion of prostitution in terms of occupation, almost entirely from prostitutes and advocates of prostitution. This framework is much different from the first three which I argue primarily construct prostitution as a social problem. The Occupational Framework describes prostitution as a

legitimate form of work. This perspective is argued by sex work advocates such as Brock (1999) and is the mandate of many sex workers' rights organizations⁸. This framework claims that there is insufficient evidence to connect prostitution to many of the social problems traditionally associated with it. Furthermore, as outlined in the literature review, this framework argues that many of the problems directly connected to prostitution are due to the very fact that it *is* problematized. This is an extremely useful framework because it presents us with an alternative to defining prostitution as a social problem. It is also important because it provides an understanding of prostitution as more representative of the needs and experiences of prostitutes. Their voices can be more clearly articulated in this framework. We can also use this framework to moves towards establishing a sense of autonomy and respect around prostitution. Furthermore, it turns the tables and identifies the discourses communicated by the legal, social policy, and economic frameworks as a primary *source* of the problems associated with prostitution.

I had anticipated that there would be little in the way of support for the prostitution as an occupation and this is the case: there are only two articles in my sample that are presented from this framework⁹. Both of these articles contain mixed orientations, one containing an offender orientation, and the other offender-victim

8 Some of the sex work and prostitutes' rights groups that have operated in Canada since 1983 include: Canadian Organization for the Rights of Prostitutes (national organization); Coalition des Travailleurs et Travailleuses de Sexe, Montreal; Parti Populaire des Putes (a political party that ran in the 2000 federal election), Montreal; Stella, Montreal; Maggie's, Toronto; Sex Workers Alliance of Toronto; Sex Workers Alliance of Niagara; Sex Workers Alliance of Halifax; Sex Workers Alliance of Vancouver

9 Because the total number of articles for this framework is only 2, I have not included a table.

orientations. Both articles contain references to prostitution as legitimate work, while the second contains additional references to prostitutes' rights.

The first article outlines current crackdowns on street prostitution in Italy and includes the suggestion, argued by a number of political parties, to legalize brothels as part of a strategy to increase the safety and legitimize the work done by prostitutes. The article is particularly unique in this sample in that it refers to a prostitutes' rights coalition in Italy and its support for a profit-sharing co-operative among prostitutes:

Pia Covre, head of the Committee for the Civil Rights of Prostitutes, favors legalization and proposes a prostitute "co-operative" to share profits. (#574, The Gazette, 15/09/94)

While the rest of the articles in this sample include references to and quotes by current and former prostitutes, community members, politicians, law enforcement, and social service providers, none include a single mention of a prostitutes' rights group. This article is also unique in that it presents more of a variety of positions from government representatives, as is evident in the following quote:

"We hold a strict line against prostitution in the streets, but what a woman does in her home is no one's business" said one of the leaders of the present crackdown.... (#574, The Gazette, 15/09/94)

This article argues that when prostitution is done in her home, it belongs outside the purview of law and government. As seen in the Legal Framework (Table 2), the prevalent attitude communicated about government representatives is a stance against crime, prostitution included. We see then, that this argument supporting a woman's privacy in her home is unique. Despite this refreshing approach, the article also contains reference to a number of other problems, such as the growing number of illegal

immigrants working as prostitutes in Italy, as well as an association with HIV/AIDS transmission. This article appears to communicate many of the same kinds of issues as those more oriented toward prostitution and crime.

The second article describes the murder of a prostitute by a client who refused to pay. The article provides the following quote from the judge responsible for sentencing the man responsible for the murder:

And, the judge said, Labelle's murder is no less shocking because she was a junkie and a prostitute...“If a client is unsatisfied or is unable to pay, he has only to refuse or leave, but to brutally assassinate the person is also repugnant...One doesn't assassinate the butcher because the price of steak is too high.” (#71, The Gazette, 04/11/93)

What makes this quote of interest is that it refers to prostitution in terms that may be used for other forms of employment. Specifically the judge uses the word client when referring to the individual who purchases sexual services. Furthermore, he uses a metaphor which suggests that a prostitute deserves the same respect as a butcher, a fully legal form of employment. The fact that all of this has been quoted from an individual in a powerful legal position also lends more credibility to the suggestion that prostitution is a form of employment rather than a social problem or a crime.

