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**'CATCHING LIGHTNING IN A BOTTLE'; AN
ETHNOGRAPHIC EXPLORATION OF A SUPPORT
SERVICE FOR SEX WORKERS**

BETHAN TAYLOR

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy

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Abstract

Though there is a growing body of literature focused on specialist sex work support, which suggests a move toward a more holistic approach, there is a paucity of research exploring the microprocesses of such support, which illuminate the complexity and variation that exist within it. Killet et al. (2016) argue for the importance of understanding the culture of a setting in order to explore its complexity. The overarching aim of this research is therefore:

To explore the lived culture of a support service for sex workers

This thesis is the result of an ethnographic research project, underpinned by a broadly critical realist framework, which sought to address this aim through carrying out participant observations, interviews, and document analysis in a sex work support service in the North of England. Using a broadly thematic approach to analysis, data collected in the form of field-notes and interview transcripts was grouped into two key themes, which demonstrate the importance of issues of power, role and relationship within the service.

The findings of this research demonstrate how the culture of the service studied is one of ambiguity and tension, where underlying ideology and the practices of support are sometimes contradictory. As a result, this thesis provides support for the significance of underlying ideology for ensuring clarity around programmatic goals, the practices needed to achieve these goals, and the roles of service-providers and service-users. The findings of this research also provide support for an expanded conceptualisation of a holistic approach, which addresses the multiple needs of sex workers, but also supports them as whole people, by acknowledging their multifaceted and complex identities.

Though it may not be possible to generalise the findings of this thesis, the issues raised may have significant implications for the policy and practices of sex work support services.

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Introduction

The material presented in this thesis documents an ethnographic study focusing on specialist sex work support, which took place over eighteen months in a drop-in centre for sex working women in the UK, in which I carried out the role of volunteer as well as researcher.

During my time as an undergraduate studying Psychology with Counselling, I attended a local church who ran a number of 'outreach ministries'. After attending the church for a few months, I became aware that one of these 'ministries' involved a team going out on a bus and parking up in the local area where there is street sex work, in order to provide an outreach service for the street sex-workers. A few weeks later I joined the team on a battered old bus driven by a kind older man with questionable driving skills, and tried to help where I could while they provided the women who came aboard with food and drink, conversation and advice, and offers of prayer. Over the next year I spoke to many volunteers and some members of staff from different sex work projects, and I was often surprised by the variation in what they did and how they did it. I read a number of books written by sex workers during this time, and tried to find journal articles that explored this complex setting in detail. Though I came across lots of interesting articles, there were few that explored sex work support in a way that reflected the humanity, messiness, challenges and complexities that I experienced during my time as a volunteer. As a result, when I was offered a PhD towards the end of my degree, I already knew what the focus would be. This research therefore started out with the aim of exploring sex work support. After spending a significant amount of time familiarising myself with more of the literature around this topic, this aim was refined and became:

To explore the lived culture of a support service for sex workers

As a result of the time I spent volunteering in the outreach service, when I began researching a sex work project for this thesis, I initially felt like somewhat of an insider. Though I had been a member of an outreach team, and my research in this service focused on their drop-in, I had shared experiences with the service-providers and felt I understood some of their frustrations with providing support, and the meaning they found in their roles. On the other hand, however, I am not currently nor have I ever been a sex worker. As a result of this, though I could be considered somewhat of an insider in relation to service-providers, I was more of an outsider when it came to service-users. The lack of shared experiences in relation to sex work meant that I approached this research as both an insider and an outsider, as both someone who understood the context under study, and someone who was learning it for the first time. While this was a strange position to start from, I feel it strengthened this research. Feeling like an outsider meant I attended to more information that might be considered taken-for-granted, but feeling like an insider afforded me certain insights that I may not otherwise have had. I do, however, recognise that my prior knowledge of sex work support, gained from my time volunteering, the conversations I had with other service-providers, and the materials I had read, is something that I bring with me to this research, and therefore something that may have influenced the decisions made and the analysis carried out.

In order to strengthen this research and provide clarification, Agustin (2005a) argues for the importance of defining key terms within sex work research. Dewey and Zheng (2013, p.85) provide a definition of sex work as 'the exchange of sexual or sexualised intimacy for money or something of value'. While the term 'sexualised intimacy' may be open to a level of interpretation, Dewey and Zheng's definition was still determined to be comprehensive enough to provide a working definition for this thesis. As an extension of their definition, this research defines a sex worker as someone who provides 'sexual or sexualised intimacy for money or something of value'. This research also recognises the distinct nature of the indoor and outdoor sex markets (see Sanders, 2005), where indoor sex work includes multiple women selling sex from the same establishment (brothels and saunas); escorting, which may involve working for an agency or independently; and independent working,

which may be done from home, and outdoor sex work refers to the street market. As the focus of this research is on specialist sex work support, it also seems important to provide a working definition of this term, therefore, this research defines specialist sex work support as any organisation offering support only to this client group. Whilst there are numerous organisations/services whose service-users may include sex workers, such as drugs services where some clients may also be sex workers, specialist sex work support refers specifically to services only offering support to those with experience of sex working (whether past or present). Often these organisations have a building in which drop-in sessions take place, and other such on-site provision. They may also have teams who deliver service provision on the street (also known as outreach), or in sex-selling establishments. According to Oselin and Weitzer (2013), they are designed to address that which governing bodies have largely failed to provide; resources and services for sex workers. It is important to point out that sex work support services are distinct from anti-trafficking organisations who seek to offer support to those who have been victims of trafficking. However, it is the case that specialist sex work support can and does provide support for those in the sex industry who have experienced trafficking to some extent; as was the case in the support service in which my research took place.

This thesis is divided into seven chapters, and begins by contextualising this research through exploring what is already known about specialist sex work support from the existing literature. Chapter one discusses the dominant perspectives of sex work and the resulting positionings on some of the key debates around it, which influence the ways in which support is approached and carried out. Chapter two then takes a deeper look at literature on specialist sex work support, including discussion of why such support exists, and considers how the variation in such support has been categorised within the literature. A rationale is then presented for this research, which outlines its significance, and the gaps in the literature it is designed to address. Chapter three discusses the decisions made in relation to method and methodology, and the decision to take a broadly critical realist approach to this thesis. It explores the ethnographic methods carried out, including participant observation, semi-structured interviews and document analysis, and the related

ethical issues and issues of reflexivity. It also considers the decision to take a largely thematic approach to analysis, and the measures taken in order to address the issue of 'maintaining the whole'. Chapter four is the first of three findings chapters, and takes a more descriptive approach to analysis in order to contextualise the support service under study, which I have referred to throughout as 'Women's Zone'. This chapter presents two constructed narratives of typical drop-in sessions and uses these narratives to draw out elements of significance for analysis. Chapters five and six then outline the two analytic themes constructed from the data and discuss the findings, with reference to relevant theory and literature. Chapter seven concludes the thesis by taking a more overarching look at the findings of this study, highlighting the original contribution to knowledge, and discussing the implications of these findings for policy and practice . Following this, the chapter looks back on the research process, and reflects upon some of the key decisions made and their consequences.

Chapter One – Sex work literature

Introduction

In order to put this thesis in context, it is necessary to conduct a review of the existing literature on sex work and sex work support services. Therefore the former will be discussed in this chapter, with the latter discussed in the following chapter. The literature discussed has been chosen for the way in which it illuminates the wider debates around sex work, and the context in which it takes place in the UK today, or for its specific relevance to this thesis.

This chapter will begin by discussing the dominant perspectives on sex work, drawing heavily on the work of Ronald Weitzer (2009). The choice to structure this chapter around the three paradigms of sex work put forward by Weitzer (2009) was made due to the way in which these paradigms have been directly applied to research on specialist sex work support (see Oselin and Weitzer, 2013). It was therefore felt that Weitzer's (2009) work was of particular relevance to this thesis. The chapter will then consider some of the key debates around sex work and the relevance of the Weitzer's (2009) paradigms. The debates considered focus on the question of 'what is wrong with sex work?' (Overall, 1992), which will include discussion around the perceived morality of sex work, its impact on sex and female sexuality, and how it relates to issues of gender and of agency and choice; and the policing of sex work, which will consider debates around sex work law.

1.1 Perspectives on sex work, then and now

When it comes to the varying perspectives on sex work, even a brief reading of the relevant literature would be enough to convince the reader that this issue is both a significant and a contentious one. Sex work researchers and theorists have acknowledged this topic to be

one of conflict, divergence (Overall, 1992), and 'heated debate' (Gerassi, 2015), which elicits varying responses often felt and presented very strongly. Understanding these perspectives is fundamental to understanding the climate in which sex work support takes place, as it is from within these perspectives that policy on sex work is created and enforced, and support is delivered.

Historically, both the most well-known and influential perspective on sex work, or 'prostitution', has been the perspective of it as morally wrong (Hubbard, 1998). The dominance of such a view is argued to stem from wide-spread historic gender prejudices against women earning money, and more significantly from the popularity of conservative Christian values based on general anxiety about the body, and in particular, the female body (Nussbaum, 1999). The fact that a generalised sense of moral concern around the impact of sex work on society still remains heavily influential within the UK, both in terms of media portrayals (see Bindel, 2017b) and policy debates (Kantola & Squires, 2004), can be looked to as the reason for the stigma that still exists around sex work, and the existence of laws which criminalise practices around it. Following decades of this perspective being the only one heard, prostitutes' rights movements began in the UK, and with them came the introduction of a conflicting perspective on sex work (West, 2000). In fact, until this point, the label 'sex work' had not yet been advocated for as an alternative to the stigma-laden 'prostitute'. At this time, sex workers and their allies began forming collectives which sought to challenge the anti-prostitution discourse and replace it with a sex worker rights discourse, which acknowledged sex work as a legitimate form of work and attempted to influence the laws affecting it. Due to the pervading nature of the anti-sex work perspective, the role of such collectives is observed to remain controversial to this day (West, 2000), particularly in countries such as the UK, which has long adhered to a morality discourse around sex work (Kantola & Squires, 2004; West, 2000). Despite this, collectives and other groups attempting to challenge anti-sex work perspectives have had varying levels of influence over discourse and policy around sex work, influencing the removal of imprisonment for soliciting in 1982 (West, 2000).

In 2009, the sociologist Ronald Weitzer acknowledged the complexities around these dominant perspectives on sex work and put forward three theories or 'paradigms' which he argued to incorporate the various perspectives and positionings (Weitzer, 2009). In presenting these theories, Weitzer argued the position taken on sex work to be intrinsically related to the position on policing, and he has since argued for the significant influence of the perspective on sex work over the approach to support for this client group (see Oselin & Weitzer, 2013). The latter relationship will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter, however the type of support associated with each paradigm will be briefly considered within the discussion of each paradigm in the following sub-sections.

The following sections will discuss the core principles of each of Weitzer's (2009) three paradigms, including their position on sex work, the language and discourse produced and reproduced, and their approach to support for this client group. The descriptions of each paradigm have been predominantly informed by Weitzer's (2009) original writings, however, supporting literature has also been included where relevant.

1.1.1 The Oppression Paradigm

The oppression paradigm is described by Weitzer (2009) as the anti-sex work paradigm in its position on sex work as inherently oppressive. This paradigm views sex work as a 'quintessential expression of patriarchal gender relations' (Weitzer, 2009) which is both a product of, and inextricably tied up with, capitalist, patriarchal society (Overall, 1992). According to Weitzer (2009) the oppression paradigm is grounded in radical feminism, and therefore differs from the more traditional immorality approach already discussed. Interestingly, although he acknowledges there to be a particular position taken up by those who view morality through a more traditional lens, Weitzer does not go on to clarify this position in a fourth paradigm. This possible limitation of his work will be explored in more detail following discussion of the three paradigms which he does put forward.

In his discussion of the oppression paradigm, Weitzer (2009) argues the radical feminist interest in sex work to be due to 'prostitution' mainly concerning women selling sex to men in unequal relationships of power (Outshoorn, 2004). In fact, issues around power and agency are key to this paradigm, with the most prominent exponents arguing that 'exploitation, subjugation and violence against women are intrinsic to and ineradicable from sex work' (Weitzer, 2009, p.214). In short, the oppression paradigm holds that sex work is just that, oppressive.

As is demonstrated in the previous quote, the language used by this paradigm has been referred to as 'dramatic' by theorists who argue that its supporters tend to refer only to the worst stories of prostitution, generalising anecdotal data and ignoring counter-evidence (Weitzer, 2009). Exponents of the oppression paradigm are more likely to refer to 'prostitution' and 'prostituted women' than to 'sex work' and 'sex workers', highlighting their lack of support for the idea that selling sex is a legitimate form of labour and indicating the lack of agency they attribute to those involved; 'prostituted' indicates something done to a person, not something chosen by the person (Weitzer, 2009). The perspective on sex work as tied up with a patriarchal society that oppresses women is reflected in the discourses produced by the oppression paradigm, which label sex workers as 'victims' (Majic, 2014) and those purchasing their services as 'woman haters' (Farley, 2004, p.1101).

As a result of this perspective, radical feminists, and other supporters of the oppression paradigm, tend to advocate for abolitionism, the movement to eliminate the sex trade through criminalising third parties, such as those who purchase sex (Outshoorn, 2004). This approach to policing sex work has already been put into practice in some Nordic countries (among others), thus it is often known as the 'Nordic Model' (Chu & Glass, 2013). Since abolitionists view sex work as 'bad' because of the way it oppresses women, this approach enables them to work towards the end goal of banning the sex trade, without criminalising sex workers, whom they view as victims.

According to Oselin and Weitzer (2013) support services operating from within the oppression paradigm are most likely to be focused on providing alternatives to sex work, and supporting women to exit (Majic, 2014), a practice which is oft-critiqued by opponents of this paradigm who have labelled it the 'rescue industry' (Agustin, 2007).

1.1.2 The Empowerment Paradigm

As is suggested by its title, the empowerment paradigm is diametrically opposed to the oppression paradigm, and sits on the opposite side of the fence on all of the issues discussed above (Weitzer, 2009). Proponents of this paradigm include liberal feminists who, unlike radical feminists, see sex work as a legitimate form of labour which deserves to be recognised as work like any other (Kingston, Hardy & Sanders, 2011). While supporters of the empowerment paradigm do not necessarily argue that all sex work *is* empowering, they do argue that it has the potential to be (Weitzer, 2009). Theorists writing from this paradigm have questioned the radical feminist critique of sex work and argue that nearly all of the seriously objectionable aspects of sex work are a result of unreasonable moral and legal stigma against sex workers (Gauthier, 2011); remove the stigma and you remove the issues, thus leaving an empowering practice in its place.

Exponents of the empowerment paradigm have shifted discourse around sex work, introducing that very label as an alternative to 'prostitution'. According to Kingston, Hardy and Sanders (2011) the label 'sex work' reflects far better the diversity it encompasses, and again represents the act of selling sex as a legitimate form of work. As with the oppression paradigm, critics of the empowerment paradigm have argued that it relies too heavily on one type of story, the success stories, and pays little attention to negative experiences which contradict this (Weitzer, 2009); something which Weitzer (2011) argues to result in another one-dimensional theory of sex work.

Unlike those in the oppression paradigm who view sex work as denying sex workers agency, liberal feminists and supporters of the empowerment paradigm argue that the practice of sex working is an expression of agency (Choudhury, Anglade & Park, 2013). As a result, supporters of this paradigm tend to advocate for the decriminalisation of sex work and promote the normalising of sexual commerce as legitimate work whose workers deserve the same rights as those in any other industry (West, 2000). Since Prostitutes' rights movements began, sex work researchers have often partnered with, or been part of, sex worker collectives who together have had varying impacts on the policing and regulation of sex work (West, 2000).

According to Oselin and Weitzer (2013) support run from within this paradigm looks very different to support run from within the oppression paradigm, and there is likely to be little focus on alternatives or help to exit sex work; instead, support from within the empowerment paradigm tends to be focused on managing risk and minimising harm whilst sex working, and promoting sex worker rights.

1.1.3 The Polymorphous paradigm

In her evaluation of sex work, Overall (1992) drew attention to the conflicting feminist perspectives demonstrated in the previous paradigms, and sought to reconcile these; the final paradigm put forward by Weitzer (2009) could be argued to represent the reconciliation she sought. The polymorphous paradigm recognises the complexity of experience of sex work, and makes no attempts to reduce all sex work and sex workers to one thing (Weitzer, 2009). Rather than taking a particular stance on issues such as agency, power and oppression, supporters of this paradigm recognise the complex relationship between empowerment and oppression that exists in sex work, and the varying distribution of agency within it (Choudhury, Anglade & Park, 2013).

When it comes to discourses produced by this paradigm, those within it try to avoid assumptions or generalised descriptions (Choudhury, Anglade & Park, 2013), making it difficult to attribute certain discourses or rhetoric. In fact, the lack of a clear stance on sex work taken by this paradigm makes it impossible to identify the position it takes on key issues such as agency and power, policing sex work, and support services for this group. In the same way that the polymorphous paradigm sees each experience of sex work as individual and distinct, exponents of this paradigm are to be approached in much the same way. In some ways, the polymorphous paradigm can be thought of as the gap in between the oppression and empowerment paradigms, with supporters sitting at various stages between the two. As a result, there appears to be far less clarity around this paradigm and the support services run from within it. In writings since his original introduction of the paradigms, Weitzer (2011, p.1338) has discussed his view of 'polymorphism' as an evidence-based theory, therefore suggesting that policy and support created and run from within this paradigm would reflect empirical research, rather than preconceived notions around the morality of sex work.

1.1.4 The 'Fallen Woman' Paradigm

As mentioned in the discussion of the oppression paradigm, while Weitzer (2009) presents his three paradigms as comprehensive groupings of all sex work perspectives, there is a possible fourth paradigm that appears to be alluded to in his work and yet never explicitly discussed, which will be referred to here as the 'fallen woman' paradigm. Weitzer (2011) makes clear that he views the oppression paradigm as aligned with a radical feminist positioning, and not a traditional morality one; however, there is evidence to suggest that the latter does exist as a distinct positioning.

According to Hubbard (1998, p.55) the 'prostitute' has long been 'constructed in popular discourse as a motif of degeneracy, contagion and sexual lasciviousness', a perspective which differs from the radical feminist view of sex work as oppressive and sex workers as

victims. Instead, this positioning appears to stem from a traditional morality perspective on sex work, which views it as sexually immoral and reprehensible. This perspective is also argued by Kantola and Squires (2004) to be at the root of the 'public nuisance' discourse of sex work, which leads to 'concerned citizens' protesting street sex work and red light districts. According to Hubbard (1998) such protesting reveals an underlying assumption and anxiety that the mere presence of sex workers has the power to transform a place from moral to immoral. As previously discussed, the perspective of sex workers as immoral and 'fallen women' is argued to stem from conservative religious attitudes towards sex. Whilst this is most commonly discussed in relation to the influence of conservative Christian attitudes which position sex and sexuality as 'problems rather than pleasures' (Inglis cited in Huschke & Schubotz, 2016, p.870) it was the conservative, religious attitudes of the Muslim group in Hubbard's (1998) study which were at the forefront of the movement to eradicate street sex work from their community.

In addition to conservative, religious groups, and those with a more traditional view of morality, aligning with the 'fallen woman' paradigm, there also seems to be another group whose alignment has become more recently visible. In a recent article in Christianity magazine titled 'Beauty from Brokenness', Katie Stock (2017) writes of more Evangelical Christian groups 'restoring dignity among sex workers' through the many faith-based or church-run support groups and outreach teams for sex workers in the UK. Like the more conservative Christians, the evangelical Christian position on sex work is argued to stem from a traditional interpretation of the bible as definitively prescribing the sexual behaviour of women, and presenting prostitution as a sexual sin and therefore sex workers as 'heinous sinners in need of repentance' (Ipsen, 2009, p.2). However, while the more traditional and conservative positions desire to simply remove the 'fallen woman' from their local vicinity, and therefore the threat of their immorality spreading; the evangelical desire is instead to 'rescue' (McGrow, 2017) and to 'restore' sex working women from 'brokenness' to 'wholeness' (Stock, 2017), meaning support run by such groups is largely focused on exit.

As a result of their perspective of sex work as immoral, those aligned with the ‘fallen woman’ paradigm are likely to advocate for the abolition of sex work through criminalisation, and a number of writers have argued for the influence of this paradigm, and the perspectives of those within it, on current sex work law which criminalises several of the practices around sex work (Huschke & Schubotz, 2016; Ipsen, 2009; Kantola & Squires, 2004).

Summary

In light of evidence from the literature discussed in relation to the ‘fallen woman’ paradigm, and also anecdotal data and personal experience, I would argue that Weitzer’s (2009) paradigms are somewhat limited and do not represent the conclusive groupings of all sex work perspectives, as they are argued to. I would also argue that further research needs to be carried out into the conservative/religious perspective on sex work, or the ‘fallen woman’ paradigm, and support run from within it. Despite this, the volume of literature written, and research carried out, which appears to align with one of Weitzer’s (2009) three paradigms, suggests that they are still valuable and relevant. As a result, section 1.2 will discuss some of the most significant debates within sex work literature and will critically consider whether Weitzer’s (2009) paradigms take into account the complexity of these issues.

The two debates focused on within this chapter are those regarding the morality of sex work, or as Overall frames it, the question ‘What is wrong with sex work?’, and those regarding the policing of sex work. These debates will be discussed due to the impact they have on how support is approached and delivered, something which will be discussed in the following chapter.

1.2 'What is wrong with sex work?' (Overall, 1992)

This section will consider perhaps the most contentious question within debates around sex work; what, if anything, is wrong with it (Overall, 1992)? Key issues related to this question include the perceived morality of sex work; the impact of sex work on sex, and particularly female sexuality; the relationship between sex work and gender; and issues of agency and choice. These issues will be discussed, with particular attention paid to how the positions taken reflect Weitzer's (2009) paradigms.

1.2.1 What's the difference? Sex work and service work

When it comes to sex work as a subject, the concept of morality has dominated discourse, both historically and up to the present writings. As a reflection of this, this section will begin by discussing some of the principal arguments around the morality of sex work. According to Gauthier (2011), much of the debate around the morality of sex work hinges on whether it differs from other kinds of service work. Service work is defined by Pettinger (2013) as any work that involves the commodification of some aspect of the worker's body, for example, the hands of the masseuse or the voice of the call centre worker. Supporters of the empowerment paradigm argue that, if sex work is not distinct from other forms of service work, we cannot rightly take issue with it, without also taking issue with these other forms. Exponents of the oppression paradigm have put forward many arguments for why sex work is not just another form of service work, all of which have been met by counter-arguments from sex work advocates. These arguments will now be considered before specific debates around the 'rights and wrongs' of sex work are looked at.