While the legal, social policy, economic, and occupational contexts attempt to identify and rectify tangible problems associated with prostitution, the following two take a more indirect or abstract approach by examining characteristics apparently reflected by prostitution and prostitutes. These contexts are useful because they provide more direct access to the moral or subjective reasoning underlying the legal, social, economic, and occupational contexts.

5.6 Characteristics of Prostitution/Prostitutes

In addition to the four aforementioned contexts, there is a framework delineating a set of alleged characteristics of prostitution. These characteristics consist of subjective understandings of the nature of prostitution, and express judgements regarding the nature of victimization and/or exploitation involved in this line of work. These can be broken down into 8 categories. Four contain a sufficient number of articles for analysis and provide an excellent opportunity to examine the kinds of judgements being made by the media about prostitution and prostitutes.

Degradation and Humiliation: Includes direct use of the words degradation and humiliation, as well as indirect suggestions that prostitution is humiliating.

Exploitation and Vulnerability: includes the actual use of the terms exploitation, victim/victimization, and vulnerable/vulnerability.

Entered by Force/Manipulation: In addition to the use of the words slavery and force, this includes more general references to individuals using techniques of manipulation or seduction to gain sexual services or financial gain from prostitutes.

Lack of Values/Morals: Includes references to questionable values and morals – this may be through detailing behavior which violates cultural norms, such as behavior which may not necessarily be directly violent or criminal but clearly beyond acceptable boundaries of respect.

Three categories do not contain enough articles for an adequate analysis. Consequently I will not expand on their content.

Desire to Leave Prostitution: Includes suggestions or quotes indicating that the prostitute(s) have a desire to leave the profession. This category contains only three articles, all of which are discussed in other categories.

Slang: Includes popular negatively used words used to describe prostitutes, such as whore, slut, and tramp. Only two articles use this language, both of which are discussed in other categories.

Freedom and Autonomy: Includes references to prostitutes as having, or prostitution as employment providing freedom and/or a sense of autonomy.

The last category is that of Minors and include articles discussing the use of children or teenagers as prostitutes. As discussed in section 5.3.i, examining the role of minors requires a different type of analysis which does not fit into my research question.

The first striking element in the Table 3 is that in comparison to the others, the Lack of Values and Morals, and Slang frameworks are more likely to communicate an offender orientation. The second element that stands out is that the Exploitation/Vulnerability, Entered by Force, and Minors categories are more likely than the others to communicate a victim orientation. The Degradation/Humiliation and Desire to Leave category are more likely than the others to communicate a mixed victim-offender orientation.

Orientation	Deg./ Humil..	Exploit/ Vuin.	Entered by Force	Lack of Values/ Morals	Desire to Leave Prost.	Slang	Freedom/ Autonomy	Minors
Offender	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Victim	66.7%	85.7%	83.3%	0.0%	67.3%	0.0%	0.0%	88.9%
Victim and Offender	33.3%	14.3%	16.7%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%
Offender & Work	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Victim & Offender & Work	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	0.0%	100%
N*	3	7	6	14	3	2	0	9

* Because some articles are included in more than one category, N = 44

5.6.i Degradation/Humiliation

Only three articles make the claim that prostitution is degradation. While this is a relatively small number of articles, the tone and language are particularly strong. The following is an editorial criticizing Canada’s Justice Minister Alan Rock’s attempts at prostitution control:

...what depth of degradation, humiliation, and abuse would they endure to become a street prostitute. I can only imagine that one would have to reach a pathetic state to become a street prostitute... (#546, The Gazette, 30/09/94)

This is an ironic passage because the rest of the article is a call for more humane treatment of women working as prostitutes. The author is attempting to articulate that prostitutes are a vulnerable group susceptible to lawmakers oblivious to their experiences. Yet he himself is making a judgement about their experiences – that their lives are degrading, humiliating, and pathetic.

Another example claiming that prostitution is degrading is in the following excerpt of one woman's experience as a "comfort woman" in Japan in WWII:

**...the soldiers "didn't even say hello," Hwand recalled. "We were treated as less than dogs. They were in a hurry so they'd just do it and leave."
...Her mother insisted she get married... "I couldn't, I felt so ashamed."
(#239, The Gazette, 08/08/93)**

From her own voice, this woman communicates the degradation and humiliation she felt, to the extent that it drastically affected her life. In examining this article, we also run into the problem that this woman's experience was a forced form of prostitution or more appropriately, slavery, and not a choice of profession. The language used in the article involves use of the term prostitute, and subsequently this association is still available to the reader.