According to critics of the oppression paradigm, such as Nussbaum (1998), the moral outrage attached to sex work by its opponents is in part due to the way in which sex work involves the intimate and intense engagement of the worker's body with the body of the

customer, a factor which radical feminists see as one of the ways in which sex work is distinct from other forms of service work. Nussbaum (1998, p.695) argues that this perception comes from the belief that financial transactions in the area of female sexuality are demeaning to women, immoral and 'genuinely bad'. She also suggests a rooting in the belief that women should not have sex with strangers, a position which is argued to stem from an overall desire to control female sexuality (Nussbaum, 1998). In this way, Nussbaum (1998) demonstrates a belief that at least some of the tenants of the oppression paradigm have arisen from conservative-religious concerns about female sexuality. However, while both the oppression paradigm and the 'fallen woman' paradigm are argued to stem from the same moral conservatism, there does appear to be a distinction in their concern. While the 'fallen woman' paradigm views the act of selling sex as 'bad' because it goes beyond what is concerned 'right' and 'proper' behaviour (Huschke & Schubotz, 2016), instead being seen by the Christian element of this paradigm as 'sinful'; the concern of the oppression paradigm is tied up with feminist concerns about the ways in which selling sex oppresses women and therefore represses their sexuality.

As well as questioning the perceptions behind the labelling of sex work as immoral; supporters of the empowerment paradigm also question whether the act of the worker's body engaging with the customer's is in fact unique to sex work. As observed by Pettinger (2013) there are other forms of service work which involve the body of the worker becoming 'engaged and entangled' with the body of the customer, such as a masseuse or a dance teacher. In response to this argument, radical feminists and other opposers of sex work assert that sex work often involves the body of the worker being more fully engaged with the body of the customer; sex workers work on the client's body with more of their own bodies than in other service work (Pettinger, 2013). They also argue that, while other body labourers such as beauty therapists and hairdressers may work intimately on the customer's body, the customer does not touch them in turn (Pettinger, 2013). Thus, sex work is still seen to differ from other forms of service work, even those that also involve body labour.

Linked to the radical feminist assertion that sex workers engage in a more intense and intimate way with the bodies of the customers, is the argument that the sex worker is commodified, objectified and othered in a way that other workers are not (Day, 2007). This is an important issue for feminists as the way in which women's bodies are objectified in general society is a primary concern within feminism, and something feminists believe is a fundamental aspect of patriarchy which must be addressed if women are ever to move to a position of equality (Walby, 2013). The polymorphous paradigm, however, argues that the issue of objectification in sex work is not this straightforward, instead reasoning that experiences of objectification will vary for each individual sex worker depending on sector, context, and a whole host of other factors (Weitzer, 2009). Here, we begin to see some cross-over between the polymorphous paradigm and the empowerment paradigm; those aligned with the latter are unlikely to be under the impression that all sex work is without objectification, and therefore are likely to view this issue in the same nuanced way as those aligned with the polymorphous paradigm. The difference between these paradigms, as described by Weitzer (2009), appears to be the way in which the empowerment paradigm is centred around the belief that all sex work has the *potential* to be without objectification, even if it contains it in its current form.

Opposers of sex work argue that the sex worker does not simply sell a service, or a sexual act, but she actually sells her body to the client. In this way, the body of the sex worker is seen to be 'commodified and consumed' (Pettinger, 2013, p.231) in a way that the bodies of other service workers are not. In response to this argument, supporters of sex work would again assert that most forms of labour involve the worker commodifying some aspect of themselves (think again of the masseuse selling her sensual touch). The radical feminist issue with commodification in relation to sex work could be argued to come from concerns that sex workers are taking money to share an intimate area of self-expression (Nussbaum, 1998), something that has been argued to result in self-alienation (Gauthier, 2011). However, as Nussbaum (1998) observes, sex work is not the only profession in which individuals are paid to share intimate forms of self-expression; here, the example of the philosophy professor is used to raise questions as to why we do not perceive this profession

to involve commodifying thoughts in order to sell them to the highest bidder. The response of sex work opposers is that 'women's selves are involved in prostitution in a different manner from the involvement of self in other occupations' (Pateman, 1988, p.207). If the difference being referred to here is the act of sex itself, as Nussbaum (1998) argues, then Nussbaum's (1998) suggestion that the radical feminist opposition to sex work is actually born out of a conservative-religious desire to control female sexuality, could again be viewed as a relevant critique. The impact of sex work on sex and female sexuality is an important aspect of debates around sex work, and will be discussed in more detail in the following sub-section.

In addition to taking issue with what they perceive as the commodification of sex workers' bodies, opposers of sex work also argue that stigmatization is an inherent part of the practice and another factor which distinguishes it from other forms of service work. According to O'Connell Davidson (cited in West, 2000, p.107) 'the client's right to command sexual use of another's body shows a fundamental objectification of the prostitute. Therefore, the success of this trade relies on the stigmatization of its workers'. The issue of stigma is agreed to be key by both those for and against sex work, however, while radical feminists see the stigma experienced by sex workers as an intrinsic part of the practice of sex work; liberal feminists and other sex work supporters view this stigma as a result of outside discourses of morality, such as those underpinning the 'fallen woman' paradigm, and practices of legality. Gauthier (2011) summarises this view in his argument that sex work does not differ essentially from other kinds of labour, and that any accompanying exploitation or degradation comes from being morally and legally stigmatized. He goes on to argue that recognising the rights of sex workers through legitimising sex work as a form of work will dismantle this stigma. Thus, sex work is seen not to be different to other forms of service work, but the stigma continually attached to it is seen as maintaining the illusion that it is. In fact, many sex work supporters argue that nearly all of the seriously objectionable aspects of sex work are a result of unreasonable moral and legal stigma against sex workers (see Schwarzenbach, 1990-1991; Shrage, 1996; Nussbaum, 1999). This argument is also provided as a response to the radical feminist assertion that sex work

differs from other forms of service work due to the disproportionate risk of violence involved in the practice (Raymond, 1998). According to sex work advocates, the level of violence experienced by sex workers depends on which sector they are working in; indoor workers report low levels of violence, whilst street workers report high levels (Sanders & Campbell, 2007). Since street sex work is subject to the highest levels of moral and legal stigma, it could be argued that violence in sex work is actually a result of stigma, and not an inherent part of the practice itself. This argument is supported by studies which show an increase in violence towards sex workers following the implementation of 'zero tolerance' approaches to the practice, which often stem from moralistic positionings (See Hubbard, 2004), like those reinforced by exponents of the 'fallen woman' paradigm. Again, the position of the polymorphous paradigm would be to argue that experiences of violence and stigma differ between 'types of sex work, geographical locations, and other structural conditions' (Weitzer, 2011, p.1338), and that violence is neither intrinsic to sex work nor entirely separate. As with much of the debate around sex work, coming to any solid conclusions about the relationship between sex work and violence is difficult, due to the amount of conflicting research and data. While liberal feminists and other supporters of sex work continue to produce research which suggests the relationship is nuanced, and continue to argue that we shift our focus from violence and oppression (Sanders & Campbell, 2007); radical feminists and other sex work opposers continue to produce literature which argues violence to be a significant aspect of the experience of sex work and one we should not ignore or diminish (see Bindel, 2017a; 2017b). With both sides firmly asserting themselves as advocating the views and voices of sex workers, and existing research which offers support for both sides of the debate, it seems reasonable to argue that the relationship between violence and sex work is most likely to reflect the position of the polymorphous paradigm, a position which Weitzer (2011) argues to be supported by empirical evidence.

When it comes to perceiving sex work as distinct from other forms of service work, radical feminists highlight the practice being performed predominantly by women who are both racially and economically disadvantaged (Raymond, 1998). Sex work researchers have more

recently responded to this argument by stating that women who work in the sex industry are no longer the poorest or those considered economically marginal (Sanders, 2008). Such researchers suggest an 'up-scaling' of the sex industry due to an increasing number of women entering the sex trade who are neither poor nor marginalised, with a rise in the number of middle-class women choosing the practice (Sanders, 2008). Debates around choice and agency in sex work are discussed in more detail in sub-section 1.2.4.

According to Gamache (1991) another way in which sex work differs from other forms of service work is the lack of transferable skills it develops. Sex work is perceived to be entered in to by those who are economically marginalised, who then remain in the industry due to being unable to develop skills to progress into other professions. As with a number of important debates around sex work, whether or not there are transferable skills developed appears to be a matter of opinion. In the way in which sex workers build their client base, manage this client base and develop strategies for capitalising on, in this case their sexuality (Sanders, 2005), they can arguably be thought of as entrepreneurial. Even in the case of street sex work, the most stigmatised and criminalised form of sex work, sex workers engage in negotiations with clients around services and costs.

Overall it appears that those on opposing sides of the debate around whether sex work is distinct from other forms of service work are unlikely to ever reconcile their views. The amount of conflicting literature and data means that either position can be justified and well argued, resulting in the same historic critiques and counter-critiques being argued between liberal and radical feminists in the present day. It appears to be the case, however, that this question can be answered on two levels; does sex work differ from other forms of service work on a theoretical level, and does it differ at an individual level in terms of experience? The answer given to the former question will be intrinsically linked to the position taken on the following debates to be discussed (i.e. sex work, autonomy and choice), and will therefore be considered later on, however, in answer to the latter question, the most reasonable conclusion seems to come from within the polymorphous

stance (Weitzer, 2009); that experiences of sex work will vary in the extent to which they differ from other forms of service work.

1.2.2 The impact of sex work on sex and female sexuality

Within debates around whether sex work is inherently damaging, another point of contention is the impact that sex work has on sex, and particularly on female sexuality. While radical feminists and other supporters of the oppression paradigm would argue that both sex and female sexuality are damaged by sex work, as would those aligned with the 'fallen woman' paradigm, though for different reasons, liberal feminists and supporters of the empowerment paradigm would argue that it is actually the repression of sex work which does the damage.

Both radical and liberal feminists would agree that sexuality is a medium for self-expression (Gauthier, 2011); however, their perspectives diverge when it comes to how this relates to sex work. According to Gauthier (2011), when sex is commodified, the result is critical to this form of self-expression and is ultimately self-alienating. He argues that the connotations of the contract entered into during the exchange demand the surrendering of sexual self-expression. The idea that sex work not only requires the sale of sexual services, but also the surrender of sexual self-expression is based in the fact that, no matter the boundaries put in place by the sex worker, the performance itself remains a façade that can never be fully revealed for what it is – 'I don't really want you to touch me, I just want your money' (Gauthier, 2011). In 2011, Lynn Pettinger studied 'Punternet', a website where men who purchase sex leave reviews of their encounters. She found that the 'punters' focused on the experience of the sex worker in a way which suggested they paid not only for 'erotic labour to be performed on their bodies, but for an erotic performance by the sex worker.' (Pettinger, 2011, p.232) This erotic performance is described as often including the appearance of sexual satisfaction, and gratitude towards the punter as the provider of this satisfaction. When this erotic performance was missing, or perceived to be faked, punters

evaluated their encounter negatively and perceived it as bad service. This research appears to support Gauthier's (2011) claims that the erotic performance can never be revealed as a façade; in the case of Pettinger's research, the consequences would be bad reviews and a resulting lack of customers. If success as a sex worker hinges to some extent on a convincing performance of enjoyment and satisfaction, then it follows that sex workers could never express their true sexual feelings if they contradicted this performance. Hence, sex workers are argued to surrender their right to sexual self-expression largely in lieu of economic benefits (Gauthier, 2011). In critique of this, it could be argued that this is the case in many areas of our lives. Almost on a daily basis we put on various performances, some for the purpose of monetary gain. A waitress who arrives at her place of work after receiving some terrible news is likely to perform the role of bubbly hostess in order to increase her likelihood of receiving tips. In this way she could also be described as surrendering her self-expression in lieu of economic benefits. The difference between the waitress and the sex worker again appears to be the act of sex. Gauthier (2011) and other such theorists who oppose sex work on the basis that it involves a performance and the surrender of self-expression seem to allude to a belief that, while other areas of our lives involve performance and faking a role, our sexual lives should not.

This argument by the oppression paradigm can also be described as sex workers gaining economic autonomy at the cost of their sexual autonomy. This is supported by Anderson's (2013) work on sexual obligation which argues that the exchange of sexual goods for non-sexual goods (money or something of value) can be a concern in the way in which it may signal the inability of one party to maintain sexual autonomy, since they are not making sexual choices for reasons that are directly related to sexual desire. The relevance of Anderson's argument, and how it relates to sex work, appears to depend on how you define sexual autonomy. As Gauthier (2011) observed, there are two definitions of sexual autonomy. The first defines something as sexually autonomous if there is any kind of desire on the part of the agent, including the desire for material reward, and the second defines something as sexually autonomous only if it engages the sexual desire of the agent and is therefore sexually self-expressive. While the latter definition supports Anderson's (2013)

arguments around sexual obligation and the radical feminist position that sex workers surrender their sexual self-expression and therefore their sexual autonomy, and is also taken up by Gauthier (2011) in order to oppose sex work, the first can be used to support the liberal feminist position in so far as economic desire would constitute sexual autonomy on the part of the sex worker. Therefore, whilst research such as Pettinger's (2011) provides support for the argument that sex workers engage in an erotic performance which can be argued to result in the surrender of self-expression, whether or not this means that sex workers lack sexual autonomy can be debated from both sides.

In addition to questioning the assumption that sex workers forfeit their sexual autonomy, the empowerment paradigm also critiques the notion that the erotic performance of the sex worker means the surrender of sexual self-expression. Gauthier (2011) states how supporters of this paradigm argue that sex work is not a way of *repressing* sexuality, but in fact a means of *expressing* it that should be supported by other feminists and not 'policed'. Advocates of this paradigm argue that attempts to do so are a continuation of the historical fear of uncontrollable female sexuality (Overall, 1992), again conflating the oppression paradigm with traditional religious/conservative views. However, while the concern of those within the 'fallen woman' paradigm around the impact of sex work on sex is argued to stem from teaching which stresses 'chastity, virginity and modesty and instils a sense of shame and denial about sex' (Huschke & Schubotz, 2016, p.870), therefore leading to a concern about sex work as promoting uncontrollable female sexuality; the concern of the oppression paradigm is argued to be tied up with the opposing view that sex work itself controls and represses female sexuality, and there is therefore a need to free women from sex work so that they may fully explore their sexuality on their own terms.

Interestingly, exponents of both the oppression and empowerment paradigms have argued that those of the other are upholding patriarchy with their position on sex work and female sexuality. As mentioned, those in the empowerment paradigm see attempts to police sex work as a repression of female sexuality which they conflate with conservative, anti-sex discourse and the 'fallen woman' paradigm. Here, movements focused on the abolition of

sex work are seen as yet another way society attempts to control female sexuality (Overall, 1992). Contrastingly, advocates of the oppression paradigm view sex work as an act in which a woman conforms to a man's sexual desires regardless of her own, which therefore contradicts the concept of sexual freedom (Gauthier, 2011). To be *for* sex work, and to advocate for its decriminalisation is therefore seen as an extension of patriarchal discourses of sex, which publicly recognise men as 'sexual masters' and puts 'submission on sale as a commodity in the market' (Overall, 1992, p.723). According to Rosen and Venkatesh (2008), however, while the sexual exchange may *appear* to confirm the man's mastery over the woman, the moment of paying serves to confirm the actuality of the man's dependence on the woman's sexuality and skill; therefore challenging the radical feminist position that sex work is about women's subordination.

In summary, the oppression paradigm argues that sex work damages both individual sexuality in the way in which it is self-alienating, and female sexuality at a societal level in the way in which it perpetuates patriarchal notions about sex. While the 'fallen woman' paradigm would agree that sex and female sexuality are damaged by sex work, their concern instead appears to be that sex work goes *against* patriarchal, conservative ideas of sex in portraying casual, extra-marital sex with multiple partners as okay, and perhaps a particular concern that this is portrayed as okay for women, the sex class long considered to be the keepers of purity and modesty (Braun, 2015). The empowerment paradigm, however, argues that individual sexuality is not damaged, as the sex worker 'still has her sexuality; she can use it on her own, apart from the relationship with the client' (Nussbaum, 1999, p.291). As sex work is seen as a form of sexual self-expression, supporters of the empowerment paradigm also argue that it is not damaging to constructions of female sexuality, instead claiming that the policing of sex work is actually where the source of damage lies. Regardless of whether sex work perpetuates harmful constructions of gender, the most reasonable conclusion to draw from the literature seems to be that the relationship between selling sex and individual sexuality and sexual self-expression will differ for each sex worker.

1.2.3 Sex work and gender

Closely linked to debates around sex work and sexuality are debates around sex work and gender, some of which have been touched on in the previous section. As observed by Overall (1992), sex work takes place in the context of capitalist, patriarchal society, and this context is key to understandings.

As previously mentioned, supporters of the oppression paradigm have long argued that sex work reinforces sexist beliefs about women, their bodies, and their sexuality; therefore contributing to their subordination (Gauthier, 2011). According to Pateman (1988, p.208) 'when women's bodies are on sale as commodities in the capitalist market...male sex-right is publicly affirmed, and men gain public acknowledgment as women's sexual masters – that is what's wrong with prostitution.' In critique of this, supporters of the empowerment paradigm emphasise the mutuality of the commercial exchange and depict sex work as 'gendered service labour in which male clients purchase the attention of consenting women for temporary pleasure, leisure, and even moments of intimacy' (Joseph & Black, 2012, p.487). From this perspective, sex working women are equals in the exchange, going in to it with their eyes open and no different from those performing any other kind of gendered labour. While radical feminists agree that sex work is not the only form of gendered labour, they view the comparison as far more complex. Of this comparison Overall (1992, p.718) asks, is sex work reversible? 'Does it have value independent of the conditions of sexual and economic inequality under which it is performed?' Her answer, along with the answers of others in the oppression paradigm, is 'no'. Joseph and Black (2012) state that experiences of sex, and sex work as an extension, are inseparable from discourses of masculinity. In Western culture, men's 'high sex drive' is constructed as a biological need which demands satisfaction, which it is largely constructed as a female duty to provide. As a result of this, women are taught that offering sexual services for money is part of what it means to be a woman (they are the satisfiers of men), and men are taught that seeking and acquiring sexual services is part of what it means to be a man (Overall, 1992). The conclusion drawn

by exponents of the oppression paradigm is therefore that sex work is dependent upon the cultural construction of gender roles in terms of dominance and submission (Overall, 1992).

In complete contrast, liberal feminists argue that the marketization of sex is not inextricably linked to negative views of women (Joseph & Black, 2012). They also critique radical feminists' totalizing of sex work clients as problematic, or 'woman haters' (Farley, 2004), as potentially problematic in itself. To view the act of selling sex as perpetuating dominance and in the case of some theorists, violence (Raymond, 1998), over women, is problematic because it prevents us from being able to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable client practices (Joseph & Black, 2012). If we state that men buying sex engage in a gendered form of violence each time, how do we prepare sex workers to identify clients who may wish to enact actual violence on them (Joseph & Black, 2012)?

Supporters of the empowerment paradigm also argue that the position taken by the oppression paradigm on debates around gender and sex work ignores male sex workers (Kingston, Hardy & Sanders, 2011). They view the existence of male sex workers as evidence that sex work is not inextricably linked to damaging constructions of gender in which males are the dominators and females are the dominated; how can this be the case if males also sell sex? While the existence of male sex workers cannot be denied, the nature of male sex work raises some questions around whether this really contradicts arguments made by the oppression paradigm about gender and sex work. In 2005, Harcourt and Donovan sought to compile a global typography of sex work, by reviewing six-hundred and eighty-one journal articles on sex work; twenty years' worth of collected papers and monographs; and observations in more than fifteen countries (Harcourt & Donovan, 2005). In the resulting paper, they discuss male sex work and state that, while it is as varied in form as female sex work, 'the client base is almost always male' (Harcourt & Donovan, 2005, p.204). This claim is reinforced in Wilcox and Christmann's (2006) study on men who sell sex, where they describe many of their participants as escort 'hopefuls', meaning they were heterosexual males hoping for female clients who would pay them for sex. According to these men; 'women just don't pay for it' (Wilcox & Christmann, 2006, p.3). Such data suggests that sex

work is still reflective of a gender discourse which positions men as those who need their 'biological drive' for sex satisfying, and therefore encourages them to seek out and acquire that satisfaction. The lack of female clients also supports the idea that the gender discourse reflected in sex work is one in which females' 'sex drives' or satisfaction are not considered a priority. Reflecting on the fact that most male sex workers are working homosexually, even if they are not gay themselves (Harcourt & Donovan, 2005), the argument that sex work makes females subordinate could be amended to stating that sex work makes subordinate all those who do not fit under that which is considered traditionally 'male', or perhaps 'typically masculine.' This would include women, but also homosexual men and those who identify as transgender.

When it comes to the 'fallen woman' paradigm, though existing literature doesn't suggest it is particularly concerned with how sex work reinforces or contradicts patriarchal notions about gender and sex, the argument that this perspective stems from a desire to control the female body and female sexuality (Overall, 1992) suggests this perspective may be gendered in itself.

In summary, supporters of the oppression paradigm see sex work as a reflection of masculine power, domination and control over women, and other individuals who are not considered typically male or masculine (Joseph & Black, 2012). They argue that the gendered power relations within the sex industry are central to its existence (O'Connell Davidson, 1998). In contrast, those within the empowerment paradigm would argue that sex work is not inseparable from gender discourses which position women as subordinate, and though the current form of sex work is perhaps reflective of this, future forms do not have to be.

Overall, research such as Harcourt and Donovan's (2005) and Wilcox and Christmann's (2006) suggests that sex work is a reflection of patriarchal discourses of gender which position men as having a high sex drive for which they should seek satisfaction. As a result, it

can be argued that, while practices may have moved on, sex work and patriarchy remain inseparable from one another.

1.2.4 Sex work, agency and choice

'The issue of choice in connection with sex work is a particularly difficult one'

Overall, 1992

For a long time, the radical feminist position that sex work is not chosen has been the prevailing narrative in both academic literature and public rhetoric (Overall, 1992). Even when sex workers are seen to have exercised agency in entering sex work, the notion that it is only performed as a result of economic necessity means it is perceived as a coercive offer and therefore one that can never be *fully* chosen (Overall, 1992). Radical feminists argue that if there were other options available to women, sex work would cease to be seen as a 'choice' at all.

In critique of this, Sanders (2005) argues that routes into sex work are far more complex than marginality and desperation. In the ethnography she conducted, Sanders (2005) found that several women had left mainstream jobs to move into the sex industry. While their motivations were still money related, their choice to begin sex working was due to a desire for economic independence, and not as a result of economic necessity. Sanders (2005) concluded that women who work independently can make conscious choices to sell sexual labour over any other type of work. The fact that some women do choose sex work means that coercion cannot be an essential element of the practice, as it can and does exist without it (Overall, 1992).

Whilst this may be true, individuals who choose sex work over other, legitimate (fully legal) job choices are only a small proportion of those who sell sex; for the majority of those

entering sex work, there are many other factors framing their choice (Rosen & Venkatesh, 2008). According to Rosen & Venkatesh (2008), sex workers' choices are framed by a context of opportunities for earnings and self-efficacious behaviour. The majority of sex workers arrive at sex work via a much narrower set of options and a much broader set of constraints. For these individuals, a number of elements come into play, elements which Pitcher (2006) refers to as 'vulnerability factors'. These factors include experiences of violence; substance abuse; homelessness; low self-esteem; experiences of the criminal justice system and negative experiences of statutory services, and are said to have faced street-working women in particular (Pitcher, 2006). Harding & Hamilton (2009) interviewed homeless women selling sex and argued that their decision to sex work was, in part, due to systematic familial abuse and coercion from abusive partners. The link between violence and sex work is often cited, particularly in radical feminist literature, as evidence for the lack of agency and choice in entering sex work (Raymond, 1998); however, Choudhury, Anglade and Park's (2013) study of women entering sex work due to leaving violence complicates this argument somewhat. While the participants in their study had chosen sex work as a result of a need to escape violent relationships, Choudhury, Anglade and Park (2013) concluded that this decision was actually an agentic one. They argued that their participants 'placed high value on their agency and capacity to control their own lives' (Choudhury, Anglade & Park, 2013, p. 373), and that they had entered sex work as a result of this, not in spite of it. Whilst the violence they had experience was clearly a factor in their decision, the researchers argued that these women had not just landed on sex work as their only option, but had weighed up the potential costs and benefits, and concluded that sex work was the best option to achieve the financial and emotional independence they desired (Choudhury, Anglade & Park, 2013).

A similar decision-making process can be seen in Rosen and Venkatesh's (2008) study of sex workers in Chicago; while structural forces which marginalised them had limited their career options and removed the choice to enter legitimate work, participants who chose to sex work did not view this as a choice which had been forced upon them out of necessity and desperation. Instead, they had chosen sex work over other criminal options due to it

offering a basic level of satisfaction of needs, namely money, stability, autonomy and professional satisfaction (Rosen & Venkatesh, 2008). So, while those in the oppression paradigm argue that the majority of individuals entering sex work are not making a 'purely rational' choice; Rosen & Venkatesh (2008) state that the structural forces which marginalise people render the decision to enter the informal and criminal sector of sex work, paradoxically rational. They argue that when outside factors affect decision making, pure rationality is not possible, and so individuals make decisions based on 'bounded rationality.' As argued by Sanders (2005, p.710) "choice' must be considered within a set of constraints, but inevitably the sex markets across the globe are expanding, adapting and diversifying because women are making decisions about how to earn money.' For some women this decision is between legitimate job choices and sex work, for others it is between a much smaller number of illegitimate job choices, including sex work; but in either case it appears that sex work can emerge as the preferred option.

Again, the position of the 'fallen woman' paradigm on sex work, agency and choice does not seem particularly clear within the literature. When it comes to choice, the 'fallen woman' paradigm is likely to come under the same criticism as the oppression paradigm; that it promotes the restriction of female agency and choice. The concern of the more traditional, conservative exponents of the 'fallen woman' paradigm, that sex workers might 'spread their immorality' (Kantola & Squires, 2004), seems to suggest a view of sex workers as responsible deviants who have chosen to be involved in an immoral profession. In contrast, writings on the more evangelical Christian position seem to align more closely with the view of the oppression paradigm, but perhaps with a more 'spiritual' slant (see Stock, 2017). Something I have often heard as a life-long member of a more evangelical Christian community is the idea that 'if sex workers knew their value, and the value of sex, they wouldn't ever choose sex work.' In other words, whilst the oppression paradigm views sex work as a result of a lack of other options, the more evangelical exponents of the 'fallen woman' paradigm see it as a result of a lack of spiritual education.

In light of the literature so far discussed, it would seem that debates around sex work, and particularly sex work, agency and choice, need to evolve to be representative of an evolving sex market. It seems that sex work offers that which other, legitimate forms of work do not; money, independence and flexibility (Jeffrey & MacDonald, 2006), things which appear increasingly important to many individuals. While this may be the case, it is still important not to overemphasise the agency of sex workers, and thus ignore oppression (Choudhury, Anglade & Park, 2013). If the structures which marginalise and impoverish certain people groups were addressed, it may be the case that many of those currently choosing sex work as a result of limited options would no longer include sex work as one of those options. Therefore, working towards challenging and removing those structures should still be the focus of both radical feminists and liberal feminists alike, along with those more aligned with the 'fallen woman' paradigm. Despite this, recent research would suggest that even if these structures were dealt with, there would still be those who would choose sex work. In this way, the polymorphous paradigm (Weitzer, 2009) may be the most reflective position on sex work and choice; for some, sex work can be argued to be a relatively free choice, for others, it is a choice within a set of strict constraints, and for others still, it is not really a choice at all.

1.3 Policing sex work

According to West (2000) the dominant model of sex work regulation distinguishes three legal frameworks; abolitionism, legalisation, and decriminalisation. Of the difference between the latter two frameworks, Hughes (2004) states:

Legalisation would mean the regulation of prostitution with laws regarding where, when and how prostitution could take place. Decriminalisation eliminates all laws and prohibits the state and law-enforcement officials from intervening in any prostitution-related activities or transactions, unless other laws apply (para. 2)

When it comes to UK law, however, the policing of sex work doesn't appear to fit into any one framework and is instead a messy and fragmented picture. For a long time, sex work law in the UK has been less of 'a law' in the singular, and more of a myriad of laws which make some aspects of the sex industry illegal, and other aspects legal (Sanders, 2008). Over the last few decades, debates around sex work law in the UK have shifted from criminalising those selling sex, to those buying it; an undercurrent of public nuisance discourse prevailing throughout (Kantola & Squires, 2004; Outshoorn, 2004). While the UK has not made illegal the purchasing of sex, as is often known as the Nordic Model or sex buyer law, the shift towards focusing policing on the buyer meant that in 2001 kerb crawling became an arrestable offence (Outshoorn, 2004). As the law currently stands both purchasing and selling sex are legal, however, soliciting (buying and selling sex in public); kerb crawling; and managing a brothel are all criminal acts (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 2016). Such policy has received criticism from sex work researchers who argue that it results in negative consequences for sex workers. For example, the way in which 'managing a brothel' is defined in the law means that independent sex workers cannot legally work from the same residence, thus discouraging a practice that promotes safety (Sanders & Campbell, 2007). The most recent government report on 'prostitution' suggests that these concerns have been heard, and advocates for the decriminalising of soliciting, and joint working from the same residence as 'a matter of urgency' (House of Commons Home Office Affairs Committee, 2016, p.39). The report also acknowledges, however, that there is considerable variation in policing approaches to sex work across the country, which is likely to be the case unless an official model or approach is adopted. This variation means that some regions instigate intermittent police raids on sex selling establishments, whilst others let such establishments continue in their business and turn a blind eye (West, 2000). While introducing a nation-wide model or policy on sex work may address such dissonance in police approaches, it would also mean the British government taking up a particular position on sex work, which does not seem likely in the near future (see House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 2016).

If Weitzer's (2009) work is to be accepted, then the taking up of either an oppression paradigm, or an empowerment paradigm position on sex work results in the taking up of a particular position on how, and if, sex work should be policed. In his discussion of the two polarized paradigms, Weitzer seems to suggest a causal relationship between the empowerment paradigm and the decriminalisation movement, and the oppression paradigm and the abolitionist movement. When it comes to the polymorphous paradigm, Weitzer does not imply the same kind of casual relationship, though as a supporter himself of this paradigm, his tentative support of legalisation (see Weitzer, 2011) may suggest polymorphism views this type of sex work law as having the potential to offer sex workers 'the safest environment' (p.229). Those in the oppression paradigm are described by Weitzer (2009) as viewing criminal law as capable of repressing a market which they see as damaging to women and therefore they seek to criminalise sex work in order to work towards its eradication (Kotiswaran, 2008). However, their view of 'prostitutes' as victims means that they do not agree with criminalising sex workers, instead advocating for the criminalisation of third parties, such as clients (Outshoorn, 2004). In light of viewing sex work as an unequal exchange which makes submissive the (female) sex worker and is all about the desires of the (male) client, those in the oppression paradigm believe the route to the abolition of sex work is in tackling demand. Since women don't really *choose* sex work, criminalising the client will remove all demand for the sex trade. An example of this policy in action is seen in Sweden, where an almost unanimous view of sex work as the oppression of women has led to the legalising of selling sex, and the criminalising of purchasing it (Outshoorn, 2004). While sex work law which criminalises customers, and other styles of abolitionist law such as those which currently make joint-working illegal in the UK, are argued by Weitzer (2009) to stem from the oppression paradigm; others writing on the influences upon such law describe them as more complex. According to Kantola and Squires (2004, p.78), current UK law on sex work is influenced by a 'moral rights discourse' which 'draws on a more complex synthesis of international human rights rhetoric, religious orthodoxies and a feminist perspective on sexual domination'. The influence of the 'fallen woman' paradigm on sex work policy is also highlighted by feminist theologian Rita Nakashima Brock, who argues that 'there is a deeply religious substratum to current prostitution law' (Ipsen, 2009, p.2). Therefore, while it is often radical feminists and

advocates of the oppression paradigm who are praised and blamed for current sex work law, which criminalises certain practices around sex work; literature on sex work law would suggest that those in the 'fallen women' paradigm exercise an oft-unseen influence.

In contrast to those in the oppression and 'fallen woman' paradigms, those in the empowerment paradigm are seen to view the law as providing a means to end the stigmatization and marginalisation of sex workers through decriminalising sex work and affording sex workers the same rights as any other worker (Weitzer, 2009). Their view of sex workers as agentic individuals who can and do exercise choice in entering sex work, means that they view the criminalising of the sex industry, whether the purchasing or selling, as a rejection of this agency and choice (Kotiswaran, 2008). An example of decriminalisation in action can be seen in New Zealand, where laws which criminalise sex workers and third parties were overturned in 2003 (NZPC, 2017).

Though criticism has been lobbied from, and at, both sides of the sex work law debate, a study of the literature on sex work regulation seems to suggest that there are far more arguments against abolitionism than there are against decriminalisation. The main criticisms of abolitionism and anti-sex work law appear to be around motivation, consequences, and limitations. While abolitionists from the oppression paradigm argue that their primary motivation for anti-sex work policy is protecting sex working women through eradicating an oppressive practice, opposers of such policy critique this claim and raise questions as to the real motivations behind it. According to West (2000), sex work laws are sometimes brought about by motives not related to the safety and wellbeing of sex workers. Whilst the kerb-crawler act was supposed to be about criminalising buyers, West argues that it was mainly to do with increasing pressure from concerned communities, an argument evidenced by the comparatively small number of prosecutions compared to sex worker offences such as soliciting and loitering (West, 2000). Sanders and Campbell (2008) also critique the kerb-crawler act, arguing that it had far more to do with tackling that which was perceived to be a public nuisance, than protecting sex workers. Sanders and Campbell (2008) have also questioned anti-sex work policy in general, arguing that policy built on disgust and shame

panders to an ideology of how humanity *should* act, and not how it *does* act. Sanders (2008) has further claimed that debates within the UK parliament around sex work law have undertones of fear about the migrant worker which have been disguised as moral anxiety around sex work. Sceptics of the claim that abolitionism is about the protection of sex workers have even gone so far as to say that sex workers make 'convenient targets for policy-makers wishing to demonstrate their dedication to matters of law and order' (Hubbard, 2004, p.1769). Overall, criticisms directed at the professed motivations of the oppression paradigm's support of abolitionism, appear to conflate the real motivations with those of the more traditional proponents of the 'fallen woman' paradigm, whose primary concern is not wanting the immoral practice of sex work to be something they have to be aware of or come into contact with.

In addition to questioning the motivations behind abolitionism, those opposing such policy also highlight the consequences of implementing anti-sex work law. According to Kotiswaran (2008), the costs of such policy are borne by sex workers. While abolitionists from within the oppression paradigm argue that anti-sex work law is the best way to keep sex workers safe, research suggests that the raids on sex-selling establishments, often carried out as a result of criminalising practices around sex work, lead to the displacement of sex workers (Majic, 2014) who are then forced into shadow economies where exploitation and trafficking proliferate (Sanders, 2008). Research also suggests that policy which makes aspects of sex working illegal is linked to an increase in risky behaviour by sex workers (Sanders & Campbell, 2008). The constant risk of arrest means individuals selling sex are already engaging in risky behaviour, thus making further risky behaviour more likely. Sex workers are also more likely to engage in risky behaviours in order to try and avoid arrest (Sanders & Campbell, 2008). In addition to the link to displacement and risky behaviour, research on zero-tolerance policy and policing of sex work has found an increase in violence against sex workers where and when such policies are enforced (see Sanders & Campbell, 2007; Hubbard, 2004). Such findings problematize the oppression paradigm's claim that anti-sex work law promotes the safety and wellbeing of sex workers.

Those opposing abolitionist policy have also pointed out the limitations of such policy. According to its critics, abolitionism and the resulting laws which criminalise those buying sex, is based on an overly-simplistic assumption that demand is the only reason women enter the sex industry (Sanders, 2008), an assumption which is argued to ignore the complex reasons behind women sex working, which therefore means that policy based on this belief is perceived to be lacking. Opposers of abolitionism also cite the lack of empirical evidence behind policy put in place to tackle demand, and the heavy reliance on anecdotal data; an approach confessed to by the home office itself (Sanders & Campbell, 2008).

If it were the case, as Weitzer (2009) suggests, that the position taken on sex work is inextricably linked to the position taken on regulation, then those for and against are arguably stuck at an impasse that will never be moved beyond. However, recent sex work literature suggests a move from focusing on the position taken, to favouring policy that will ultimately ensure the safety and wellbeing of those selling sex. Sanders and Campbell's (2007) work, while still referencing the sex worker rights discourse found in the empowerment paradigm, appears most concerned with the creation and implementation of realistic policy which has positive, not negative, consequences for those selling sex. Rather than make blanket statements about decriminalising all sex work, or legalising in the same manner across sectors (indoor and outdoor alike) the researchers argue for policy-makers to focus on realistic questions, such as how the mechanisms that improve safety for indoor workers could inform policy for outdoor workers. This approach to regulation is one that takes into consideration the complexities of the sex industry and the significant variation across sectors and regions, and one that would require a depth of understanding that only extensive research could provide; a lack of which the House of Commons Home Office Affairs Committee (2016) recently cited as reason for the inability to propose specific legislation and policy.

According to Weitzer (2011) this evidence-based approach to sex work policy is a feature of the polymorphous paradigm, however, there does appear to be cross-over with the empowerment paradigm. There are also those whose beliefs about sex work position them

within the oppression paradigm whose desire to see sex workers protected from violence and particularly harmful practice trumps their underlying position on selling sex, and therefore they too would advocate for an evidence-based approach, even if it means legalising a practice they view as inherently negative (see Overall, 1992). Therefore, while it remains the case that there are those whose beliefs would locate them within the oppression paradigm who continue to campaign for abolition, and those who resonate with the empowerment paradigm who continue to campaign for decriminalisation; the sex work research and literature so far discussed suggests that the position taken on regulation is more complex and nuanced than Weitzer (2009) proposes.

Summary

In conclusion, the sex work literature so far discussed suggests that the position taken on sex work is actually more complex and nuanced than Weitzer's (2009) paradigms suggest. Literature such as Overall's (1992), which describes disagreeing with sex work, but acknowledging that decriminalisation may be the best way to protect those selling sex from harm, demonstrates the possibility of being aligned with a particular paradigm on a theoretical level, but resonating with a conflicting paradigm at the level of practice and experience. The conclusions of this chapter would therefore suggest that specialist sex work support, which is argued to be run from within these paradigms (Oselin & Weitzer, 2013), is also likely to be complex and nuanced, and therefore further research is needed to explore the complexities of this setting. The following chapter will therefore consider what is currently known about support for this client group, including literature which discusses the variation in the approach taken to support and the practices carried out.

Chapter Two – Support Services for Sex Workers

Introduction

Following the previous chapter's discussion of sex work literature and the key debates within it, this chapter will consider what is known about support services for sex workers from the existing literature. The first section will consider the history of specialist sex work support and sex work projects, using the literature to trace their journey from HIV-prevention to the more holistic approach seen in many services/projects today. This chapter will then go on to highlight what is known from the literature about such services, both in terms of what they do and how they do it, and will consider the small body of research that explores the complexities of sex work support, beyond a focus on sexual health.

In addition to discussing that which is known about support services for sex workers from the existing literature, this chapter will also highlight gaps and will present a rationale for this research.

2.1 Sex work support, then and now

This section will consider the history of sex work support, and how it has progressed both in terms of its focus and aims, and also in the approach taken. Section 2.1.1 will begin by discussing the origins of sex work support as a means for addressing the spread of HIV, and will consider the development of new approaches to tackle this issue. Section 2.1.2 will then consider the move towards a holistic model of support, and the harms linked to sex work that a holistic approach is designed to address. Section 2.1.3 will then explore why specialist support is necessary, including consideration of the barriers sex workers face to generalised

support, before discussing literature which takes a more critical stance and raises some questions as to whose needs specialist sex work support is actually addressing.

2.1.1 The origins of sex work support; HIV and the sex working community

According to Pitcher (2006) there has been an increase in sex work support services since the 1980s, when they began predominantly as a means of preventing the spread of HIV within the sex working community. As a result, the funding of such projects and services was dominated by HIV/AIDS prevention schemes, and the support offered rarely went beyond that focused on sexual health (Pitcher, 2006).

Literature on the origins of sex work support demonstrates how a harm-reduction approach emerged as a public health response to HIV within this community, the principles of which are 'pragmatic, value neutral and focused on prioritising achievable goals' (Cusick, 2006, p.3) On the ground, a harm-minimisation approach to HIV includes distribution of condoms and clean needles, training in condom-negotiating skills, education, and sexual health checks (Rekhardt, 2006). However, despite the literature acknowledging many positives of the harm-minimisation agenda, it is also critical of some aspects of this approach. According to Sanders and Brown (2017) the dominant vulnerability narrative of sex work, which positions sex workers as both 'at risk' and 'a risk', justified (and in some cases still justifies) a more patriarchal approach to support for this group, which 'does to' rather than 'works with'. Within the harm-minimisation approach to HIV, patriarchal practices such as compelling sex workers to undergo regular sexual health checks have been widely critiqued by sex work researchers and sex worker-led groups, as potentially perpetuating sex work stigma and promoting the idea that sex workers are a risk to public health (Cusick & Burney, 2005). When it comes to education around HIV and STIs, such researchers also argue against interventions which only seek to educate sex workers, and not their clients, an approach which ignores the wealth of research demonstrating that sex workers are actually keen to

practice safe sex and may have lower rates of STIs when compared to other groups in the UK (Cusick & Burney, 2005; Pitcher, 2006).

More recently, a community empowerment approach to HIV among sex workers has arisen as an alternative to some of the more patriarchal practices enacted as part of a harm-minimisation approach. According to Kerrigan et al. (2014) a community empowerment (CE) approach centres on the participation of sex workers in design and implementation at every level of programs and services (Kerrigan et al. 2014). Unlike some manifestations of a harm-minimisation approach, which see exiting as the ultimate way of managing harm (Raymond, 1998), CE does not aim to rescue or exit sex workers from sex work (Kerrigan et al. 2014). Instead, CE is a process by which sex workers can take collective ownership of programs and services, and is considered best practice when it comes to support for this client group (Kerrigan et al. 2015). 'Making sex work safe' a guidebook produced by the Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP) and ARHTAG (1997) states that, whilst there is no single type of sex work support that works universally, sex worker participation in such support is a universal feature of successful projects and services. When it comes to the role of non-government organisations in a community empowerment approach to HIV, Kerrigan et al. (2014) are clear that, whilst a significant role does exist, that role must be supportive rather than directive or such organisations may actually hinder this approach.

2.1.2 Harm-minimisation and moving towards a holistic model of support

Whilst the previous section has highlighted the ways in which a harm-minimisation approach to HIV amongst sex workers can be linked to patriarchal practices, perhaps as a result of the 'value neutrality' (Cusick, 2006) discussed earlier as a key principle of this approach, such practices are not inherent, and researchers such as Cusick (2006) have argued for the need to expand the harm-reduction approach to go beyond a focus on HIV and injecting drug-use, to promote better sex worker health in general. According to the guideline booklet produced by the Network of Sex Work Projects and ARHTAG (1997, p.5)

health is a core principle for successful sex work projects. Here, health is defined not just as sexual health, but as ‘a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing’. The SWEAT (sex workers’ education and advocacy task force) good practice guide to integrated sex worker programming (Rangasami, 2015) describes this as working with the whole person; head, body, heart and spirit, and argues that ‘sex workers have the same needs as any other person and sex work programmes should aim to address all of these needs’ (Rangasami, 2015, p.22). The SWEAT guide also argues that successful sex work support should be founded on the principle that service-users are first people, then sex workers, and it is therefore vital for projects to support individuals as whole people through providing holistic services. As a result, sex work support services are increasingly adopting holistic models of support (Pitcher, 2006), which provide various interventions and offer additional kinds of support beyond that focused solely on sexual health. This shift can be seen in the taking up of a harm-minimisation approach to drug-use amongst sex workers, and predominantly street sex workers, which, though a relatively new concept when discussed by the NSW in 1997, is increasingly common today.

When it comes to understanding the need for a more holistic approach to specialist sex work support, consideration of the literature on the harms said to be linked to sex work seems key. Cusick (2006) conducted a review of such literature and categorised three types of association between sex work and the harms linked to it: factors thought to predict, explain or cause sex work; harms introduced by sex work; and, mutually reinforcing factors. While those writing from within these different viewpoints perceived the harms linked to sex work differently, there appears to be a common list of harms discussed within each. Within her chapter on specialist sex work support, Pitcher (2006) presents the following as harms linked to sex work; experiences of violence, both prior to and during sex working; substance abuse, particularly in outdoor workers; homelessness; low self-esteem; harassment from police and communities; experiences of the criminal justice system; and negative experiences of statutory services. In regards to the need for a more holistic model of sex work support, this list of harms seems to reflect the additional areas of service-

provision beyond sexual health support, and therefore appear to be the reason a holistic model seems necessary.

The issue of violence in sex work, the first harm on Pitcher's (2006) list, is one that has been written and hypothesised about rather extensively, with global sex work literature reporting varying figures on the impact of violence on sex workers, from 50% to 100% of sex workers having experienced physical, sexual and/or economic violence in their job (Sanders & Campbell, 2007). A number of studies in this area have highlighted how a high percentage of street sex workers have also experienced violence outside of sex working (see Sanders & Campbell, 2007), something which led Surratt et al. (2004) to argue that street sex workers experience a cycle of violence in their lifetimes. While there are other professions which may involve a risk of violence, research in this area suggests sex work involves a disproportionate risk of violence, with street sex workers in the UK being 12 times more likely to die from violence at work than other women their age (Ward, Day & Weber, 1999). In fact, Brookman and Maquire (2003) claim that sex workers are the *most* vulnerable group to homicide, an argument which was confirmed by a recent analysis of occupational homicides of sex workers in the UK (Cunnigham et al, 2018), and which suggests the need for some form of intervention to reduce violence, or to address the effects of violence, which might include direct support for sex workers around this issue.