Another example of how the news communicates prostitution as degradation is through the following example from a book review. Evelyn Lau, a Canadian novelist famous for her biographical account of her life as a run-away teen prostitute, produced a second novel containing a number of fiction stories narrated by prostitutes and escorts. The following is an excerpt from a review of her novel:

The cockatiel [a client's pet present in the room where a prostitute provided a service] may be the only creature to escape with any dignity in Evelyn Lau's disturbing, sometimes brilliant fiction debut. (#99, The Toronto Star, 16/10/93)

Again, this is a clear reference to prostitutes lacking in dignity. Overall these articles communicate a victim orientation, as well as a sense of sympathy for the women experiencing this degradation.

5.6.ii *Exploitation/Vulnerability and Entered Prostitution by Force*

Seven articles associate prostitution with Exploitation/Vulnerability and six associate prostitution with Entered Prostitution by Force. These two categories are discussed together for two reasons. The primary reason is because five articles are cited in both categories. Clearly there is a relationship in that these contexts occur together in articles. The second reason is because they have similar distributions throughout the orientations. Both categories communicate a victim orientation (86% for Exploitation/Vulnerability, and 83% for Entered Prostitution by Force). Similarly, the balance of both categories communicate a victim-offender orientation (14% for Exploitation/Vulnerability, and 17% for Entered Prostitution by Force).

The following example is taken from an article interviewing a social worker. She explains how young teenagers enter into prostitution through the control of a pimp, emphasising that the histories of abuse and familial problems experienced by these teens make them easily exploited:

“When an older man comes along and showers them with affection, baubles and beads, and offers to pay them for things they’re already doing - they’re easy marks.” (#616, *The Gazette*, 19/08/94)

This is an example of how prostitutes are lured into the profession through manipulation. Another example of how the media communicates that this practice is

done can be seen in the following article addressing the issue of African women immigrating to Italy:

...the private Catholic group claims that more than half the Africans in Italy are under the age of 30. Lured by false promises of secure work they end up as prostitutes on the streets, or more usually along country roads. "This new slavery" the group said, "is morally unacceptable". (#717, The Gazette, 15/05/94)

This second quote introduces an important relationship I observed in articles associating prostitution with exploitation. Four of the articles extended this association to include references to individuals (women and children) forced into prostitution, consequently they are also identified as Entered into Prostitution by Force. These articles focus on international issues including the Japanese military forcing women into sexual slavery as comfort women during WWII, children in the Asian sex tourism industry, as well as the abduction of a Halifax teenager. Again we see in the victim orientation the conflation of prostitution and abuse or forced entry. The individuals cited in these articles did not make the choice to enter into prostitution. In addition, two-thirds of the articles focus their exploitation discourse on children and teenagers.

The additional articles are of a somewhat different nature, although this discourse calling for the protection of community order, yet adds a different dimension. These articles have a less clear but underlying association between prostitution and inappropriate or a lack of values and/or morals.

5.6.iii *Lack of Values and Morals*

Fourteen articles discuss prostitution in a context that highlights questionable values and morals. All provoke and offender orientation. One example of this is an article outlining efforts by a woman in Alberta asking to be stripped of her “dangerous offender” label. The article outlines the number of violent and non-violent crimes for which she has been convicted, including prostitution. It also details an incident where this woman left another prostitute naked and stranded in a field. This incident certainly strays from the usual patterns of crime such as drug dealing and robbery, and suggests there is something more at work.

This also includes references suggesting that prostitution is threatening community order. Some of the examples cited in these articles point out that families have had to move because of the presence of prostitution (among other problems), and community members have been assaulted and/or feel threatened by increasing numbers of drug-users and gangs. The following quote was made by a supporter of a rejected anti-loitering law in Toronto:

The [proposed anti-loitering] law was needed to crackdown on violent street crime, gangs and prostitution, problems that plague both the councillors’ wards...“I don’t want the streets to be taken over by drug addicts. All we’re trying to do is bring a little law and order to the streets. It’s time we woke up and tried to take back our streets.” (#704, The Toronto Star, 31/05/94)

This example suggests that the problems faced in the community are so bad that community members are losing their community. This is also communicated in other types of articles. For example, while summarizing the candidates and issues on the table during a Toronto municipal election, the author of the following article suggests that the

goal of any government representative should be “...quality of life, a clean environment, more jobs, less prostitution, and fewer drug crimes...”.

The theme of threatening community order also includes references to prostitution threatening families in the community. For example, prostitution is also named among several community problems which threaten the safety of the children who attend a low-income Toronto neighbourhood daycare:

It’s a place where, for 2 ½ hours a day, young children from inner city housing projects can escape the deluge of crime, drug addiction and prostitution and just be kids. (#518, The Toronto Star, 17/10/94)

One type of judgement about the character or personae of prostitutes that is made clear in two articles is around the concept of being “cheap”. What is particularly interesting is that these references have nothing to do with prostitution, but use prostitution as a negative metaphor or descriptor. One article commenting on trends in runway fashion said the following:

But after struggling so hard to be taken seriously in our work, do women really want to emulate models who are styled to look like cheap hookers in heavy eye-make-up and stilettos? (#588, The Toronto Star, 08/09/94)

Similarly an article on the royal family cited Princess Diana’s famous quote “I’m the world’s biggest prostitute” in the context of her unhappy marriage, detailing the years of psychological and emotional trauma it has caused her (#448, The Toronto Star, 20/11/94). These articles are important because they illustrate that this discourse is not only present in news discourse, but part of social discourse as well. This example does not allow us to comment on a specific relationship between the influence of news reporting on social discourse, it does, however, illustrate that it is present among different levels of social

communication. Other evidence which undermines the character of prostitutes is found in an article outlining an assault and theft by a prostitute:

Parks, who faces two counts of sexual assault, one count of assault, one count of conspiracy to commit theft, breach of bail conditions and communicating for the purpose of prostitution, was ordered to report to police once a week, stay out of the area bordered by Sherbrooke St., Rene Levesque Blvd., St. Urbain and Papineau Sts., and remain at home between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m. (#127, The Gazette, 21/09/93)

Other moral judgements are made through a larger context, describing a “sleazy corner of central Paris” occupied by sex shops and “kerb-krawlers ogling the prostitutes in the doorways” (#686, The Gazette, 02/06/94).

Chapter 6 – Concluding Discussion

Prostitution in the news media

The offender discourse dominates the news media in this sample. While it is true that both offender and victim discourses are being communicated, close examination illustrates that prostitution is identified as much more harmful to the community than it is harmful to the women and men working in it. The media achieves this through a number of strategies:

Prostitute as Offender

The media make some interesting distinctions between prostitution as a phenomenon and the prostitute as an individual. While this can be applied to both the offender and victim orientation, it is most prominent in articles communicating an offender discourse. By identifying prostitution as a phenomenon separate from the community, the media reinforces the illusion that the community exists in a state of social order. It promotes the idea that prostitution is an independent, self-perpetuating industry that exists outside of the community. Consequently, the community is able to respond to this homogeneous social problem by developing legal and policy strategies to eliminate it. Furthermore, it emphasises the division between the “good” community and “bad” prostitute, rather than acknowledging the fact that all members of the industry – prostitutes as producers and clients as consumers – are members originating in the community. At the same time, prostitutes as individuals are also represented as a threat to the social or organizational stability of communities. This is most frequently done by attacking the prostitute as an individual, and identifying the individual character as

responsible. This is achieved through some of the moral judgements made about the nature of prostitution and the character of prostitutes. Embodying characteristics such as “cheap” and frequenting areas of the city that are “sleazy” separates prostitutes from “normal” women of the community embodying more acceptable characteristics.

Prostitute as Victim

While it is clear that prostitutes are being unfairly targeted as offenders of a variety of problems in the community, the victim orientation also targets prostitutes as victims of many of these same problems. Underlying this discourse, however, is a number of more complex issues. For example, the victim orientation promotes a *discourse of sympathy*. By outlining the poverty, hardship and suffering experienced by individuals working as prostitutes, this discourse draws on the emotions of the audience. In some cases, it goes so far as to create a sense of community responsibility for the poverty and violence being experienced. These articles detail the coercion, abuse and discrimination experienced by many individuals working on the streets. These issues are a reality in street prostitution. A victim orientation can be a useful discourse through drawing attention to the fact that violence and poverty exists among street prostitutes. By acknowledging this reality this discourse can lead to public sensitization and even changes in social and legal policy. This victim discourse as it is communicated in this sample, however, is not so constructive. In fact, it puts prostitutes at a further disadvantage. Throughout this sample we see that the conflation of abuse with prostitution serves to categorize abuse victims into prostitutes and non-prostitutes. The violence being experienced in these articles is connected to the fact that they are

prostitutes. Because they are prostitutes, they are at risk of violence. This connection implies that these are hazards of the job and that prostitutes are a risk group in need of protection. Abuse should be identified as such and addressed independently of prostitution.