While the impact of violence on sex workers is an important issue that requires addressing, sex work researchers are clear that experiences of violence vary with sector (Sanders & Campbell, 2007). Traditionally, research in this area has described indoor sex work as safer than street sex work, with lower levels of violence reported by those selling sex indoors (Church et al. 2001; Whittaker & Hart, 1996). However, more recent studies have demonstrated shifting trends around the risk associated with indoor and outdoor sex work, with findings revealing that the risk of homicide is now higher for sex workers in the indoor markets, and that more murders of sex workers are now taking place indoors (Campbell et al. 2018). Contrastingly, such research found low levels of serious crime reported by

internet sex workers (Campbell, et al. 2018), suggesting the ability to screen clients, offered by online working, results in reduced risk.

While newer ways of selling sex, such as online working may be associated with a lower risk of violence and serious crime, Gorry, Roen and Reilly (2010) highlight the emotional and psychological impacts that are still a risk for those selling sex. Sanders (2004) research highlights the association between factors such as a demanding work schedule and emotional burnout, and even in sectors where low levels of violence are reported in a number of studies, research carried out in this context suggests a climate of fear remains (see Gorry, Roen & Reilly, 2010; Whittaker & Hart, 1996).

Like the issue of violence, the relationship between sex work and substance-abuse has also been widely discussed in the literature, with a number of theorists drawing attention to its complexity (see Broadway, 2008). Researchers have discussed how sex workers may 'use drugs to cope with psychological, emotional, and physical stress' (Rekart, 2005, p.2123) and also how individuals may use sex work as a means to fund drug use (Rekart, 2005). In this way, the relationship between sex work and drug use can be seen as a cyclical one; sex workers take drugs to 'cope' with sex working, and then sex work to fund the drug-use, or individuals begin sex working as a means of paying for drugs, and then use drugs to 'cope' with the impacts of sex working, and the cycle continues. While substance abuse is presented by Pitcher (2006) as one of the harms associated with sex work, both she and a number of other sex work researchers have again argued that this is an issue largely facing outdoor workers (see Broadway, 2008) and therefore it should not simply be assumed that all sex workers are drug-users, or in need of support for this issue.

As with drug-use, the issue of homelessness is also argued to be one which is experienced by a much larger proportion of street-based sex workers than indoor workers, and according to Broadway (2008) is part of the distinct nature of the outdoor market. In fact, a number of the challenges Pitcher (2006) lists as facing sex workers, overlap with those listed

by Broadway (2008) as characteristics specific to the outdoor sex industry; suggesting it is predominantly street sex workers that face harms as a result of their occupation.

Broadway's (2008) list includes current/past experiences of violence, trauma and abuse; complex relationships between drug-use and sex work; stigma and low self-esteem attached to sex work; financial independence (no benefits) and multiple needs of many women.

In light of the literature discussed so far, it could be argued that a holistic approach to specialist sex work support is only necessary for outdoor sex workers, as this is the group experiencing the majority of challenges. However, the final three factors on Pitcher's (2006) list of harms linked with sex work; harassment from police and communities; experience of the criminal justice system; and negative experiences of statutory services, are shared by both outdoor and indoor workers. Due to the nature of sex work law in the UK, raids on sex-selling establishments are not uncommon, though they may be sporadic (West, 2000) and sex workers who have been working from the same establishment still face arrest, and possibly a prison sentence. As described in the previous chapter, street sex workers also risk arrest due to laws criminalising loitering and soliciting. As a result, traditional means of reporting the violence we know to affect outdoor workers (and less commonly indoor workers) and other incidents such as robbery (Whittaker & Hart, 1996) which affect both groups, are not necessarily accessible. In 2012 the charity UK Network of Sex Work Projects recognised this and started the world's first national scheme designed specifically for sex workers to report incidents and crimes committed against them, establishing a National Ugly Mugs Scheme (UKNSWP, 2017). Though this scheme started as a pilot, it quickly became permanent and now distributes the information from reports submitted, in the form of text alerts etc. to around 10,000 sex workers across the UK (UKNSWP, 2017). NUM's evaluations and impact reports demonstrate the success of this specialist project and state that 62.7% of sex workers said they would be more likely to report violent crimes to the police as a direct result of NUM, they also state that NUM has led to the convictions of 22 serial offenders, 17 of which are rapists, and therefore has prevented at least 51 rapes (based on the assumption that each offender would commit a further 3 rapes) (UKNSWP, 2014-2015). The success of National Ugly Mugs in increasing reporting, ensuring convictions

and therefore making sex working safer, demonstrates how specialist support for sex workers can be extremely effective, and also suggests that what it meant by 'support' can be quite broad and varied.

However, in addition to the criminalisation of sex workers leading to a potential *need* for specialist support, literature on sex work services makes clear the way in which criminalisation can also act as a *barrier* to such support. In 2004 the home office published 'Paying the Price', a consultation paper on prostitution which has been widely criticised by specialist services for the way in which it prioritised a criminal justice approach to sex work, and as a result, de-prioritised sex worker health (Boynton & Cusick, 2006; Cusick & Burney, 2005). According to Boynton and Cusick (2006), outreach services for sex workers noticed an increased fear about the safety of their services following the report, due to a concern that accessing specialist services may lead to identification and therefore arrest. When it came to the impact of 'paying the price' (Home Office, 2004) on specialist sex work services, not only did the report impact access to such services, in some cases it also impacted on what was involved in service delivery. Following the release of the report, and the resulting move towards a Nordic model, which positions sex workers as victims but still criminalises those selling sex in a 'no tolerance' approach (Carline & Scoular, 2015), engagement and support orders (ESOs) were introduced for those convicted of soliciting in England and Wales (Carline & Scoular, 2015). ESOs require sex workers to attend three meetings with a 'suitable person', meetings which are designed to 'address' the reasons behind the offence and therefore prevent re-offending and encourage exit. Due to many specialist services involvement in ESOs as the 'suitable person', Carline and Scoular (2015, p.109) argue that such services have 'increasingly become part of the criminal justice system and are consequently responsible for operationalising the government's policies'. Overall, the existing literature on specialist sex work support makes clear the negative impact of criminalisation on such services, both in the way in which a lack of access may mean a delay in receiving necessary support (Boynton & Cusick, 2006), and in the jeopardising of specialist projects/services as 'safe spaces' that are independent from the criminal justice system that has penalised sex workers for so long.

2.1.3 The need for specialist support

In addition to the *criminalisation* of sex workers acting as a barrier to generalised support, there is also a significant amount of sex work literature presenting the *stigmatisation* of sex workers as another barrier, which results in the need for specialist support. Research on sex worker experiences of generalised support, and particularly of access to health-care, reports that sex workers feel looked down on (Mosedale, Kouimtsidis & Reynolds, 2009) and misunderstood by generic health-care professionals (Gorry, Roen and Reilly, 2010) who may respond to their disclosure of what they do negatively (Clark, 2009) and powerfully reinforce stigma through the language they use (Whitaker, Ryan & Cox, 2011). Recent research also suggests that negative experiences of statutory support can act as a barrier for a significant amount of time (Lowe et al. 2017) with some sex workers describing a negative experience 30 years previous as the reason they would choose specialist support. As a result, sex workers tend to under-use conventional services (Pitcher, 2006), and those that do access statutory health-care are likely to attempt to hide certain aspects of their lifestyle (Lowe et al. 2017; Whitaker, Ryan & Cox, 2011), resulting in many sex workers going without the health-care or treatment they need. In contrast to the powerful stigma and shame sex workers described feeling at the hands of generic health-care professionals, research on specialist support states that sex workers described never feeling judged (Gorry, Roen & Reilly, 2010) and experiencing far less stigma than they would in generic support (Broadway, 2008). Lowe et al. (2017) suggest that, as well as specialist support being delivered by professionals who are well educated in sex work, the comparative level of comfort experienced within specialist support is likely to be due to such support bypassing the need for disclosure, in the same way that accessing an LGBT support group bypasses the need for 'coming out' as something other than heteronormative. Therefore, whilst working to educate health-care professionals, and others who might offer generic services to sex workers, is an increasingly common aspect of service delivery for specialist support services (see James-Hanman & Roberts, 2013 & Sanders-McDonagh & Neville, 2012), the literature

discussed so far would suggest that, until stigma around sex work ceases to be reinforced by those offering generic support, therefore removing this barrier to accessing such support, specialist services will remain necessary in order for sex workers to access the support some of them may require.

In contrast to the literature so far discussed, which presents the harms associated with sex work as the reason for why specialist support is necessary, there is a small amount of literature which is more critical of such services and complicates this straightforward understanding of why they exist. According to Agustin (2005a) the origins of 'helping projects' or 'the rescue industry' (Agustin, 2007) are not necessarily benevolent, as argued in the literature already discussed. Instead, they are seen to be rooted in a Western desire to help, save and control (Agustin, 2005a) and a pathologizing of women who sell sex as victims. Agustin (2005a, para.4) argues that 'despite the efforts being carried out on their behalf, there has been little improvement in the lot of women who sell sex since the whole helping project began'. In other words, there is little evidence that these helping projects actually help the women they are said to exist for; whereas the benefits to the 'helpers' are argued by Agustin (2007) and McGrow (2017) to be undisputable. If this is the case, then the answer to why support for sex workers exists, is not to address the harms that may affect individuals who sell sex, but instead to address the needs of service-providers to rescue, save, help and control.

The issue with specialist support which is run with an underlying victimhood narrative of sex work is also acknowledged by Carline and Scoular (2015) and Sanders (2009), all of whom go further to discuss how this becomes even more problematic in a society which criminalises those who sell sex. The researchers argue that providing specialist support within a societal culture in which sex workers are both seen as victims, yet still criminalised, leads to confused support cultures and approaches, and an enforcement plus support model. This can be seen in the involvement of specialist support services in the enforcement of engagement support orders (Carline & Scoular, 2015) and the use of Anti-social behavioural orders for sex workers (Sanders, 2009). When combined, a perspective of sex workers as

victims and an enforcement of criminalisation can lead to specialist services attempting to 'rescue' sex workers through enforcing punishment for their involvement in sex work.

When it comes to reaching a conclusion about the efficacy of specialist sex work support, something heavily questioned by Agustin (2005a), the variation and complexity between and within such services, presented in this chapter, makes this a rather difficult task. Therefore, instead of attempting to debate their efficacy, it seems fair to conclude that Agustin's critique highlights the importance of participatory approaches to sex work support, such as the community empowerment approach considered in section 2.1.1, and the need to involve sex workers in both the design and delivery of services, in order to avoid the kind of patriarchal support of which Agustin is so critical.

2.2 What do they do? Areas of service provision and methods of service delivery

This section will follow on from considering the origins of sex work support and why such support exists, to look at what it is specialist services actually do. Section 2.2.1 will begin by looking at the areas of service provision discussed in the academic literature and service evaluations, and section 2.2.2 will then move on to discuss methods of service delivery.

2.2.1 Areas of service provision

This sub-section will look at 10 areas of service provision, which I categorised from reading a range of literature on sex work support. Figure 1 breaks down this literature by type, and shows the amount of each type focusing on female and male sex workers, in addition to the amount based in the UK.

Figure 1 – Table showing break-down of sex work support literature

	Empirical research	Literature review	External service review	Service evaluations
No. considered in this section	7	1	1	5
No. focusing on female sex workers	4	1	1	3
No. focusing on male sex workers	1	0	0	1
No. based in UK	4	1	1	4

Housing & Homelessness

Due to large numbers of street sex workers having experienced homelessness, many projects provide support relating to issues around housing (see James-Hanman & Roberts, 2013; Sanders-McDonagh & Neville, 2012). For some services this includes securing emergency accommodation (Whowell, 2011) or liaising with housing providers to enable referrals (Pitcher, 2006). As discussed in Dodsworth, Sorensen & Larsson’s (2015) evaluation of sex work services in Norfolk, hostels often come with their own set of problems, particularly for those trying to reduce or stop drug-use, and as a result, services may offer specialist accommodation (Broadway, 2008), which in some cases may be a run by the service themselves.

Drug and Alcohol Support

As a result of the established link between outdoor sex work and drug-use, many services offer support relating to drug and alcohol abuse (see James-Hanman & Roberts, 2013; Saldanha & Parenteau, 2013). Practices relating to this area of service delivery can vary, with the majority of services offering information and advice in relation to drug and alcohol use, and facilitating referrals to treatment services. Some projects also have arrangements for drugs workers to accompany them on outreach to sex-selling establishments, and a small number have their own, in-house treatment services which are designed specifically for their sex-working service-users (Pitcher, 2006).

Health Support

For many services, 'harm-minimisation' includes supporting individuals selling sex with their health and wellbeing. Due to most services taking a holistic approach, this area of support usually includes support for mental and physical health, as well as sexual health (Whowell, 2011). When it comes to supporting the mental health of sex workers, services may offer in-house counselling or other forms of therapeutic intervention (Pitcher, 2006; Preble, Praetorius & Cimino, 2015). As well as these more formalised methods of support for mental health, Dodsworth, Sorensen & Larsson (2015) also found that sex working service-users experienced befriending as a form of support for the loneliness they experienced due to feeling unable to share what they do with others for fear of judgement and stigma, suggesting that the relationships which develop in such services are a form of service provision and support in themselves.

Access to physical and sexual health support may involve trained nurses who either join the team on outreach (BASIS, 2016), or have a physical space within the drop-in centre where they can provide medical interventions on site (Preble, Praetorius & Cimino, 2015). Support services commonly provide information on safer sex practices (CATIE, 2010) and are likely to

have free condoms available to give out on site, or to distribute during outreach (Whowell, 2011).

Violence and Safety Support

In light of the high levels of violence said to be experienced by outdoor sex workers, and the issues which prevent sex workers from reporting via traditional means such as the police; addressing the safety of sex workers is seen to be of vital importance for support services for this group (Pitcher, 2006). Support service literature suggests that, not only do sex worker specific services offer support for those currently dealing with domestic and sexual (and other) violence (James-Hanman & Roberts, 2013), they also support those dealing with the effects of past violence through counselling (Gorry, Roen & Reilly, 2010). Some of the most common ways sex work services work towards improving the safety of sex workers are through reporting incidents and assaults (BASIS, 2016) through National Ugly Mugs (UKNSP, 2017), and distributing 'dodgy punter' sheets detailing incidents in the local area and descriptions of customers to avoid.

Support with the criminal justice system

A number of support services now offer arrest referral or court diversion schemes, which aim to stop the cycle of sex working following arrest (Broadway, 2008; Preble, Praetorius & Cimino, 2015), these schemes will be discussed in more detail in sub-section 2.2.2. Welfare and legal advice services are also a common aspect of support for sex workers, and particularly for outdoor workers who are more vulnerable to arrest (Pitcher, 2006). This may involve service-providers liaising with the police, assisting service-users with issues related to the criminal justice system, or external professionals offering advice within drop-in sessions.

Support with unemployment and finance

Particularly for sex workers wishing to exit, but also for those trying to secure housing, support with unemployment and finances is key. For individuals exiting the sex trade, a lack of skills may be a barrier to securing other work, therefore support for unemployment may include workshops focused on building specific skills, or help to put together professional documents such as a CV (James-Hanman & Roberts, 2013). Financial support may involve advice on budgeting (Preble, Praetorius & Cimino, 2015) or on setting up a bank account and paying bills.

Provision of resources

In addition to the provision of free condoms and lubricant (Saldanha & Parenteau, 2013; Whowell, 2011), many services also provide free food and drink. For outreach services this is likely to be cups of tea and coffee and food that sex workers can easily manage on the beat, such as cups of soup (Whowell, 2011). For drop-in centres food options may include a hot meal that can be eaten on-site (CATIE, 2010). Support service literature also mentions a number of other resources that are provided to sex workers, such as personal alarms (Pitcher, 2006); clothing (CATIE, 2010); and 'winter warmer' packs (BASIS, 2016)

Support to exit

How much of a project's service delivery is centred around exiting depends on the focus of that project (something which will be discussed further in section 2.3), with some providing support for exiting as just one aspect of a holistic approach, and some focusing solely on practices related to helping men and women leave sex work. Though there is variation, most services tend to offer some support to those wishing to exit (see CATIE, 2010; James-Hanman & Roberts, 2013). Practices relating to exiting support can include helping sex

workers to develop additional skills through activities or more structured training, and also support relating to areas already discussed such as drug treatment and housing support (Preble, Praetorius & Cimino, 2015).

Opportunities for self-development

This area of service provision includes aspects which may not be related to a particular area of support, e.g. housing support or drug treatment, but which provide opportunities for personal growth and development, or new experiences. The sex worker program case study from CATIE (2010) discussed service-users being provided with various workshops and the opportunity to volunteer, and Broadway's (2008) review of sex work services in Lambeth discusses leisure activities as an aspect of service provision, including health and beauty, sports, gardening, and restaurant visits.

Advocacy

While the level of advocacy carried out by a service may depend upon their underlying perspective on sex work (something that will be discussed further in section 2.3), a significant number of the service evaluations, and the other literature on sex work support, discussed advocacy as an area of service provision (see BASIS, 2016; James-Hanman & Roberts, 2013). For some services this involved mediation with local communities, and CATIE (2010) reports the success of the sex work program they studied in reducing tensions between their sex working service-users and their local community. For other services, advocacy involved working with other third-sector and statutory bodies to ensure sex workers had access to a range of services (Sanders-McDonagh & Neville, 2012), and for others advocacy meant a more general promotion of sex worker rights (Agustin, 2007), possibly through campaigning for decriminalisation or challenging the perception of sex workers as victims.

Beyond service provision

While the areas of service provision discussed so far represent some of the most common and most significant aspects of support for sex workers, Whowell's (2011) ethnographic research with an outreach service for male sex workers in the UK led her to argue that support for this group is much more than simply the material practices. Whowell (2011) identified a proven reputation for care as key to providing support and earning the trust of service-users, and Preble, Praetorius and Cimino (2015) state how service-users in their study also identified reputation as an important factor for a support service. In addition to reputation, service-users in their study also discussed the importance of belonging (Preble, Praetorius & Cimino, 2015), further supporting the suggestion discussed earlier that the relational aspect of support is extremely significant.

2.2.2 Service Delivery Methods

In addition to the ten areas of service provision identified, I also categorised seven methods of service-delivery from the literature, which will now be discussed.

Outreach

One of the most commonly discussed methods of service-delivery for sex workers in the literature is outreach, a method that involves service-providers (and possibly other professionals) heading out on to the beat and into sex-selling establishments and meeting sex workers 'where they are at' (Saldanha and Parenteau, 2013), in order to offer them support without requiring them to go out of their way, or break their routine. This is commonly on foot, but can be in a van or some sort of vehicle (Whowell, 2011). Service-providers doing outreach have been described in the literature as outsiders entering a space

that does not belong to them; they are guests in the space for the time period they are doing outreach (Saldanha & Parenteau, 2013), something which means they are expected to be discreet and not to draw attention (Dodsworth, Sorenson & Larsson, 2015). Outreach hours seem to differ with service, with some teams heading out during the evening (Whowell, 2011), and others doing outreach through the night (Saldanha & Parenteau, 2013).

Outreach is described in the literature as being both experiential and relational (Saldanha & Parenteau, 2013); experiential in the way in which it relies on outreach teams being aware of the space and reacting to it, and being able to manage risk (Whowell, 2011), and relational due to the importance of building relationships in order to gather information and to pass it on (Whowell, 2011). According to Whowell (2011) one of the most important aspects of outreach is being a consistent presence in the space, and while Saldanha and Parenteau (2013) agree, they argue that as well as being consistent, outreach needs to be constantly adapting in order to be effective. In reflecting on the process of outreach, Saldanha and Parenteau (2013) describe it as an active form of waiting in which outreach workers need to maintain their constant presence in order to be ready anytime a sex worker requests their support.

Case-working

Like outreach, one-to-one support often referred to as case-working or key-working, was frequently mentioned in the literature (See BASIS, 2016; Broadway, 2008; CATIE, 2010; Pitcher, 2006) and was described by service-users in Mosedale, Kouimtsidis and Reynolds' (2009) study as being a particularly helpful aspect of support. In most services, case-working involves a service-user being assigned to a particular member of staff who will then spend time with them one-to-one and offer support based on their particular wants and needs.

Drop-in

The existence of a drop-in centre/building was discussed in a number of the service evaluations and the academic studies (See BASIS, 2016; CATIE, 2010; Mosedale, Kouimtsidis & Reynolds, 2009; Sanders-McDonagh & Neville), though little information about what is actually done in drop-ins and how this differs from outreach or case-working was given. According to Pitcher (2006) drop-ins may provide specific services such as needle exchange, sexual health checks, and counselling, or they may simply be ‘a more general space in which sex workers can just come to relax, make use of the facilities and network with others in similar circumstances’ (p.248).

Court-diversion schemes

As previously mentioned, court diversion schemes arose in response to a cycle in which women arrested for offences relating to sex work then ended up sex working to pay fines and/or legal fees. Arrest referral and court diversion schemes can include sex workers being bailed to appear in court on specific days when a service-provider from a support project can also be in attendance, and offering arrested sex workers the option of engaging with support over paying a fine (Pitcher, 2006; Preble, Praetorius & Cimino, 2015). While this scheme may ensure sex workers avoid facing criminal charges, researchers such as Wahab and Panichelli (2013) have critiqued it for being coercive, due to the fact that those who do not complete the program, or are deemed ineligible, face prosecution and a possible prison sentence.

Signposting/referrals

When it comes to this method of service-delivery, support services for sex workers can be thought of as an intermediary, signposting service-users to other relevant services and resources, and making referrals on their behalf. Signposting appears to be a practice most

common within outreach, where service-providers are unable to address certain support needs and instead hand out information about where those needs can be met (Saldanha and Parenteau, 2013; Whowell, 2011).

Social Media Networking

Though only discussed in the one instance in this literature, Saldanha and Parenteau (2013) argue that access to technology now means that, alongside older practices like outreach teams walking the beat with rucksacks full of condoms, support providers are now reaching out to service-users (potential and current) via social media networking sites. This method of service-delivery is also discussed at length within new best practice guidance for working with online sex workers, and is referred to here as 'netreach' (Beyond the Gaze, 2018). Earlier this year Beyond the Gaze, the team behind the best practice guidance, conducted the second of two surveys asking sex work projects about the targeted methods they engaged in online to contact online sex workers (Beyond the Gaze, 2018). The top three online methods used were projects having an information thread on SAAFE, a website offering support and advice for escorts; projects having their own profile with information about their service on online escort advertising platforms and forums; and projects having a profile and presence on social media. While netreach is an increasingly popular method of advertising services to sex workers, Beyond the Gaze are clear that projects engaging in netreach must adhere to new GDPR guidelines, and ensure they take issues of data protection into consideration (Beyond the Gaze, 2018).

Helpline/Phone-line

Though not discussed in this literature as a method of service-delivery currently being used, service-users in Mosedale, Kouimtsidis and Reynolds' (2009) research put forward the ideas of a drug helpline and an emergency phone-line as suggestions for service-delivery.

Preliminary findings from Lowe et al's (2017) study of sexual health support for online sex

workers also reported their participants as having suggested a phone-line as an aspect of an ideal service for sex workers.

Summary

The ten areas of service-provision and seven methods of service-delivery discussed in this section have demonstrated the variation that exists within specialist sex work support service provision, both in terms of what is on offer, and in terms of the formal practices carried out. Section 2.3 will now consider literature which demonstrates further variation in this setting and suggests the importance of understanding more than simply what a service claims to do.

2.3 Recognising the variation and complexity within sex work support

In addition to the variation demonstrated within specialist sex work support provision, existing literature also makes clear the variation within practices, ideology and approach. While there have been attempts made to categorise this variation (see Oselin & Weitzer, 2013), detailed ethnographic work such as Agustin (2007) and Whowell's (2011) suggests sex work support is complex and cannot be so neatly labelled or explained. This section will consider such literature and how it adds to understandings of this context.

2.3.1 Complexity and variation in practice

Though only a small number of studies, the detailed ethnographic work of Agustin (2007) and Whowell (2011) demonstrates how complex a setting sex work support is on many levels, and the value of such research in illuminating and engaging with this complexity.

For her PhD research, Whowell (2011) carried out ethnographic research, including interviews with thirty-one people, and six-hundred hours of participant observation with two male sex work outreach projects. In her discussion of this research, Whowell (2011) notes how learning to 'do outreach' was not simple, and how the skills involved went beyond just carrying out the formal practices of service-provision. Whowell discusses how the outreach workers had to learn to 'read' the beat and react to signs and signals, and how being aware of how they 'felt' whilst walking the beat was important in keeping the outreach workers safe. Participating in outreach also allowed Whowell (2011) to observe the importance of laughter and humour as key skills, something she saw as taken-for-granted by the outreach workers. The data collected for her research led Whowell (2011) to conclude that providing specialist sex work support involves far more than the material practices categorised within section 2.2, therefore demonstrating the importance of research which is able to engage with the complexities of this setting.

Agustin (2007) also carried out ethnographic research with two outreach services for sex workers in Spain, though her research across Europe led her to perceive the findings as widely representative. For two years Agustin was a participant observer, attending meetings to decide policy, accompanying volunteers in vans and bars, and reading epidemiological reports, in addition to carrying out formal interviews with project management officials. Like Whowell, Agustin's (2007) work demonstrate the complexities, but also the contradictions, that exist within sex work support. Within her findings, Agustin discusses the efficacy of the tolerant, harm reduction approach taken by the anti-aids group she observed for drawing in lots of sex workers, who could then receive support. However, she also discusses how the large crowd that gathered around the van became a spectacle, consequently highlighting the difference between the sex workers and everyone else. In addition to the anti-aids group, Agustin (2007) also observed an outreach service she refers to as the 'Progresistas', Unlike the harm-minimisation focus of the anti-AIDs group, the Progresistas are described as promoting the 'sex work as work' agenda, along with sex worker solidarity and empowerment.

When it comes to the variation between these services, Oselin and Weitzer (2013) argue for the significance of underlying ideology. According to the two theorists, the position taken on sex work, which they then link to one of Weitzer's (2009) three paradigms, determines what it is that a service does, and how it does it. Oselin and Weitzer (2013) drew on data from multiple sources, including the website content of 37 support services (which they refer to as prostitute serving organisations); 21 in-depth interviews with staff from such services, and secondary sources that explore particular programmes. This data was then used to categorise the services in terms of their predominant perspective on sex work, aligned with one of Weitzer's (2009) three paradigms. Oselin & Weitzer (2013) also used the data to find out about what it was that each service offered, and from this information they then drew some conclusions about how the paradigm of sex work aligned with, influenced the goals of support and the practices involved in service delivery. The 37 support services studied were grouped into four categories; radical feminist prostitute serving organisations (PSOs), linked to the oppression paradigm; sex work PSOs, linked to the empowerment paradigm; youth oriented PSOs, linked to the polymorphous paradigm; and neutral PSOs, also linked to the polymorphous paradigm. Oselin and Weitzer (2013) went on to discuss how each type of 'prostitute serving organisation' (PSO) formulates some kind of 'grievance' about sex work, based on the paradigm they align with. For radical feminist PSOs, the problem with sex work is that it is a form of female oppression and exploitation, which reflects a patriarchal society. For sex-work PSOs, the injustice is not in sex work itself, but in the societal disapproval and legal punishment of sex workers. For youth oriented PSOs the central grievance is that those who are underage and involved in the sex industry are subject to arrest and legal punishment, and for neutral PSOs, who perceive individual experience of sex work to vary, the 'problem' with sex work differs with sex worker. Oselin and Weitzer (2013) argue that the creation of these 'injustice frameworks', which are influenced by underlying service ideology, define that which the service perceives to be the goals of support, and also the practices required to achieve these goals, and is therefore responsible for the variation across services. For radical feminist PSOs, who see sex work as patriarchal and oppressive, the goal of support should be to empower 'victims' to exit the sex trade, and therefore the practices of support involve developing alternatives and facilitating routes 'out'. For sex-work PSOs, who see society and criminalisation as the problem with sex work, the goal of

support is to advocate for sex worker rights, and the practices of support involve educating sex workers about these rights and creating campaigns around decriminalisation. For youth-oriented PSOs, who are focused on criminalisation of underage sex workers, the goal of support is to prevent service-users from receiving legal punishment, and to advocate for a change in the law on sex work in relation to minors. While the previous three categories of PSO are argued to clearly identify both the problem with sex work and the source of this problem, leading to clarity around programmatic goals and the practices of support, Oselin and Weitzer (2013) argue that neutral PSOs neglect to clarify the source of harms linked to sex work, and as a result, there remains ambiguity around what their programmatic goal of harm-minimisation actually means, and what practices are required to achieve it.

In regards to the variation demonstrated in Agustin's (2007) research, Oselin and Weitzer (2013) would therefore argue that this is due to a difference in underlying ideology and the resulting injustice framework created. However, the findings of Agustin's (2007) work suggest that the relationship between underlying ideology and the practices of support is more complex than Oselin and Weitzer (2013) claim. While the description provided of the 'Progresistas' would place them within Oselin and Weitzer's (2013) category of sex work PSO, some of the practices they engage in appear to contradict those argued by the two theorists to come from such an ideology. Agustin (2007) discusses how, despite the Progresistas professing a desire to empower sex workers to understand their rights, a focus reflective of sex work PSOs, they would often withhold gifts, such as condoms, until the sex workers had agreed to interact with them and discuss the topics on their agenda, a practice that can arguably be thought of as disempowering. Agustin's (2007) work therefore suggests that Oselin and Weitzer's (2013) categories of support, while useful in demonstrating variation, do not fully reflect the complexity and contradictions that exist both *between* and *within* sex work support services.

When it comes to understanding the limitations of models like Oselin and Weitzer's (2013), which solely focus on service ideology to make sense of the variation in sex work support, literature such as Phoenix and Oerton's (2005) and Sanders and Brown's (2017) may provide

an explanation in highlighting the way in which such support does not take place in a vacuum. As previously discussed, specialist support is impacted by regulation, and Pheonix and Oerton (2005) make clear how regulation, both at a local and a governmental level, is impacted by the dominant discourses of sex work being drawn upon. Sanders and Brown's (2017) research focusing on the multi-agency partnership initiative in Leeds also demonstrates how specialist support operates within, and is both influenced by and influences; local attitudes towards sex work, local governance and regulation of sex work, and local interventions and initiatives. Therefore, while the practices of different specialist services may be informed by their ideology of sex work, therefore leading to the variation demonstrated in the previous section, this literature suggests that such practices are enabled or constrained by the sex work environment they are operating within, including governance, attitudes and policy.

Whowell (2011) and Agustin's (2007) research demonstrates the value of detailed, ethnographic work that is able to engage with the complexities and contradictions that exist within specialist sex work support, and the importance of studying what services *actually* do, rather than simply what they *say* they do as a result of their ideology (Agustin, 2007).

2.3.2 Complexity and variation in approach

Within the literature on specialist sex work support, and on support services in general, the variation in approaches are described in a number of ways, which I would argue can be broadly grouped into two approaches; a service-user led approach, which positions the service-user as expert, and a service-provider led approach, which positions the service-provider as expert. While the former is discussed explicitly, frequently, and largely as a positive within the literature; the latter tends to be more implicit, more sporadic, and largely framed as a negative.

Due to the way in which a service-provider led approach tends to position the service-provider as expert, it is they who set the direction of such support, and not the service-user. In Preble, Praetorious and Cimino's (2015) study, they reported how service-users at 'fresh-start', a faith-based service they describe as a formal exiting program, felt case management was case-worker determined, rather than service-user led. This was found to cause frustration for the service-users who felt like the programs were one-size-fits-all, something which they felt conflicted with their own acknowledgement that sex workers are not one, homogenous group. In some instances, service-provider led approaches can take up a punishment model, where service-users experience consequences if they do not comply with the program of support laid out for them. This can be seen in the court-diversion schemes in Preble et al's (2015) study, where service-users could face sentencing if they didn't comply with the program (or were found ineligible), or in the Engagement and Support Orders discussed by Carline and Scoular (2015), where failure to complete the mandatory meetings within a six-month period is considered a breach that results in resentencing. Though a service-provider led approach is not commonly discussed in the literature in a positive manner, taking such an approach to support with sex workers may stem from the 'instability' often perceived to be a part of the lives of sex workers, and in particular street sex workers (Gorry, Roen & Reilly, 2010). In light of this 'instability', structured and formalised support led by a service-provider who may be perceived as being more consistent in their approach than the service-user, could be seen as justifiable.

In contrast to a service-provider led approach, taking up a service-user led approach is often explicitly discussed in the literature on sex work support services (see Broadway, 2008; Sanders-McDonagh & Neville, 2012), and in the literature on support services in general, where it has been referred to as service-user involvement (Broer, Nioboer & Bal, 2014); client-centred support (Jarman, Smith & Walsh, 1997), and person-centred practice (Thomson, Kilbane & Sanderson, 2008). As the name suggests, service-user led support involves service-users taking a more active role and, at least to some extent, directing support themselves. According to Sanders-McDonagh and Neville (2012) the 'user-led'

approach taken up by the Women's Open Space project gave service-users a sense of ownership over interaction, which they argue improves general wellbeing.

According to Mcgrath and Pistrang (2007), rather than being two separate and distinct approaches, service-provider-led and service-user-led approaches are instead the end points on a spectrum. Thinking about some of the sex work services/programmes so far discussed, it would seem fair to place those enforcing a punishment-model, such as those involved in court-diversion schemes and engagement support orders, towards the service-provider-led end of the spectrum, and the approach taken by services like Women's Open Space project, towards the service-user-led end. However, arguably sitting even further towards this end, perhaps even occupying the end-point of the spectrum, are peer-led specialist services, such as those taking up the community empowerment approach previously discussed. Though some specialist services may lean towards a service-user-led approach in giving service-users a *sense* of ownership, as in the Women's Open Space project, those taking up a peer-led or community empowerment approach actively advocate that service-users *take* ownership (WHO, 2013). This means sex worker involvement in the design and delivery of services at every level, including programmes having sex-workers as volunteers, as paid staff, and as managers (NSWP, 2015). In this way, community empowerment 'represents a paradigm shift from sex workers being recipients of services to the self-determination of sex worker communities' (WHO, 2013, p.6). Literature on community-empowerment makes clear the difference between services which are 'done for' sex workers, and those that are 'led by' them, as is demonstrated in figure 2 (WHO, 2013).

Figure 2 – Table comparing approaches to sex work support

Done for sex workers	Done with/Led by sex workers
<p>Programmes sometimes focus on how sex workers can protect <i>others</i> from disease, and how society can be protected <i>from</i> sex workers.</p> <p>Often assume that knowledge and power reside with the programme staff and managers.</p>	<p>Programmes focus on sex workers' collectively identified needs and develop appropriate solutions.</p> <p>Community discusses its needs before developing a programme, and sex workers are engaged in all stages of planning and implementation.</p>
<p>Involve sex workers in programme implementation commonly as volunteers, not as equal partners.</p>	<p>Involve sex workers as equal partners in programme implementation, more commonly as paid employees or as community outreach workers working with the community, not for an external organization.</p>
<p>Monitoring focuses on goods and services delivered and targets to be achieved.</p>	<p>Monitoring focuses on quality of services and programmes, community engagement, community cohesion and community acceptance, as well as adequacy of service coverage.</p>
<p>Focus on building relationships within the health system with health-care providers. Less emphasis is placed on building relationships among sex worker groups.</p>	<p>Focus on building relationships within sex worker communities as well as between sex workers and other organizations, service providers, human rights institutions and similar groups.</p>

When it comes to peer-led sex work support, there are some projects which take up such an approach from their conception. One example of this is 'queens of the underworld', a non-profit organisation set up by a 43 year old Latin migrant sex worker called Romina Rosales (NSWP, 2018). Romina had been struggling with anxiety, and one day decided to ask others in the strip-club where she worked about their own worries. She distributed a survey and found some shared concerns relating to sex work, and as a result created an organisation which promotes coping skills and self-care for women-identifying and femme sex workers (NSWP, 2018). For other projects, taking up a peer-led approach requires a transition, as was the case for the Avahan programme in India, which is described by those involved as shifting from being run 'for' sex workers, to being run 'with' them, to eventually being run 'by' them (Rangasami, 2015). Literature on peer-led specialist sex work support is explicit in its desire to see this transition replicated across all such services, therefore working towards the goal of cultivating programmes run entirely by sex workers (WHO, 2013).

While the literature on peer-led approaches is unified in its view on sex-worker involvement and meaningful participation (NSWP, 2015), the fact that such an approach is sex-worker driven at its core means that those advocating for it also acknowledge the impracticality of

taking up a fixed and prescriptive approach to implementing it (WHO, 2013). As a result, even those services/projects which share a peer-led model of support can be varied in terms of service-provision and delivery, again making clear the variation and complexity which exists within this context.

2.3.3 Exploring complexity through studying culture

When it comes to exploring the complexity of a setting, Killet et al. (2016) argue for the importance of understanding its culture, which they define as a combination of the underlying beliefs and assumptions of an organisation, as well as the day-to-day behaviours associated with these in practice. To add to this definition, organisational culture is defined within psychology as a normative glue and a shared set of assumptions, values, social ideals or beliefs, and perhaps most importantly, as a framework for understanding (Schein, 1990; Siehl & Martin, 1983). Though there appears to be a lack of research exploring the culture of specialist sex work support services, neighbouring research and literature in the support and care sector suggests this concept to be key in understanding the variation and complexities across this context.

In their special article on organisational culture and health care, Davies, Nutley and Mannion (2000) discuss the contested nature of this concept and conclude that ‘there must be such a thing as “organisational culture”’ (p.117), and that empirical work into the distinctive cultures across the care sector is key in understanding the place from which care (or support) is offered. The conclusions drawn by their research are supported by that of Killet et al. (2016), who drew upon an empirical study of care-homes in the UK to explore how experience was influenced by the culture of the service. Through their observations, panel groups and interviews, Killet et al. (2016) found that, instead of a typology of cultures, each home had their own distinct culture, which varied in strength and internal consistency. Understanding these distinctive cultures enabled the researchers to understand the variation in the kind of care being offered, and helped to shed light on the variation in the

experiences of those receiving it. From their research, Killet et al. (2016) concluded that organisational culture is influential in 'shaping the behaviour and attitudes across staff in health and social settings' (p.184) and the experience of service-users. Therefore highlighting the significance of understanding the culture of specialist sex work support services.

Though not direct studies of sex work support, literature such as Killet et al's (2016) and Davies et al's (2000) demonstrates that exploring sex work support service culture, or cultures, may provide a framework for understanding the complexities that this chapter has argued to exist within this context, therefore moving beyond the current categorisations of variation and their limitations.

Summary

This chapter has discussed the origins of sex work support and the progression from services solely focused on HIV prevention and treatment, to a more holistic approach. It has also considered a number of harms linked to sex work in the literature, and the barriers to more generalised support which make specialist support necessary. Further, this chapter has outlined what is known from the current literature about what such services do, both in terms of areas of service-provision and methods of service-delivery. In addition to discussing what is known, this chapter has also highlighted some areas that require further research, most significantly the need for further research which explores the complexities and nuances of specialist sex work support, something this research aims to do. The final section has highlighted a need for research exploring the culture of this support context in order to add to understandings of the variation and complexities, something else this research aims to address. Section 2.4 will now present the rationale for this research and the research aims designed to address the gaps identified within the literature.

2.4 Rationale for this research

The specialist sex work support literature considered in this chapter has demonstrated a shift towards a holistic model of support, which attempts to address more of the harms linked to sex work than solely issues with sexual health (Overs & Hunter, 1996; Pitcher, 2006). While there may appear some unity in the taking up of a harm-reduction approach and a holistic model, grey literature such as project reviews and evaluations, and empirical research focusing on specific elements of service delivery, demonstrates real variation in terms of what specialist services do and how they do it (BASIS, 2016; Broadway, 2008; CATIE, 2010; Cusick, Brooks-Gorden, Campbell & Edgar, 2011; Dodsworth, Sorensen & Larsson, 2015; Gorry Roen & Reilly, 2010; James-Hanman & Roberts, 2013; Mosedale, Kouimtsidis & Reynolds, 2009; Preble, Praetorius & Cimino, 2015; Saldanha & Parenteau, 2013; Sanders-McDonagh & Neville, 2012). Though there have been attempts made to categorise this variation (Oselin & Weitzer, 2013), the small body of detailed ethnographic research in this context, which looks at the micro-processes of support, or the 'on the ground' practices (Whowell, 2011), suggests that this setting is too complex to neatly categorise, and indicates a need for further research which is able to explore the complexities and variation evident within it (Agustin, 2007; Whowell, 2011). This research therefore aims to follow on from the detailed, ethnographic projects of Agustin (2007) and Whowell (2011), and will use ethnographic methods to study the 'on-the-ground' practices/micro-processes, which make up the culture of a specialist support service and illuminate the complexity and variation found in this setting.

In taking up this approach, this research will also respond to the call of a number of sex work researchers for more literature which explores this context beyond a focus on HIV in the sex working community (Agustin, 2007; Gorry, Roen & Reilly, 2010; Oselin & Weitzer, 2013; Pitcher, 2006; Whowell, 2010; Wilcox & Christmann, 2006). While this chapter has highlighted the move towards a holistic model of sex work support, which goes beyond a sole focus on sexual health, research which focuses on HIV/STI prevention and treatment

remains dominant within sex work support literature, leaving a comparatively small number of studies whose focus goes beyond this. This disproportionate focus was evidenced in my own literature search. When searching for the term ‘support services for sex workers’ between 01/01/2000 and the present day on the Summon Service by Proquest, 43 of the first 100 results were about the relationship between sex work and HIV, or the use of outreach services to manage HIV risk among this group. A search for ‘outreach services for sex workers’ within these same dates revealed half of the first 100 results were again focused on HIV or other sexually transmitted infections. In contrast, only 6 of the first 100 results for the first search term were about specialised support for sex workers (beyond that focused on managing HIV risk), and only 12 of the first 100 results for the second search term. The results of this systematic literature search can be seen in figure 2.

Figure 2 – table showing results of systematic literature search

Search Term	Lit. on specialist support (non-HIV)	Lit. on specialist support based in UK	Lit. on HIV/STIs
Support services for sex workers	6	3	43
Outreach services for sex workers	12	2	50

Therefore, in following on from the work of Agustin (2007) and Whowell (2011), this research will add to the growing body of literature which explores the lesser-studied practices and processes of specialist sex work support.

When it comes to studying these practices and processes, section 2.3.3 has demonstrated how studying the culture of a sex work support service may provide a framework for

exploring complexity within the levels of practice, ideology and approach, and therefore the first research aim of this study is:

To explore the lived culture of a support service for sex workers

This research aim will be guided by the following research questions:

1. *What are the taken for granted assumptions/beliefs of the service under study?*
2. *Are there contradictions within the culture of the service?*
3. *Does the culture made observable through the everyday practices reflect the culture demonstrated in the written philosophy and ethos of the service?*

Section 2.3.1 has demonstrated the variation and complexity that exists at the level of practice, and how research must develop understandings beyond the areas of service-provision offered, or what Agustin (2007) refers to as 'what they say they do'; instead exploring 'what they *actually* do' through detailed, ethnographic work. Therefore, the second research aim guiding this study is:

To explore the practices of both service-providers and service-users, which together constitute the nature of the service.

Though the exploration of practices and culture are arguably inextricably linked, Hognestad and Bøe (2016) argue that practical knowledge is gained through focusing specifically on the practices that are enacted within a setting, which they define as 'sayings, doings and relatings' (p.592). Nicolini (2009) also notes the significance of understanding 'how real-time practices are carried out in the workplace' (p.1391) within organisational studies. When it

comes to the practices of sex work support, the dominance of debates around sex work, power and agency suggest a need to understand how the practices enacted within sex work support might reinforce or challenge particular related discourses. As a result, the second research aim will be led by the following question:

Do the practices enacted by service-providers empower or disempower the service-users?

In addition to exploring the culture and practices of a specialist sex work support service, this research is also concerned with exploring the experiences of those participating in the setting, those whom Kinmond (1999) refers to as 'the people who know'. Following her research with those providing care to victims of self-harm, Kinmond (1999) argued that, in order to expand understanding, researchers should be exploring the experiences of those involved in the phenomena under study. The final aim of this thesis is therefore:

To explore the experience of those participating in the service, how they understand it and the meaning they attribute to it.

This research aim will be guided by the following research questions:

- 1. Was the setting experienced differently by service-providers/service-users?*
- 2. Were there any particularly significant aspects of experience?*
- 3. How did those within Women's Zone attach meaning to the service and to the practices within it?*

In addition to discussing what this chapter has done, it also seems important to discuss the way in which it has not considered the efficacy of specialist sex work support, and the fact

that this thesis does not aim to evaluate a sex work support service. As stated in section 2.1.2, measuring the efficacy of sex work support is particularly difficult due to the lack of agreement about what it is such services should be doing. While Oselin and Weitzer (2013) argue that this is a result of the underlying service ideology, proposing four kinds of service which each have their own perception of what they should be achieving, section 2.3.1 has made clear that the differences across sex work support are arguably too complex to fit neatly into the four categories of support proposed. In light of this, the aims of this research are designed to study process, rather than outcome. This shift in focus mirrors that seen in recent literature on counselling and psychotherapy, which occurred in response to a recognition of the lack of understanding of *how* and *why* certain outcomes came about (Alegria et al. 2016; Cooper, 2010). In the same way, the aims of this research will enable me to gain a better understanding of the day-to-day impacts of support, and what it means to those involved.

The particular ethnographic methods employed within this research to address the three research aims will be outlined in the following chapter, which will consider decisions made in relation to method and methodology.

Chapter three – Method and Methodology

Introduction

This chapter will cover decisions made in relation to methodology and method. It will begin with a discussion of the underpinning epistemological and ontological assumptions of this research, and the decision to take a critical realist approach. Following this, the choice to carry out a qualitative study using ethnographic methods will be discussed and justified, and detail will be given about how these methods were used to collect data. Issues relating to ethics and reflexivity will be unpacked, and some key issues explored. The final section of this chapter will consider the decision to take a predominantly thematic approach to analysis of the data, and will justify its suitability for this study, before discussing the process of analysis and introducing the two themes drawn out of the data.