This victim discourse constructing prostitutes as 'other' is also a dangerous argument affecting all women. This argument identifies a list of problems, either through violence and poverty or through stigmas attached to women's sexuality, and marginalizes them with prostitutes. By associating these issues to one group of women the structural factors responsible for them are ignored. Not only does this affect prostitutes, but this affects all women.

Reporting Strategies

In addition to an analysis of the victim and offender orientations themselves, I would also like to provide an analysis of some of the reporting strategies I identified throughout the sample. The most striking of which is the tendency to *conflate issues*, first raised in discussion of prostitute as victim of violent crime. While prostitution, crime, and social dysfunction are not mutually exclusive, they are analytically separate categories. The news media constructs coverage of these phenomena in a way that merges them into one homogenous social problem afflicting communities. One of the ways this is achieved is through representing prostitutes as a threat to community safety. Throughout this sample, prostitutes are associated with various forms of crime and drug use, threatening the safety of the community. The community fails to address the underlying social order responsible for each of these phenomenon. The audience is not

provided with evidence of structures governing the economic opportunities available to women, as well as the conditions under which individuals choose to commit crime or become involved as drug users or traffickers.

The process of conflating issues is also illustrated in the representation of prostitutes as a source of HIV transmission. Through interviews with community members and government representatives, the media constructs a discourse whereby the safety of community members are threatened. This is a particularly dangerous discourse because it implies that HIV is only a problem for people who are promiscuous. It establishes a link between HIV and sex as a social act rather than with unprotected intercourse. By associating sex as a social act with disease, prostitutes, by virtue of the occupation as providers of sexual services, becomes associated with disease.

Another strategy that emerged is *selective reporting* whereby the story contains incomplete information. This is particularly evident in the prostitute as victim of violent crime discourse. For example, the suggestion that abuse, coercion, and poverty exists among non-prostitutes as well as prostitutes is a valid claim. By not including any comparative data the media is able to maintain the illusion that these are problems affecting only one group of women. This is part of the discourse reinforcing prostitutes as 'other', a category that is somehow different from 'normal' women. A second way this is achieved is through the illusion of a 'natural order'. The media succeeds in suggesting and reinforcing the idea that prostitutes consist of a category of women who are vulnerable, degraded and humiliated, yet fails to make any attempt at identifying the factors or systems responsible for these consequences. By maintaining a one-dimensional

approach to these issues, the media maintains the illusion that these are unfortunate but natural consequences of the social order.

All of these stereotypes effectively promote the ideology that prostitution is problematic. The presence of this ideology in this sample is so strong that the prostitution-as-work ideology is virtually non-existent. The very few occasions where this ideology is present, it is found in a context with victim and orientation discourses. By placing it alongside contradictory perspectives, this perspective is discredited. Consequently, prostitutes are not being given a forum in which they may challenge this ideology and promote themselves as subjective, autonomous, and functional members of the community.

Contributions and Future Directions

I view this research as one piece of a larger puzzle. In terms of academic contributions, I would like to put forth my analysis as part of a number of discussions; media analysis, sex and sexuality, and feminist theory. This project examines how the news media communicates a limited worldview or set of ideologies, and how the voices of marginalised groups continue to be marginalised by those limitations. This project also addresses the relationship between sex and law, and is a interesting way of contributing to the increasing body of research around the social construction of sexuality. Finally, this work is successful in contributing to the growing set of feminist perspectives challenging some of the traditional areas of feminist theory. This is a personally important contribution, and by challenging traditional or popular theoretical

frameworks within feminism, I feel it fosters a healthy dynamism and growth in building a better understanding of the structures governing the lives of women.

Politically, I make this research available to sex work advocates and activists as a tool for identifying sites towards which they may direct social change. This project addresses a number of issues, providing insight into how the production and communication of knowledge around prostitution in the media serves to legitimise one system of knowledge while marginalizing and delegitimising another. The implications of having a prostitution defined and legitimised as a social problem are serious. It is this system of knowledge that will be used to justify courses of action. This may be through individual decision making on behalf of police faced with making an arrest and judges hearing a case, or through the development of law and social policy by politicians and community groups faced with prostitution in their communities.