3.1 Ontology and Epistemology

According to Creswell (1998) researchers bring multiple paradigmatic assumptions to the design of their studies, including those relating to ontology and epistemology. In the same way, they may also bring ideological perspectives which guide and influence the research. In the case of this research, the underpinning ontological and epistemological assumptions can be summarised as fitting within a broadly critical realist framework, something which will be discussed in this section. As well as being guided by a critical realist framework, my approach to this research has also been influenced by a mindfulness of some of the feminist debates around methodology, such as those around giving voice (considered in section 3.1.3), issues of power (considered in relation to a choice to undertake participant observations in section 3.2.5), and positionality (considered in section 3.4.2).

3.1.1 Deciding on a theoretical framework

When it came to deciding on a theoretical framework that would guide this thesis and underpin it, I began by considering social constructionism, which arose as a reaction against the dominant positivism within the social sciences, and against the view that knowledge is a direct perception of reality (Burr, 2015). Instead social constructionism argues that we construct our own versions of reality through language or 'discourse' and as such there can be multiple, competing versions of reality which co-exist (Burr, 2015). In this way, social constructionism appeared to provide a framework for acknowledging and understanding the many competing realities of sex work, and how these realities were constructed through the conflicting discourses discussed in chapter 1. In the same way it appeared to provide a framework for acknowledging and understanding the multiple realities of support discussed in chapter 2, and how these realities were linked with the competing discourses of sex work, and of support. While other theoretical perspectives search for 'truth', social constructionism argues that truth doesn't exist in the way it is often argued to, instead describing it as our currently accepted ways of understanding the world (Burr, 2015). This conceptualising of truth provides a means of understanding the shifts that have occurred regarding both sex work and support service culture. While sex work was once accepted as morally wrong and damaging, it is now accepted by many as a legitimate form of work. In the same way, experts designing and delivering fixed interventions is no longer most people's understanding of accepted practice within support. The 'truth' of sex work and support has changed over time, and continues to be debated and to evolve.

As well as providing a framework for accepting the contested nature of reality, social constructionism also insists on taking a critical stance towards taken-for-granted understandings (Burr, 2015), something which also seemed appropriate for this thesis and its desire to illuminate the culture and practices of a support service for sex workers; aspects which are likely to be taken-for-granted by those participating within this context.

Despite social constructionism seeming like an appropriate framework for the reasons discussed above, it became clear that there were also elements of this approach that were considered limiting, or unsuitable for the design and aims of this research. While a social constructionist framework would allow for acknowledgement of the multiple realities of sex work and support, it seemed stunted in its inability to reconcile these realities and affect change. According to Parker (1998) the social constructionist view that all realities are equally valid results in a sort of paralysis where no account is any more representative of reality than any other. Parker (1998) discusses accounts of abuse as an example of how such a view can be limiting. If the accounts of both abuser and victim are seen as equally valid, how can we say that one party is oppressed and in doing so work towards keeping them safe? In addition to this, social constructionism's stance against 'individualist' psychology (Burr, 2015) has been argued to mean it is not an appropriate framework for researching personal experience (Butt, 1999). As a result, I felt I needed to search for a framework that would incorporate social constructionism's acknowledgement of contested realities, whilst also being able to move beyond undecidables and unknowables to say something about these realities, and also be suitable for the exploration of individual experience.

This search led me to consider critical realism, a post-positivist approach which sits between positivism and relativism (Given, 2008). Like social constructionism, critical realism acknowledges the contested nature of reality, but unlike social constructionism it offers the possibility of being able to judge between competing accounts on the basis of their explanatory power (Bhaskar, 2011), their ability to explain the setting or phenomena under study. Critical realism can therefore be seen to accept epistemic relativism in its acknowledgement that our beliefs are 'produced, transient and fallible' (Parr, 2015, p.196), but to reject judgemental relativism in its claims that 'all beliefs are equally valid and there are no rational grounds for preferring one to another' (p.196). When it comes to the findings of this research, critical realism therefore offers a framework for choosing data extracts based on their perceived salience (Parr, 2015).

In addition to this, a critical realist framework also allows for acknowledging the significance of both human agency and social structures (Lopez, 2005). In this way it sits between the perception of human behaviour as completely influenced by structures, over which individuals have neither knowledge nor control, and the perception of the social world as empty of any enduring structural dimensions (Bhaskar, 2011). Being able to acknowledge the influence of both human agency and social structures is key in sex work research, as ignoring either influence would arguably be reductionist. To focus only on the economy and the gendered nature of poverty would be to ignore the choices women make to enter the sex industry over other options, and to focus only on the choices and behaviour of those who sell sex would be to ignore structural factors which lead to their involvement in sex work. In order to resolve debates around how humans could simultaneously exercise agency and have their actions be structurally determined, Bhaskar (1978) developed the 'transformational model', which argues that we do not 'create' social structures; we reproduce and transform them, whilst they too exert this influence over us. Having an awareness of the impact of and on social structures is important for this research as there appear to be a number of social structures reproducing and transforming sex work support, whilst it, in turn, reproduces and transforms them. These structures range from status-level societal structures such as gender and class, to government-level structures such as health services and the law. Though the focus of this research is not explicitly on how a support service for sex workers causally affects, and is causally affected by, social structures; adopting a critical realist framework will allow me to acknowledge that these transformational processes will impact on service-user's and provider's experiences of participating in the service.

When it comes to data collection, there is another important difference between social constructionism and critical realism. According to Burr (2015) while mainstream psychology views language as a fairly straightforward expression of thought, social constructionism sees language as one of the principle means by which we construct our world. Language, therefore, is seen as a pre-condition for thought. As a result, social constructionists see language as being at the heart of the construction process (Burr, 2015), and are therefore

committed to the study of language and discourse. While critical realists view language as important when it comes to knowledge and experience, they do not believe that knowledge can be reduced to language alone (Lopez,2005). For this reason, critical realists are likely to combine the study of language with the study of other elements such as practices and actions, in order to gain a greater understanding. In this way critical realism appeared to fit with the research aims of exploring the culture and practices of a support service, something which arguably cannot be accessed through language alone.

For the reasons so far discussed, critical realism was chosen as a broad framework to underpin and guide this research. The suitability of this framework for the chosen research method will be discussed in more detail in section 3.2.3.

3.1.2 Choosing the methodological paradigm – the need for a qualitative approach

Following on from the decision to take a critical realist approach to this research, the decision was also made to take a qualitative approach. Though critical realism has been used alongside both qualitative and quantitative work, many critical realists argue it is better suited to qualitative research (Given, 2008). According to Given (2008, p.168) ‘the strengths of critical realism for qualitative research lie in its desire to render complexity intelligible’. As a position, critical realism sits comfortably with complexity, far from attempting to simplify it advocates that complexity must be ‘embraced and explored’ (Given, 2008, p.168); a challenge which many critical realists have argued is better addressed through qualitative work. Further than simply studying complexity by any means, critical realism also advocates for research to occur in the natural world/the real domain (Given, 2008), again supporting its suitability for qualitative research.

In addition to fitting with a critical realist approach, a qualitative approach was also chosen for its suitability for this research, and addressing the research aims. According to Corti & Thompson (2004, p.326), a common aim of qualitative research is to ‘capture the lived

experience of the social world and the meanings people give these experiences from their own perspective.' As one of the aims of this research is to explore service-providers' and service-users' lived experiences, adopting a paradigm that is focused on subjective experience and meaning making is entirely appropriate.

In addition to this, many qualitative researchers argue that the qualitative paradigm allows the researcher to be able to hear, and give voice to, those who have been 'silenced, othered and marginalised by the dominant social order' (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2005, p.28; see also Josselson, 2014); a concept which I have given much thought to since beginning this research, which will be discussed in the following section.

3.1.3 'Giving voice'

The idea of 'giving voice' was one of the earliest and most primary goals of the feminist movement, where researchers sought to 'find' the omitted voice of women in research (Ashby, 2011). Since then, feminist principles of voice have been applied to critical research with numerous other marginalized people groups. Despite the obvious good intentions, the concept of giving voice has been critiqued by researchers and found to be problematic. Upon reflecting on her work with individuals with disabilities, Ashby (2011) shares the questions she began to ask of her intention to 'give voice' to this group, she writes 'was I really giving voice? Was it mine to give? Whose voice is it really? Who benefits from the telling?' (para.10). These concerns all echo my own upon approaching this research, mindful that I wanted to counteract the common omission of the voice of the sex worker; I desired to 'give voice' to this group, but what did that mean? Was it possible? And who would it benefit in the end?

According to Bogdan & Biklen (1998, p.204) giving voice is 'empowering people to be heard who might otherwise remain silent' 'or who have been silenced by others' Ashby (2011) adds. While the concept of giving voice may be problematic, it cannot be denied that there

are clear problems with being deprived of a voice. We are defined by the stories we tell about ourselves, and too by the stories others tell about us (Blatt, 1981); when research is carried out which fails to 'give voice' to the group/individual under study, that group/individual is excluded from the process of constructing themselves. Giving voice allows those involved to play an active part in the construction of themselves, and the group/s they belong to.

Whilst it's clear that an important part of empowering marginalized groups through research is making sure that they are not denied a voice, it has been argued that attempting to 'give voice' can actually 'reinforce the very systems of oppression it seeks to address' (Ashby, 2011, para.11); no matter the researcher's intentions 'hierarchies of power and privilege are re-inscribed when the researcher presumes to give voice to someone else.' (Ashby, 2011, para.11) The very concept of giving voice infers some disconcerting underlying assumptions, namely that the group/individual under study is without a voice and therefore is in need of another who can bring their experiences to light, and also a denial that this group/individual has their own voice which they can (and do) choose to use (Ashby, 2011). In the case of sex workers, this is a complicated issue and requires that I acknowledge the many sex worker rights groups which are run by/include those involved in sex work, and frequently provide a platform for sex workers to exercise their voices (see English Collective of Prostitutes, 2017; International Union of Sex Workers, 2002-2009; Sex Workers Outreach Project, 2016). It is also true that there are researcher groups in existence with members who are involved in sex work (Sex Work Research Hub, 2017); therefore, there *are* sex worker voices being heard in academia and research. Despite this, it remains the case that there are numerous pieces of academic literature written about sex work/sex workers, which appear to omit sex worker voices (see Gauthier, 2011; Hester & Westmarland, 2004; Raymond, 1998). It is also the case that research which does appear to include such voices is complicated by the existence of conflicting perspectives on sex work, and the fact that sex workers are far from a homogenous group. As Weitzer (2009) argues in his writings on the paradigms of sex work, researchers who view sex work as oppressive and damaging are likely to focus on sex worker stories which confirm this narrative, in the same way that

researchers who view sex work as a legitimate form of work with the potential to be empowering, are likely to focus on supporting experiences also. In this way, a significant amount of research on sex work can be seen to include the voice of sex workers, whilst simultaneously silencing it; to include the voice of one is not to include the voice of all. When it comes to sex work law, while sex worker collectives have exercised varying levels of influence over law reform (West, 2000), sex work law continues to be reproduced and created by politicians who themselves recognize they are doing so from a position of inexperience and a lack of research which includes the voice and experience of sex workers (House of Common Home Office Affairs Committee, 2016); therefore sex worker voices are often omitted or ignored in the discussion and creation of policy which directly impacts them.

Behind the concept of giving voice is the notion that this will be of benefit to those we have perceive to be 'voiceless', and whilst the process is indeed intended to be emancipatory, the telling of these stories is often more advantageous to the researcher than the group/individual under study (Ashby, 2011). As researchers we ask for these stories because we believe that they will lead to positive outcomes and change where it is needed, but it is important to be critical of this assumption. Whilst it is true that research can (and does) provide a springboard for positive change, we must ask ourselves how long this change will take to come, and who it will ultimately benefit. In the case of this research, whilst I may believe that my participants will benefit from telling their stories due to positive change that could come from the dissemination of knowledge; this 'change' could take years and ultimately be of no direct benefit to my participants. There is also the glaring truth that I am attempting to gain a doctorate through this project, so whatever benefits this research could have for my participants; there is one large and obvious benefit it holds for me. Behar (1993) also notes that in asking for these stories, we are requiring a vulnerability from participants that is in no way required of us. This power-imbalance is something I have wrestled with and I feel has been, in part, addressed through my time spent carrying out participant-observation; something I will discuss in more detail in section 3.2.5.

There are evidently multiple issues with the concept of 'giving voice', but there is also a question of whether the action of giving voice is even possible. Behind a belief in being able to 'give voice' is the assumption that there is an authentic voice to be heard. If this is the case, then the job of a researcher becomes to excavate this voice, and therefore reveal the 'true' voice of the participant/s. It is at this point that another criticism can be raised. If an authentic voice does, in fact, exist to be excavated; will the research data produced be a true representation of that voice? Critical realism, and most qualitative positionings, would argue for the acknowledgement of researcher influence on research. According to Atkinson & Hammersley (2007, p.13) research accounts 'inevitably reflect the socio-historical position of the researcher'. The researcher will always bring their own interpretation to the data, an interpretation which may or may not be reflective of the participant's intended meanings (Ashby, 2011). Researcher influence is not only exercised at the analysis stage; research aims, the chosen literature to review, interview questions etc. are all reflective of a researcher's positionings, and all impact on the data produced. Therefore, if an authentic voice does exist, there is no guarantee that this voice will be reflected in the data produced.

There is also the argument that attempting to 'give voice' and therefore excavate an 'authentic voice' from participants is based on an assumption that denies the performative nature of identity. According to Ashby (2011) researchers should shift their focus from attempting to discover the 'authentic voice' of the participant/s, and instead work to enable participant/s constructions and representations of self. Facilitating agency requires contexts in which researchers believe that a participant has something to say, provide a space for them to say it, and possess the listening skills to 'hear' it (Rosetti et al. 2008). While this research seeks to do just that, and to allow the voices of the women to be heard and their knowledge valued; this feminist principle is arguably in conflict with the critical realist principle that some accounts of reality are better than others (Parr, 2015). As a researcher I sought to reconcile this conflict through the way I approached data collection, something which will be discussed further in section 3.2.5, and in doing so I felt I was able to remain true to a critical realist framework, whilst staying committed to this feminist principles of research.

In summary, this research will not be aiming to 'give voice' to its participants, but instead to 'learn about different voices, hear what they have to say, and work to become allies and friends in our struggling to take on oppressive formations' (Dewar cited in Clarke & Humberstone, 1997, p.71).

3.2 Choosing ethnography

The following section will justify the decision to take an ethnographic approach to this research, it will explore how such an approach fits with the assumptions of critical realism, and describe the design of this study and the methods of data collection.

3.2.1 Ethnography

According to Brewer (2000) ethnography is not distinguishable as one particular method of data collection. Instead, it is a type of research distinguished by the objectives it sets out to address. Literally translated, ethnography means 'writing about people' (Jones & Watt, 2010) and aims to describe cultures, or people groups, in rich detail. As a result, ethnographic work tends to focus on cultures, and often on the 'cultural other' (Berry, 2011, p.165). In order to immerse themselves in the culture under study, ethnographic researchers often carry out multiple methods of data collection, most commonly including interviewing and participant observation (Bhatti, 2002; Ladner, 2016) but also document analysis (Brewer, 2000). Immersing oneself in the culture under study, through participant observation and interviews, is said to enable the researcher to be exposed to the practices of the culture/group, and not just the rhetoric (Arber, 2006). Such immersion provides the researcher with a unique insider-outsider status which can enable the production of accounts of culture that both 'understand it from within and capture it as external to ... the researcher' (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007, p.10). This focus on producing rich, detailed

accounts of specific cultures or groups, means that ethnographers tend to focus on a single setting or group in depth, often spending extended periods of time in the field (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007).

In the way in which they have ‘a pattern of shared basic assumptions ... [which are] taught to new members as the correct way to perceive think and feel’ (Killet et al. 2016), and a set of values and normative practices understood and performed by those involved; support services for sex workers can be viewed as having their own culture. Viewing them as such provides a framework for exploring the underlying assumptions and practices involved, thus adding to understandings of this context.

3.2.2 Ethnography and lived culture

Gray (2002) defines culture broadly as the production of meaning or ‘signifying practice’ that happens at every level of the social. According to Gray, culture is not a free-flowing set of ideas or beliefs, but it *is* fluid. It is both constitutive of and constituted by ‘the lived’, here defined as the material, the social, and the symbolic practices of everyday life. In order to begin to explore lived culture, Gray argues researchers must employ a variety of different methods including participant observation, interviews and textual analysis; an argument that demonstrates the suitability of ethnographic methods for exploring the lived culture of sex work support.

According to ethnographers Atkinson & Hammersley (2007, p.8) the study of culture is of particular use in exploring what is done within a particular context, and why it is done. At its core, culture is about meaning, and ethnography is a method to explain that meaning (Ladner, 2016).

3.2.3 Ethnography and critical realism

As previously mentioned, ethnography can be distinguished by its objectives, namely to understand a particular culture or people group. In addition to this, ethnography is also distinguishable by its theoretical underpinnings, though these vary a little, underpinnings which make it both a method and a methodology. Though there are varying versions of ethnography, in many ways, these underlying assumptions are well-fitting with the assumptions of critical realism, resulting in many examples of critical realist ethnography (Porter, 1993).

When it comes to assumptions about the nature of reality, both ethnography and critical realism accept its contested nature (Barron, 2013). Within ethnographic research, experience is perceived to be subjective, and therefore reality as subject to interpretation (Brewer, 2000). As a result of this, though critical realism argues for a reality which exists independently of individuals (Bhaskar, 2015), both approaches would argue that human subjectivity and interpretation mean that this reality cannot be known with any certainty (Given, 2008).

Both approaches also view knowledge as largely socially constructed. For ethnography this comes from its underpinnings in contextualism, an approach which views experience as situated and bound in a historical and current context; therefore arguing that knowledge, such as that presented in the form of participant accounts or research data, is also contextualised (Jones & Watt, 2010). As previously discussed, within critical realism the two principal objects of knowledge are seen as human agency and social structure, the latter playing a key role in the construction of knowledge and therefore a fundamental aspect of the contextualisation ethnography speaks of (Lopez, 2005).

The phenomenological focus of ethnography on meaning (Wilson & Chaddha, 2009), also resonates with a critical realist belief in the meaning-centred nature of humans (Given,

2008), and ethnographic methods provide a means of studying this process of meaning-making in the natural context in which critical realists argue it should be observed (Given, 2008).

Due to the alignment in assumptions, critical realism can, and has, been used to guide ethnographic approaches to research. However, according to theorists such as Barron (2013), Foley (2002) and Porter (1993), adopting a critical realist approach to ethnography is more than a case of suitability, it's a means of strengthening the method and addressing some of its criticisms.

In its early years, ethnography suffered from what has since been referred to as 'naïve realism,' the illusion that this method had some special access to 'reality' or 'truth', some kind of 'privileged gaze' (Brewer, 2000, p.42). Early ethnographic researchers saw the representation of social reality as 'unproblematic' and therefore saw no issue with absenting themselves from the data (Brewer, 2000, p.41). As a result, this approach to data collection was labelled idealistic and critiqued by those who had a very different perception of 'reality'. Whilst there are clearly issues with adopting a purely realist approach to ethnography, the alternative is not without critique of its own. Relativism, whilst enabling researchers to adopt a critical voice when it comes to notions of 'truth', has been criticised for its inability to move beyond 'undecidables and unknowables' to make a contribution (Barron, 2013). Critics have argued that the soup of subjective realities such an approach produces can often lead to largely inaccessible ethnographic texts (Foley, 2002) which regard every ethnography as an invention of its author (Porter, 1993).

In contrast, critical realist ethnography neither denies the existence of truth, nor professes to have any special access to it. Critical realist ethnographers recognise the importance of 'time, culture, society and politics' (Barron, 2013, p.118) in both the production and analysis of their data, and they seek to be reflexive and acknowledge their own influence over the data produced (Foley, 2002).

In summary, critical realist ethnographies are often founded on the following ontological and epistemological assumptions laid out by Foley (2002, pp.472-473)

- (1) 'All cultural groups produce an intersubjective reality which is both "inherited" and continually constructed and reconstructed as it is lived or practiced.
- (2) a well-trained, reflexive investigator can know that historical, socially constructed reality in a partial, provisional sense through an intensive, experiential encounter with people who live by these cultural constructions of reality
- (3) a reflexive investigator, who has experienced this unfamiliar cultural space and has dialogued with its practitioners, can portray this cultural space and its people in a provisionally accurate manner.'

3.2.4 Ethnography and theory

'It is rare for ethnographic analysis to begin from a well-defined theory, and indeed there are dangers associated with such a starting point.'

Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007, p.210

The role of theory in ethnography has been a point of contention for much of the method's existence, with avid theorists such as Wacquant (2002) arguing for the need for strict theory-driven ethnographic work, and 'urban ethnographers' such as Duneier (1999 p.334) seeing a theory-driven approach as making 'a farce out of otherwise careful work'. As a researcher, I see the value in both of these perspectives and therefore intend to take an inductive approach to theory, without allowing the thesis to become 'theoretically weak.'

Whilst there are many existing ethnographies that are driven by a strong theoretical foundation, it was felt that this research needed to be as open-ended as possible, due to the limited amount of other academic research exploring the practices and cultures of sex work support. As Bhatti (2002) found during her ethnographic work, when she tried to attach a

theory to her research, it felt like trying to fit a one-dimensional philosophy onto three-dimensional data. With something as multifaceted as support, and participant groups as complex as sex workers and support-providers, no one theory seemed to be enough. Therefore, my approach to analysis reflects that described by Duneier (1999, p.1566) as the ethnographer arriving at a field site with the theoretical equivalent of a 'doctor's medicine bag'; rather than having to make complex data bend to fit a singular theory, this approach allows the ethnographer to utilise their knowledge of already existing theory, and their engagement with the social setting, in order to explain the 'symptoms' of the site. The analysis presented in chapters five and six can therefore be described as being informed first by the data, and second, by insight and ideas presented in existing related theory and literature.

3.2.5 Ethnography and the design of this study

The choice to take an ethnographic approach to this research was both a response to the chosen aims, but also something that helped to shape them. In the early stages of this research project, ethnography was deemed a fitting approach due to its suitability for exploring the context under study, and for providing the kind of detailed data seen in the work of Agustin (2007) and Whowell (2011). While there were several pieces of sex work support research which focused on specific aspects of support, such as practices around exiting (Cusick et al. 2011; Preble et al, 2015), the comparative lack of academic literature illuminating the 'whole' context of support for sex workers led me to search for a method that would immerse me in this context, thus offering insight into the 'whole' setting, and not only lone aspects. In the simplest terms, trying to create a picture of sex work support from current literature seemed to require pulling together research from multiple settings which focused on varying aspects, and therefore the general aim upon beginning this research was to provide a full picture (though there are clearly limits) of a support service for sex workers, an aim which ethnography was deemed to be the method most capable of addressing.

The decision to take an ethnographic approach to this research, combined with time spent in the research setting, and extensive reading around the topic under study, all worked to refine the general aim I had upon beginning the thesis journey and to inform three research aims (pp. 63-66) which have guided this research from data collection through to analysis. The suitability of ethnography for addressing these aims will now be considered.