While this particular research project was unable to examine what messages have the most positive and negative impact on individuals, it identifies the messages which are being communicated as well as offering ways they may be read by the audience. This research is essential in developing educational programs sensitizing communities to the variety of issues and perspectives involved in street prostitution. By understanding the messages that are being communicated in the news media, the stereotypes and myths that are potentially being received by the audience (community residents, businesses, social services, political and legal figures) can be identified. In addition, by identifying the media as a source of those stereotypes and myths, it can be targeted for its inaccurate portrayal of prostitution.

My own reflections on this project involve a number of sentiments. I am left feeling frustrated at what I have read in these news articles. I am angry at the lack of respect many of these reporters and editors have demonstrated through editorial commentary, patronizing and sometimes abusive language, and a general insensitive approach to the issues at hand. While some of this is intentional or a subconscious reflection of assumptions and stereotypes, some of this is also due to poor research and reporting habits. I am even more surprised that so many of these articles were considered newsworthy and fit to print. That being said, my journey as a scholar and as a woman has allowed me to identify my own assumptions and develop my understanding of feminist theory and the feminist social movement.

Appendix A
Sections pertaining to prostitution in the Canadian Criminal Code

Bawdy-houses

210. (1) Everyone who keeps a common bawdy-house is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years.

(2) Everyone who

(a) is an inmate of a common bawdy-house,

(b) is found, without lawful excuse, in a common bawdy-house, or

(c) as owner, landlord, lessor, tenant, occupier, agent or otherwise having a charge or control of any place, knowingly permits the place or any part thereof to be let or used for the purposes of a common bawdy-house, is guilty of an offence punishable on a summary conviction

211. Everyone who knowingly takes, transports, directs, or offers to take, transport or direct any other person to a common bawdy-house is guilty of an offence punishable on summary conviction.

Procuring

212. (1) Every one who

(a) procures, attempts to procure or solicits a person to have illicit sexual intercourse with another person, whether in or out of Canada,

(b) inveigles or entices a person who is not a prostitute to a common bawdy-house for the purpose of illicit sexual intercourse or prostitution,

(c) knowingly conceals a person in a common bawdy house,

(d) procures or attempts to procure a person to become, whether in or out of Canada, a prostitute,

(e) procures or attempts to procure a person to leave the usual place of abode of the person in Canada, if that place is not a common bawdy-house, with intent that the person may become an inmate or frequenter of a common bawdy-house, whether in or out of Canada,

(f) on the arrival of a person in Canada, directs or causes that person to be directed to take or causes that person to be taken, to a common bawdy-house,

(g) procures a person to enter or leave Canada, for the purpose of prostitution,

(h) for the purposes of gain, exercises control, direction or influence over the movements of a person in such a manner as to show that he is aiding, abetting or compelling that person to engage in or carry on prostitution with any person or generally,

- (i) applies or administers to a person or causes that person to take any drug, intoxicating liquor, matter or thing with intent to stupefy or overpower that person in order thereby to enable any person to have illicit sexual intercourse with that person, or**
- (j) lives wholly or in part on the avails of prostitution of another person, is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding ten years.**

Offence in Relation to Prostitution

213. (1) Every person who in a public place or in any place open to public view

- (a) stops or attempts to stop any motor vehicle,**
- (b) impedes the free flow of pedestrian or vehicular traffic or ingress to or egress from premises adjacent to that place, or**
- (c) stops or attempts to stop any person or in any manner communicates or attempts to communicate with any person**

for the purpose of engaging in prostitution or of obtaining the sexual services of a prostitute is guilty of an offence punishable on summary conviction.

Appendix B
Measurement Tool for Coding

Legal Framework

1. Offenders of non-violent crime
2. Victims of non-violent crime
3. Offenders of violent crime
4. Victims of violent crime
5. Organized crime
6. Unspecified/General crime

Social Policy Framework

1. Victims of STDs/HIV
2. Source of transmission of STDs/HIV
3. Social Service or Assistance programs
4. Previous abuse (not-related to prostitution)
5. Drugs

Economic framework

1. Evidence of a faltering economy
2. Victims of a faltering economy
3. Low property value
4. Gambling

Occupational Framework

1. Legitimate work
2. Prostitutes' rights
3. Legal employment

Characteristics of Prostitution

1. Degradation/Humiliation
2. Exploitation/Vulnerability
3. Freedom/Autonomy
4. Entered by force
5. Threat to community order
6. Desire to leave prostitution
7. Lack of values and/or morals (cheap, threat to families, not to be trusted)
8. Lack of respect for the community

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