Aim one - To explore the lived culture of a support service for sex workers

While this first aim is not so far from the original desire to illuminate the support context, the focus of ethnography on studying lived cultures helped to refine the wording and shift the perspective of the support service under study from a setting to a culture. According to Gray (2002) the study of culture must involve multiple methods of data collection, such as textual analysis; participant observation and interviews; all common within an ethnographic approach. For this reason, ethnography seemed to offer a method capable of addressing this first aim.

Aim two - To explore the practices of service-providers and service-users, which together constitute the nature of the service

As discussed in section 3.1.1, a critical realist perspective argues that knowledge and understanding cannot be reduced to language alone (Lopez, 2005), therefore, this research required a method that would also enable the study of the practices of those participating within the support context. As previously mentioned, the mixed-method approach offered by ethnography most commonly includes interviews and participant observation, and it was decided that using both of these methods would be the most beneficial approach to take to this research, and the most fitting with a critical realist framework. As argued by Arber (2006), carrying out observations allows the researcher to be exposed to the practices of the

culture, and not just the rhetoric, thus affirming the suitability of participant observations for addressing the second research aim. While critical realism does argue that research must look beyond language alone, it also recognises the importance of language, and therefore it was decided that combining participant observations with interviews would offer the fullest approach to data collection, and the most fitting approach with a critical realist framework. In addition, the decision was made to carry out some document analysis. Sullivan (2012) highlights the usefulness of documents as subjects of ethnography due to their analysis adding to understandings of cultures, and it was therefore decided that carrying out some document analysis would help to address the first research aim of exploring the culture of a support service.

Aim three - To explore the lived experience of those participating in the service, how they understand it, and the meaning they attribute to it

The desire of this research to include the voices and experiences of those participating within support, both the sex working service-users and the service-providers, and therefore to understand support from their (interpreted) perspective, combined with the suitability of ethnography for exploring lived experience, helped to inform and shape this final research aim. According to Gray (2002), in addition to enabling the study of group cultures, taking an ethnographic approach also enables the study of individual lived experience. In this way, ethnography will allow this research to explore what it is that a support service actually does, but also how this is experienced by those involved. The importance of exploring the experience of service-providers and service-users has been argued for by a number of researchers carrying out studies within the support setting. According to Owczarzak et al. (2013) and Preble et al. (2015), understanding service-users' experiences of support can help to develop services that better reflect the wants and needs of those they are designed to help, therefore contributing to their overall improvement. This argument is supported by Kindmond (1999) who argues that our understanding of support needs to come from the 'people who know'. This includes service-users, but also service-providers, whom Kindmond (1999) argues are able to offer new and comprehensive understanding of the support

setting in which they work/volunteer, which can have real, positive impacts for the care of those they work with.

In terms of the specific methods of data collection associated with ethnography, there are some additional reasons why combining interviews, document analysis and participant observation is a suitable approach for this study. While carrying out interviews alone can glean detailed insights and a deeper understanding of the setting/phenomena under study (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008); Agustin (2005a) argues that direct question-asking needs to be rethought as a method when subjects are marginalised, stigmatised and criminalised. When this is the case, there are likely to be prior negative experiences of one-to-one interaction or interviewing, or simply general negative connotations attached to direct question-asking. In this case of this research, the fact that sex workers experience all three of these forms of oppression, means that their prior experiences of one-to-one interviewing may be in the form of police interviews, or meetings to judge their worthiness of various measures of support. As a result, Agustin (2005a) argues that carrying out interviews alone would be likely to result in compromised responses. Carrying out participant observations in addition to interviews, and preceding the interview stage with ten months of observations, allowed me to address this issue by enabling me to build relationships with the service-users (and service-providers) before carrying out any direct question-asking, and carrying out some document analysis prior to interviewing provided me with a deeper insight into the setting I was studying, which helped to shape the questions I asked and the manner in which I asked them.

In addition to this, doing participant observation also allowed me to go some way towards addressing the one-sided nature of research. As discussed in section 3.1.3 there is a common power-imbalance that occurs in research when we request the telling of stories and sharing of experiences from our participants, and yet are not ourselves expected to offer up our own stories or experiences (Behar, 1993). It seemed to me that arriving at the setting a total stranger, demanding the women's stories in the form of interviews, and then leaving with the information I had gained, was rather akin to robbery. It seemed intrusive,

unequal and would have left me with the feeling of having used my participants for what I could get from them; something Dey (cited in Charmaz & Bryant, 2011, p.306) refers to as the 'smash and grab' approach to data collection. In order to attempt to address this imbalance, I took inspiration from sex work researchers using participatory action approaches, a research style that has considered issues of power, exploitation and voyeurism in great detail. In a similar way to Wahab (2003), a sex work researcher who undertakes participatory action research and uses dialogue sessions as a space where participants can question as well as be questioned, I decided to take part in Women's Zone as a volunteer. Whilst this was still a great tool for gathering data, it meant that, even if only in a small way, I was offering a service back to the women I was asking a service from. Spending an extended period of time carrying out participant observation meant that it was not only I who had access to these women's lives, stories and character; but that they too were given access to, at least some of, mine. I felt I owed it to the women whose stories I was relying upon, to spend time getting to know them and allowing them to get to know me; to a certain extent this allowed for the production of more 'collaborative knowledge' as Wahab (2003) refers to it, and the recognition that I am far from the expert in this.

Negotiating access to a service

In order to address my research aims and explore the lived culture of a support service for sex workers, participant observation and semi-structured interviews were carried out in such a service, and elements of document analysis were also undertaken. Initially I approached a sex work support service that I had heard about through the charity I worked for at the time, and though this presented more ethical issues, such as problems with anonymity, carrying out ethnographic work within a setting you already participate in/are known in, is an approach advocated for in the literature (see Bernard, 2011). However, as is so often the case in fieldwork-based research, negotiating access via gatekeepers was a difficult and lengthy process (see Sanders, 2008), and after some months of negotiating up the various layers, access was eventually denied due to the service amalgamating with

another, and new management feeling they couldn't accommodate me during the transition.

Following the collapse of my relationship with this service, I began to contact various other sex work support services in the north of England. Using the UK network of sex worker projects' site as a database (UKNSWP, 2017), I called the majority of the services listed as being within a travelable distance; in most cases, the projects listed had either closed down, or were no longer offering services specifically to sex workers. After numerous phone calls, I managed to get through to 'Women's Zone' (pseudonym that will be used to refer to the service from now on), a service in the north of England, and was granted access after a few meetings with their volunteer coordinator. During these meetings I was able to talk about my research and what it would entail, and my responsibilities were explained to me. Women's Zone took me on as an unpaid volunteer, and after completing three evening training sessions, I began volunteering at their drop-in centre.

'Women's Zone'

The drop-in centre at Women's Zone is open five days a week to women who are currently involved in sex work, or have been at some stage. Afternoon sessions run for three hours every day, and there are evening sessions three days of the week. Women's Zone offers one-to-one case-working where a service-user is assigned to one of the two case-workers who are on the team of paid staff, and service-users often use the drop-in time to meet with their case worker and receive one-on-one support. In addition to this, service-users accessing the drop-in are provided with food and drink; access to computers and the phone; a variety of workshops; visits from external professionals; needle exchange services; sexual health check-ups on-site; and occasional trips, among other things. The services offered by Women's Zone will be discussed in more detail in chapter four. The number of women accessing each session can vary, with a particularly quiet day seeing around five women, and a busy day seeing numbers in the twenties.

When it comes to the position taken up by Women's Zone on sex work, the philosophy stated in the volunteer handbook (appendix one) suggests it could be interpreted as aligning with either the polymorphous or empowerment paradigm (Weitzer, 2009). Within their philosophy, Women's Zone state their acknowledgement of the 'diverse experiences' (Appendix one) within sex work, a perspective which seems most closely aligned with the polymorphous paradigm (Weitzer, 2009), which takes a neutral stance on sex work and acknowledges that experience will vary with individual. However, as discussed in chapter one, there does appear to be some cross-over between the polymorphous and empowerment paradigms in recognising that sex work is not only one thing, and therefore this perspective may also stem from ideology more aligned with the empowerment paradigm. The assertion of Women's Zone that 'it is neither the intention, nor one of the objectives to initiate any attempts to persuade sex workers to leave the industry' (Appendix one) could also be interpreted as stemming from either of the two paradigms; while it may reflect an approach to support more aligned with that of a neutral service (Oselin & Weitzer, 2013) which sets no agenda, it may also reflect the kind of approach taken by a sex work support service (Oselin & Weitzer, 2013), whose agenda is promoting sex work as legitimate work, rather than supporting sex workers to exit. Overall, the information provided within the philosophy of Women's Zone does not make clear the exact position taken on sex work. However, conversations had with service-providers which privileged a harm-minimisation approach over advocating for the 'sex work as work' agenda, seem to suggest it is most closely aligned with the category of neutral service, identified by Oselin and Weitzer (2013) as stemming from a polymorphous view of sex work. In terms of the service-user led vs. service-provider led continuum, discussed in chapter two, the focus on 'choice' and 'empowerment' (Appendix one) within Women's Zone's mission statement combined with their self-identification as 'user-centred' (Appendix one) suggests that, at least in ethos, Women's Zone lean more towards the service-user led end of the spectrum. However, while individual interventions and support sessions within Women's Zone may be service-user led, in as far as service-users may decide how they wish to receive support and what for, Women's Zone does not reflect a peer-led/service-user involvement model of support

(Overs & Hunter, 1996; UN AIDS, 2014) such as the community empowerment approach discussed in chapter 2. During my time with the service, there were no current or former sex workers on the paid staff team, and only one volunteer who ever mentioned having been involved in sex work (though there may have been others who simply chose not to discuss this). Therefore, while a peer-led model involves the participation of sex workers in the design and implementation at *every level* (Kerrigan et al. 2014), Women's Zone appears to only involve their participation at the level of receiving support.

Though these underlying perspectives may not necessarily translate into informing practice and experience, as discussed in chapter two, understanding them is important in understanding the culture of the service, and therefore an awareness of the ethos and underlying ideology of Women's Zone has been used to inform this research and analysis of the data.

In order to get to know the setting, and to begin to build rapport with the service-providers and service-users, I spent around a month volunteering at various afternoon sessions, before beginning to record any observations. Women's Zone is run by paid staff, and there is always at least one member of the paid staff team in attendance at each drop-in session, along with a number of unpaid volunteers. Volunteer responsibilities within these sessions include signing service-users in at the door; making food and drinks (two days of the week there is hot food prepared prior to the session and served during); sitting in on phone calls with service-users (and sometimes taking calls on their behalf); interacting with service-users; joining in activities and, in some cases, leading them; and trained volunteers can deliver needle exchange services. During this initial time of volunteering, I attended up to three drop-in sessions a week as a volunteer, something which gave the chance for me to make service-users and providers aware of my research.

Observations

Following the initial period of attending drop-in sessions solely as a volunteer, I began my 'official' observation period and attended one afternoon drop-in session a week as both a volunteer and a researcher. Though my responsibilities remained the same, attending the sessions during this official period of observations meant attempting to discuss my research with both service-providers and service-users, and gaining oral consent. In addition to this, my role as researcher meant I tried to keep some level of distance between myself and the goings on in the centre, in order to try and remain aware of interactions and practices that I was not directly involved with. This was not an easy task, and one in which I was not always successful, something which will be discussed further in section 3.4.

For the first 9 months of my time in the field I mainly attended Monday afternoon sessions, and for the second 9 months I mainly attended Friday afternoon sessions; though I also provided cover for various days. During my time in the field I was able to attend at least one drop-in session for every day of the week. In addition to observing the drop-in sessions, it had been my initial intention to join the Women's Zone outreach teams to observe both street outreach and visits to sex-selling establishments. Despite the need for more research in both of these areas, it soon became apparent that this was too big an undertaking for this research. On a practical level, time constraints meant that carrying out observations in these extra sites would have resulted in less time spent in the original drop-in site; thus reducing the immersion required for successful participant observation (Bernard, 2011) to a much more surface-level exposure in each setting. At a theoretical level, I began to realise that each of these settings, though part of the same service, were distinct from one another. Different groups of service-users were involved in each setting, different staff/volunteers attended each, different activities took place, and there appeared to be a different set of cultural values, norms and rules. I decided that attempting to describe all three settings may have resulted in data which looked more like a comparison than an in-depth exploration of the complexities of a particular group and setting. For these reasons I decided to limit my observations to the drop-in setting.

According to Bernard (2011) there are three different kinds of fieldwork roles; complete participant, participant observer, and complete observer. Most ethnographic research is based on the second, this study being no different. Within this role there are two further breakdowns; observing participant, and participating observer. As I entered the field setting an outsider and only became a participant in order to carry out observations, my fieldwork role fits under the latter category.

For each drop-in session I attended, I began observations when I entered the Women's Zone building, though my field notes mainly start from the briefing session which took place prior to the drop-in opening. These briefing sessions were attended by all the volunteers who would be covering the session and usually lasted around five minutes or under. Briefings were led by a member of staff who would talk us through the situations of various service-users. Common topics were women who 'needed' to fill out a form or have some sort of conversation with a member of staff, or any service-users who had been excluded.

Following the briefing we would lift the blinds on the front door and the windows as a sign that we were open; from this point women could come to the door or ring the bell to be let in. After three hours the drop-in would 'close' and the service-users would leave. A debrief would then take place with all the volunteers and staff from that day's session. During these debriefs, volunteers and staff would discuss anything that had happened during the session that they felt needed sharing. Therefore, depending on how the session had gone, they could last anything from a few minutes to around twenty. There were a small number of occasions when I had to leave before the debrief had finished in order to avoid missing my train.

Due to the comparative lack of research in this context, I tried to keep the focus of my observations as broad as possible. I recorded all the interactions and conversations that I could remember, both those I was involved in and those I wasn't (subject to the limits of consent); I made note of what the space looked like, whether anything had changed or been added; I recorded who was there, how they spent their time and who with; I wrote about whether there was any food being served or activities on offer; and anything else that I

noticed. Whilst I did not intentionally narrow my focus in any way, I am aware that the information I attended to will have been impacted by my various positionings as a researcher. Upon reflecting on his own doctoral thesis, Barron (2013) acknowledges that he tended to record that which he found interesting. He argues that the ethnographer writes about that which they deem significant, meaning field notes are inevitably selective, and thus do not give a full picture. Therefore, whilst there was no conscious focus for my observations, I recognise that they did not occur without some bias on my part. The impact of myself as the researcher on this study will be explored further in section 3.4.

Field notes

Field notes were recorded as soon as possible after leaving Women's Zone, as advocated by Palmer (2010), in order to try and retain the maximum amount of information; though there were a few instances when other commitments meant that there was a delay. Something I found very quickly as I began to look into ethnographic methods, was that there is little guidance in the literature on how to approach field-notes. Like much in the world of ethnography, how to 'do' field notes appeared to be a much internalised and unexplained area of knowledge. In the end, I took what I could from field note excerpts included in ethnographic studies I had read, such as Whowell (2011) and Agustin (2007). These ethnographers took a storied, almost narrative approach, to their notes, writing down all they saw, heard, and, in the case of Agustin, felt. In the interest of reflexivity and maintaining an awareness of my own biases and interpretations of the data, I chose to keep a separate field journal, which documented my own emotional responses to my observations; an approach encouraged by Arber (2006) as a means of maintaining reflexivity and managing dual roles. There were times when my own reflection seemed particularly relevant to a certain observation, and so that was included within the field notes in italics, to differentiate. Having these reflections included in the data has given extra insight when it comes to analysing these observations.

Around four months into my observations, I came across some writings by Palmer (2010), which laid out a clear approach to organising field notes, splitting them into observational notes, theoretical notes, and methodological notes. This approach seemed useful, and so I began writing up field notes in this style instead. After a month or so, I read through all the field notes I had so far written, and noticed that, whilst Palmer's style was more succinct and focused on key 'important' events or happenings; my original style seemed to offer a fuller picture of each session, attending to far more information that might be considered taken-for-granted. As a result, I returned to my original, storied style, with a renewed confidence in this approach. Examples of these different styles of field notes can be found in appendix two.

As advocated in ethnographic literature (see Foley, 2002; and Barron, 2011), I spent over a year volunteering at Women's Zone, and around ten months recording my observations. According to Naroll (1962), researchers spending this kind of time in the field are more likely to report on sensitive issues, due to the length of time it takes to be accepted as a participant observer. The decision to cease official observations at ten months was in part due to a feeling of saturation when it came to the content of my field notes, and in part due to needing to focus on interviews and begin analysing my data.

Interviews

Though carrying out participant observation enabled me to observe the practices of support, the insight offered by observation into the culture of Women's Zone, seemed limited entirely to my own interpretations. While it is the case that the researcher still exercises influence over the data collected through interviews, both at the analysis stage and in terms of decisions around what is asked, accessing the voices and experiences of those participating in Women's Zone through interviewing, enables the collection of data which the service-users and service-providers play a more active role in producing. In other words, interviews allow for a 'version of their experiences' to be heard (Parr, 2015, p.203),

where observation data may be thought of as a version of my experience. In this way, interviews enabled me to include the voice and stories of those participating in Women's Zone, in a way that observations alone could not. For this reason, after carrying out ten months of participant observation, I began conducting semi-structured interviews with both service-providers and service-users. Service-providers were usually asked whether they would like to participate prior to, or after, a session, and service-users were approached during sessions. In total I carried out nine interviews; four with service-users, and five with service-providers. Of the five service-providers I interviewed, one was a volunteer; three were members of the paid staff team, and one was an external who was paid to deliver workshop sessions. Of the four service-users I interviewed, three were currently sex working and one had exited sex work. All of the interview participants were over the age of eighteen. All interviews took place in the drop-in centre, and most during drop-in hours; though there were some service-provider interviews that took place before drop-in. The interviews were mainly carried out in the 'therapy room', a private room opposite the drop-in room, but a few took place in the 'interview room'; a smaller space where needle exchange is carried out.

After reading Hollway and Jefferson's (2000) writings on the narrative interview, I revised my initial narrow, perhaps closed, interview questions into a more narrative style. My aim in reconstructing the interview questions in this manner was to try and ensure the interviews were led by myself to a lesser degree, and to offer the interview participants more control over the direction of the interviews and the subjects discussed. All participants were asked the following six guiding, narrative-style questions, but varying questions were asked in between, depending on participant responses.

1. Can you tell me about how you came to be involved in Women's Zone?
2. Can you tell me about what it's like to be a service-user/service-provider at Women's Zone?
3. Can you tell me about any times at Women's Zone that seem important to you?
4. Can you tell me about what Women's Zone means to you?

5. Can you tell me about your relationships at Women's Zone?
6. Can you tell me about any impact that Women's Zone has had on you?

Interviews lasted between ten minutes and an hour and a half, though only two were shorter than half an hour. This variation was partly due to participant responses, and in one case, language barriers. Some participants were interviewed on the day they were approached, and others at another scheduled time.

Document analysis

In order to triangulate data collection for this study, elements of document analysis (DA) were also carried out. This section will discuss DA as a method of data collection, and incorporation of service documentation into my analysis will be discussed in section 3.5.4.

According to Bowen (2009), organisational documents have been a staple in qualitative research for many years, and incorporating them in a study is a way of complimenting other methods, uncovering meaning, and providing relevant insights. Document analysis was deemed fitting for this study due to its suitability for 'intensive studies providing rich descriptions of a single phenomenon, event, organisation or program' (Bowen, 2009, p.29), and its common use alongside ethnographic methods (see Angers & Machtmes, 2005) such as participant observation and interviews (Bowen, 2009). For this study, the two documents that were originally selected for analysis were the volunteer handbook and the volunteer agreement, both provided to me during my volunteer training. The significance of these documents was confirmed by staff at the service, who sent these same documents to me when I asked for any official documentation they thought important for contextualising the service.

Bowen (2009) states that the first stage of document analysis is identifying meaningful and relevant pages of data to include, and in the case of this study, that included sections in the volunteer handbook on the history and philosophy of Women's Zone, and on its mission statement (appendix one). These sections were deemed most relevant to this study due to the way in which they contextualised the service and provided insight into its underlying assumptions and position on sex work. As a result, insights from these sections of the volunteer handbook were used to develop my understanding of the research setting before beginning observations, as can be seen in their use within the above discussion of Women's Zone. Insights from these sections were also used within the analysis and discussion seen in chapters four, five, and six.

3.3 Ethical considerations

Due to the sensitive nature of sex work research (Sanders, 2006) and of the support setting, there were a number of complex ethical issues to consider and manage within this research. This section will outline these issues and discuss the ways in which they were resolved for this study.

Decisions made with regard to the ethics of this study were predominantly informed by the British Psychological Society (BPS) code of ethics (BPS, 2014); however, as this study arguably straddles multiple disciplines, guidelines from the British Sociological Association (BSA, 2002) and the American Anthropological Association (AAA, 2004) have also been consulted in relation to the ethics of ethnographic research, as have guidelines given by ethics panels for specific, related projects.

In order to gain permission to carry out this research, an ethics application was submitted to the University of Huddersfield's Human and Health Sciences School Research Ethics Panel (SREP).

3.3.1 Consent

Observations

For multiple reasons, the decision was made to approach consent differently for service-providers (SPs) and service-users (SUs). In the case of service-providers, an information sheet (appendix three) and consent form (appendix four), following the BPS (2014) guidelines, was provided to each, asking their consent to include them in my observations. SPs were encouraged to read through the information sheet, though many chose to discuss the issues with me, in person. When it came to obtaining consent from Service-Users, it was felt that the method used for Service-providers would be problematic. According to the American Anthropological Association (2006) there are cases in which it is 'not appropriate to gain consent through a signed form.' This includes instances in which the act of signing would actively inhibit and prevent the building of rapport between the participant and researcher. In these cases, the AAA argues that permission for the waiving of written consent be given.

The Office for human research protections suggests oral consent is appropriate when these four conditions are met:

1. The research is of no more than minimal risk
2. The change in consent procedures, from written to oral, will not harm the respondents
3. The research could not 'practicably be carried out without the waiver or alteration', and
4. Whenever appropriate, additional information will be provided to subjects after participation

It was felt that this research met all four of these criteria, and after the initial period of time spent volunteering in the drop-in, it was decided that asking the service-users to sign a formal document would not work in the setting. Requesting this kind of formal agreement had the potential to disrupt the relaxed setting, and put participants with negative experiences of formal documents off taking part in the research. It was decided that a more appropriate way of gaining consent would be orally.

Service-users were approached during the drop-in sessions and asked whether they were happy to be included in observations for the duration of my time in the setting. In order to ensure all of the relevant ethical issues were covered, I had intended to use an oral consent card as a prompt (appendix five). This card followed a template taken from the University of Virginia's Social and Behavioural Science's guidelines for gaining oral consent (appendix six), and included seven rights to make the participant aware of. It had been my intention to keep this card on my person and to refer to it when gaining oral consent from service-users, as a kind of checklist to ensure I had made each aware of their full rights as a participant. However, when it came to actually using this tool within the drop-in sessions, the reality was that I often only got as far as explaining the research and asking their consent to be involved in observations, before service-users appeared to get bored, and changed the subject. While there were some women I was able to pick up the conversation with at another time and go through their rights as a participant, there were many others who gave their consent to be involved but told me they didn't need to hear about their rights, or indicated a desire to avoid discussion of this through walking away, changing the subject, or repeating that they were happy to be involved until I stopped talking. In these cases, I still included the service-users' data in my field notes.

Issues such as service-users being under the influence of substances, or suffering with poor mental health, meant that there were times where it could not be guaranteed that certain service-users were capable of providing informed consent. The AAA state that researchers should avoid instances in which consent is not truly voluntary or informed; this was something I had to negotiate throughout observations. As is commonly the case for

researchers, this often meant using my own judgement to determine whether service-users were in a place to offer consent or not. For some service-users, the level of substance influence, or state of their mental health meant that informed consent could never be guaranteed, and therefore they were not included in observations. In instances in which I was unsure, staff at the service were able to offer further insight and, on occasion, be part of a conversation around consent, in order to determine how much the service-user had understood.

Drop-in sessions could be quite hectic, with multiple service-users leaving before I had the chance to obtain consent. The AAA state that, though gaining consent in the immediate is preferable, consent can be gained retroactively; something that occurred in cases like this. While it was always my intention to only include participants in my field notes who had consented to be involved in observations, it was not always as straightforward as this in practice. Due to the nature of the drop-in setting, there were several service-users whom I had mentioned in general terms in my field notes, for example 'a service-user entered the drop-in and requested needle exchange. She then left with the case-worker', who I never saw again to obtain consent retroactively. In these cases, general information that contained no personal details or recordings of conversations was left in the field notes.

Due to observations being fairly longitudinal, consent was rechecked at various points throughout the observation period. If a participant had not been present in a drop-in session I had attended for a while, I would recheck consent upon seeing them again. When information was shared of a particularly personal or sensitive nature, I would check afterwards with the participant who shared it, and confirm that they were happy for it to be included in the observation data. Consent was also re-checked in the case of overheard conversations that I was not directly a part of, to ensure they were not intended to remain private.

In trying to manage the issue of service-user consent for observations, I experienced a real tension between a desire to conduct ethical research that respected the rights of my participants, and a desire to produce high quality, in-depth data that represented as many of those participating in the setting as possible. When it came to the issue of gaining consent retroactively, and instances in which I was unable to obtain consent from service-users I had already included in my field-notes; whilst I did choose to include information of a general nature, I felt it unethical to include any data that was not considered general. For example, data describing conversations, specific actions, or anything that went beyond generic description. As a result, I had to remove such data from my field-notes, and therefore lost the insight it may have provided during analysis. This was also a dilemma I faced in relation to the issues around informed consent, discussed earlier. Whilst it was decided that the ethical approach was to exclude service-users from field-notes who were deemed unable to provide informed consent due to issues such as mental health and substance abuse; this also meant that I lost insights their data may have offered, such as the impact of mental health issues on the experience of support. Overall, while a commitment to ethical research practices is arguably a strength of the methodology of this research, it seems important to acknowledge how privileging such practices did result in some limitations on the data collected.

Interviews

Due to the interview process meaning the participant had already joined me in a separate room, it was felt that obtaining written consent for both service-providers, and service-users in this instance, would not be disruptive. Each participant was provided with an information sheet (appendix seven) and consent form (appendix eight) following BPS (2014) guidelines, detailing all of their rights as a participant. Whilst the use of consent forms was not seen as inappropriate for interviews, it was still felt that provision should be made for service-users who may feel uncomfortable signing a formal document. The option was therefore given to all participants for them to signal their consent using an 'x'; this a common practice amongst researchers working with communities who may attach negative connotations to the giving

of a signature (see Guta et al. 2014), as it is argued that 'for some groups who engage in criminalised, illegal, and/or socially unsanctioned activities (e.g., sex work) or who have had negative experiences with authority figures...providing one's signature could involve a greater risk than the experience of participating in the study.' (Guta et al. 2014, p.8)

3.3.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

All participants were made aware of the limits to confidentiality. When it came to sharing interview data with the service, participants were made aware that data would only be shared if it concerned something that had the potential to cause significant harm to themselves, or others. As this is already the policy of Women's Zone in relation to confidentiality, it was therefore a concept the participants were all familiar and comfortable with. Whilst the usual practice of service-providers is to record any information disclosed by service-users on a monitoring sheet, I made it clear to both service-providers and service-users that information shared during the interviews would not be recorded in this way.

With the above exceptions, participants were made aware that their data would be kept anonymous throughout the research process. All names were replaced with pseudonyms, whether the names of the participants, or names mentioned by them. The organisation itself was also given the pseudonym 'Women's Zone', and other services or details mentioned that might allude to the identity of the service were left out or also replaced with pseudonyms.

3.3.3 Other issues

All participants were made aware of their right to withdraw their data at any point up until September 2016 in the case of observation data, and November 2016 in the case of interview data. The information sheet provided made participants aware of the

psychological support available, should they require support following participation. Interview participants were told that they could terminate the interview at any time, without explanation, and withdraw their participation. All interview participants were given my university email address and told they could contact me at any time, should they have any questions. Participants were also made aware that a summary of the results would be made available to them, should they wish to see it, though no such requests were made.

In terms of observations, I felt it unethical to observe every activity/interaction within the drop-in, and important to ensure service-users could still choose privacy if they so desired. As a result, I only observed within the private rooms external to the main drop-in space (the needle exchange room etc.) if I was the service-provider accompanying a service-user into one of these spaces myself. In these instances, I would obtain oral consent from the service-user to include the exchange in my field notes.

3.4 Reflexivity

Myerhoff & Ruby (1982) define reflexivity as the process by which a researcher understands how their social background influences and shapes their beliefs, and how this self-awareness then impacts on observations, meaning-making, interpretation and interaction with participants.

The importance of reflexivity as a shared aspect of ethnography and critical realism has already been highlighted in discussion of how the two approaches fit together. In terms of critical realism, reflexivity helps to illuminate the parts of social reality that are not 'real and predetermined' but are instead 'socially constructed through human agency' (Paulson, 2011, p.151). According to Barron (2013, p.127) critical realist ethnography, in conjunction with reflexivity, has the potential to be a powerful methodological framework 'which

accepts the contested nature of reality but which provides a means of addressing possibilities and of bringing about change where it is needed.’

In addition to its importance for ethnography and critical realism, reflexivity is also highly valued in feminist research. The choice to be reflective signifies a researcher reacting against the historical patriarchal perception of knowledge as, yet another, entity to be pursued, captured and possessed. Instead, reflexive research attempts to deal with power differences and work towards a more equal partnership in which knowledge is produced collaboratively (Wasserfall, 1993). Feminist researchers see reflexivity as helping to promote a more ethical approach to research in the social sciences, and seek to be compassionate, forming non-exploitative relationships with participants.

Following the interpretive turn in the social sciences, ethnographers are no longer simply the instigators of study, but also under study themselves. As a result, when an ethnographic researcher embarks on her research journey, ‘what she brings to her field and how her specific social self and background influences the ways she gives meanings to her informants’ lives and represents them, becomes part of the methodological questions being raised’ (Wasserfall, 1993).

According to Maso (2003) personal reflexivity begins with the researcher examining their subjective investments in the research topic. They argue that, whilst there will be clear, *academic* justifications for studying any given topic, there are generally far more *subjective* reasons lying just underneath. The rest of this chapter will therefore explore my own reasons for pursuing this topic, taking up a reflective position in relation to this research.

3.4.1 A personal interest in sex work

Since around the age of thirteen I have been interested in sex work as a phenomenon. Around this time I had read a novel with a 'prostitute' as the main character, and from then on became increasingly curious about this 'world,' which it seemed everyone knew *of*, but nobody *knew*. Arguably voyeuristic, my curiosity grew as I did, and I read many articles and books and listened to many talks on the topic. By the time I reached university, I had already decided that I wanted to work for an anti-trafficking organisation when I graduated, eventually setting up my own support service for non-trafficked sex workers. In hindsight, I could neatly categorise myself as fitting within the oppression paradigm (Weitzer, 2009) during that time; the hiddenness of sex work, combined with the anti-trafficking narrative I often heard in faith contexts, meant I positioned women in the sex industry (at this time I was entirely naïve to male sex workers) as victims of a patriarchal society which had lied to them about their worth, and about the worth of sex.

When I reached the stage of carrying out a PhD, knowing all the while that this would be my topic of choice, I had managed to recognise that sex workers and trafficking victims were a different group, but my desire to develop some sort of formula for offering support to sex workers was indicative of my sustained ignorance of the fact that sex workers are not one, homogenous group. My personal desire to illuminate the goings-on of a support service for sex workers, is not far from my academic justification for this thesis, and has not changed; however, I can see that my approach to this, and my views on the topics under study, have evolved and changed significantly over the course of my research.

In light of this evolution in my own perspectives, I would argue that my position on sex work is more complex than choosing between one of the three (or possibly four) paradigms. As a Christian, my views on sex and the self are such that I would never advocate for someone choosing sex work as a career, or argue that it does not impact on the individual involved. However, I also acknowledge that this view is not one I should ever impress on others, and would therefore never undermine another's choice to engage in sex work. As such I believe my role is to advocate for sex workers' safety and rights so that they can be as empowered and safe as possible in their chosen profession. On a wider level I seek to advocate for

women's rights in general, as I believe that the prevalence of female sex workers is, at least in part, due to a patriarchal society that limits the options of women.

While my position on sex work is not particularly strong or fixed, Willig (2013) argues that personally reflexivity and being aware of one's own position in relation to the topic under study, is key. I therefore recognise that my own views, as discussed in the introduction to this thesis, will have exercised some influence over the way in which I interpreted and analysed the data.

3.4.2 Experiencing dual roles and reflecting on observations

Bernard (2011) summarises participant observation as involving 'immersing yourself in a culture and learning to remove yourself every day from that immersion so you can intellectualise what you've seen and heard, put it into perspective, and write about it convincingly' (p.258). Reflecting on this quote, I questioned myself about how successful I had been in removing myself and intellectualising. On the whole I feel this was something I achieved. The process of writing up field-notes immediately after leaving the field setting enabled me to think analytically about what I had just observed, and helped to put some distance between myself and the field. However, distance is not just an issue upon leaving the setting. Many ethnographers discuss difficulties with maintaining distance *within* the setting, some finding themselves completely drawn into their participant's lives, a process known as 'going native'. So the question I ask myself here is, did I? In the interest of transparency, I do believe there were times when, I too, 'went native', times when I became too involved in the community under study, and in doing so, times when I was unable to maintain distance. Despite this being the case, 'going native' is not something I feel particularly concerned about, as Bernard states 'since total objectivity is, by definition, a myth, I'd worry more about producing credible data and strong analysis and less about whether going native is good or bad' (Bernard, 2011, p.262). In some ways 'going native' helped me to gain acceptance as a member of the group, it gave me insight into

participating in the drop-in as a service-provider, which I might otherwise not have had, and it helped to build my relationships with other service-providers and service-users.

Slightly different from the issue of 'going native' where it is the absorption in the lives of the participants which is the pull of the researcher, I did experience a real tension between my role as researcher, and my role as volunteer. Unlike going native, the reasons for this tension were not necessarily to do with immersion, perhaps more to do with my own insecurities and limitations as an observer. It would be fair to say that, during my time carrying out observations, I felt more comfortable in my role as a volunteer than I did in my role as a researcher. Service-provision, in varying contexts, is something I am familiar with, something I feel comes naturally, and something in which I have years of experience. Research, however, is not. Going straight from an undergraduate degree in which my only research project used students as participants, into this doctorate, has meant I have carried a real feeling of inexperience, a real sense of being a novice, throughout my PhD journey. A desire to 'save face' and avoid looking foolish, meant that there were often whole drop-in sessions that went by without me even mentioning my research, let alone approaching people to obtain consent. Thankfully, as my confidence as a volunteer grew, so too did my confidence as a researcher, and I began to worry far less about the potential of negative responses when I approached people. I suppose, rather than actually becoming a full participant, there were times when I camouflaged myself as such, for self-preservation. Due to this, there were very rarely ever times when I wasn't aware of my role as researcher and therefore very few times when I wasn't viewing the drop-in through an analytical lens.

According to Bernard (2011), personal characteristics also make a difference in fieldwork, your gender, status as a parent or not, your age etc. lets you in to certain things and shuts you out of others. The following are all personal characteristics I feel made a difference in fieldwork.

My gender:

Being a woman in a service run solely for women, and for all but two, solely by women, meant that there was much open to me that may not have been, had I been a man. Conversations about punters, past relationships, current troubles with men, were all open to me, as a heterosexual woman who was assumed to have had enough experience to comment. As a woman, and a feminist, service-providers openly shared their views on patriarchy and the structures letting down the women accessing the service.

My age:

Though there were a number of other volunteers around the same age as me, my young age, made to seem younger by my appearance, also had an impact on what was open to me and what wasn't. Service-users who were also young seemed to gravitate towards me, viewing me as a peer, and perhaps intimidated by the older service-providers and service-users; however, certain service-users who were older than me found it difficult to receive services from someone younger, some commenting on how I didn't know anything of the world yet, others speaking to me only to give life lessons. In addition to the impact that this had on my role as a volunteer, it also meant that data collected from service-users was sometimes different depending on their age, with younger service-users sharing quite openly with me, and older service-users reserving this openness for service-providers closer to their own age.

My lack of experience of sex work:

I am not, nor have I ever been, a sex worker. This is the case for all but a few of the service-providers at Women's Zone, and means that access to the experience of sex work through the sharing of stories and conversation is, for the most part, granted and denied by the service-users. When such experience was shared with me, it was delivered with a seeming expectancy of my naivety to the realities of sex working, though not to the realities of the circumstances surrounding it. In one sense this was useful for the data, as it meant service-users were likely to explain things in more detail than they might have otherwise, however, in another sense, it meant that I was not necessarily being exposed to the 'native language'

(Bernard, 2011) of the service-users at Women's Zone, but perhaps instead to an interpretation of that language spoken by service-users for the sake of service-providers.

My lack of children:

Many of the service-users at Women's Zone are parents; I am not. It's hard to say how much of an impact this had, as women did still converse with me about their children, but there is a sense in which this is an experience not shared, and therefore another difference and distance between myself and the women. This is a difference I believe is important, as motherhood seemed to be a huge part of the identity of the service-users who had children, something which is explored further in chapter six.

My upbringing:

When it comes to the vast majority of service-users accessing the drop-in, I have experienced a privilege that they have not. My childhood was trauma-free, I have never experienced homelessness, never been estranged from family, and never been involved in substance abuse. Again there is a wealth of experience here which is not shared, ways in which service-users could not relate to me, and whilst there were instances in which this branded me as naïve to some, someone who could never understand, to others it made my relationship and input all the more valuable. As a result, the impact of this on the data arguably varied with service-user; for some, my naivety may have closed off access to some conversations and topics, and for others, it may have opened it.

Managing dual roles

Arber (2006) argues that one of the best ways of managing dual roles, is to exercise reflexivity through keeping a fieldwork journal. This is something I did throughout my time observing, and slightly less during my time interviewing. Reflexive practice also occurred

through supervisory discussion and conversations with other academics, something that often brought an awareness of reflexive issues that I had not yet seen myself.

3.4.3 The lens through which I saw

Upon reflection on the previous sub-section (section 3.4.2) and my discussion of the personal characteristics I felt may have impacted upon fieldwork and data collection, it became apparent that I had solely focused on the impact these characteristics and positionings may have had on service-users, entirely neglecting to consider the way in which they impacted service-providers. While this is likely due, in part, to my shared role as a service-provider, it may also be due to a perceived affinity with the service-providers and not the service-users. Such an assumption appears to indicate some internalisation of stigma and marginality attached to sex work. On some level, I seem to have assumed more difference between myself and the service-users than between myself and the service-providers. Whether this assumption is accurate or not, it is necessary to be aware of, as Barron's (2013) research suggests that observers tend to focus on that which they perceive to be 'different' or 'exotic' to their own self or experience; therefore meaning I may have paid more attention to the service-users within my observations and field notes, than to the service-providers.

3.4.4 The lens through which I was seen

In addition to the impact of my personal characteristics on the way I was viewed by the participants of this study, I also feel it is important to reflect on the way in which I was viewed in relation to my dual identities as researcher and volunteer.

When it came to the service-providers, there was often clear acknowledgement of these dual roles/identities. They would often ask me how I was getting on with my research and I

had many lengthy conversations pre/post drop-in about different issues covered by my study. After having observed drop-in sessions for around ten months, I informed the service I would no longer be coming in to volunteer and observe anymore, but asked if I could come in once a week to try and obtain interviews. The service saw a clear distinction between my researcher and volunteer roles, and when I arrived at drop-in I would often be asked if I was there to 'work' [to do research] or as a volunteer.

This was starkly different to the service-users. I had conversations with many over the course of observations, often repeating these conversations multiple times with the same women; though some seemed interested in my research and wanted to know more, most simply acknowledged it and moved on to a different topic. The overwhelming response to these conversations was distinctly neutral, and most interestingly, in all but a few cases, my identity as a researcher was forgotten. There were many instances in which I would raise the topic of my research with a service-user whom I had already discussed it with, only to find they appeared completely ignorant to the subject. This was not a simple case of general forgetfulness, service-users would often remember details volunteers had mentioned, such as having a first date coming up, and ask them for full run-downs at the next drop-in; it seemed to me to be about something different. In terms of my two roles, it appeared that my role as volunteer was of far more value to service-users than my role as a researcher. As the first, I was there to offer them services and to help run the drop in; my value to them was clear and understood. As the latter, though I myself could see the value such research could hold for these women; this appeared to elude them, and they therefore dismissed it as irrelevant. Some service-users mentioned others who had conducted research in the centre, and how the results had never been made available to them, and the researcher had disappeared as soon as they had collected their data. It is arguable then, that my role as a volunteer may have been viewed as being mutually beneficial, whilst my role as a researcher was seen as only of benefit to myself.

Summary

In approaching this research I sought to be reflexive, and to maintain an awareness of my own positionings, and how these might exert influence throughout the process. Recording my personal responses to time spent in the drop-in through a field journal allowed me to remain aware of how these positionings changed and developed during the research process, and to recognise where they may have influenced my field notes or my analysis of the data. Chapter seven will look back over some of the key issues in relation to reflexivity, and reflect upon them in light of having completed data collection and analysis.

3.5 Analytic approach

The following section will discuss the decision to take a broadly thematic approach to analysis, and how Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase model was largely used to guide the process. It will also discuss the limitations of this approach, and the decision not to take a solely thematic approach to chapter four, due to a desire to contextualise the themes presented in the following two chapters, and to 'maintain the whole', as discussed in section 3.5.3.

3.5.1 Thematic analysis

'Qualitative psychologists need to be clear about what they are doing and why, and to include the often-omitted 'how' they did their analysis in their reports'

Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.79

According to Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis (TA) is a foundational method of qualitative analysis, and should be the first analytic method taught to any budding researcher. Despite some researchers arguing that TA is simply an analytic tool to be used

across different methods (Hollaway & Todres, 2003; and Boyatzis, 1998); Braun & Clarke hold that it is a method in its own right, and that the use of some of its processes across other methods is simply further evidence of its importance within qualitative research.

As an analytic method, thematic analysis is focused on finding repeated patterns of meaning across a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These patterns of meaning are referred to as 'themes', and though prevalence can be a factor in the identification of some themes; it is not simply a case of counting occurrences. In the case of this research, looking for meaning across the data set, and not simply approaching participant accounts or individual observations as separate case studies, will work towards the creation of a picture of the support context. While the individual accounts are valuable in their own right, and tell us a lot about the support setting and the experience of it, as critical realism states, they represent only one truth among many (Bhaskar, 2011). Therefore, it is in the interweaving of these accounts that the bigger picture of support is created. In terms of addressing the first research aim of exploring the lived culture of support, it is only through putting the accounts and observations together that the shared meanings of the setting are revealed. In summary, using thematic analysis and looking for meaning across the data set enables the contextualising of the individual accounts of service-providers and service-users.

According to Braun & Clarke (2006) a theme should capture something important about the data and be relevant to the research question(s), beyond this criterion it is largely down to researcher discretion. In light of this, TA would not refer to themes 'emerging' or being 'discovered' as such language makes the researcher's role seem far more passive than it is in reality. In reference to this issue, Braun and Clarke (2006) state that 'if themes reside anywhere, they reside in our heads' (p.80).

In order to begin to identify themes, TA uses a strategy called 'coding', which involves closely inspecting data to look for 'recurring themes, topics, or relationships' (Lapadat, 2010, p.2). Once found, similar passages are then given a label, or code, to group them for

further analysis. Coding is a cyclical process which researchers must repeat many times; codes are revisited, revised and sometimes removed before analysis is considered complete (Lapadat, 2010).

In the way in which it aims to describe patterns across the data, thematic analysis is not unlike interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), or grounded theory. However, unlike IPA and grounded theory, TA is not theoretically bound. According to Braun & Clarke (2006, p.78) 'thematic analysis is essentially independent of theory and epistemology, and can be applied across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches.' This flexibility is arguably the greatest strength of thematic analysis, and ensures its compatibility with various theoretical frameworks.

Despite its acknowledged strengths, and the use of its concepts across multiple analytic methods, TA is not without critique. Whilst the process of organising data into themes may be the reason for its prevalence within qualitative research, it is also seen as TA's biggest weakness by many qualitative researchers, who argue that the process of breaking data into parts to reduce, organise and code it, leads to fractured, decontextualized and disembodied accounts (see Hoskins & Stoltz, 2005; Lapadat, 2010). For these reasons, van Manen (summarised in Gibson & Brown, 2009) argues that the themes TA produces are 'a poor substitute for the lived experiences to which they refer' (p.129). Whilst this may seem like a pretty damning critique of thematic analysis, Gibson and Brown (2009) argue that it is more of a health warning for the dangers of careless analysis, than an argument for TA's lack of value. According to them, themes are a useful device which provide a means of linking together diverse experiences or concepts, and contrasting and interconnecting different features within the data. Gibson and Brown (2009) do not deny that data is re-presented and recontextualized through the themes produced, but they argue that this is of value in 'creating new readings and renderings of that data' (p.129). Through addressing some of the issues raised in van Manen's 'health warning', researchers are able to move beyond the limitations of thematic analysis to yield insightful interpretations that are contextually

grounded (Lapadat, 2010). The way in which the issue of fragmenting the data has been addressed within this research will be discussed in section 3.5.3.

3.5.2 Thematic analysis and this study

As previously stated, thematic analysis is a method and not a methodology, meaning it is well suited to the hybrid inductive-deductive approach taken to this research. Whilst TA can be used alongside strict theoretical frameworks for a purely deductive approach, Lapadat (2010) argues that it is better suited to a largely inductive approach which seeks out themes grounded within the data itself, as a result, choosing thematic analysis allowed me to code the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame (Braun & Clarke, 2006), or on to pre-existing theoretical ideas. The flexibility of TA also means that it can be 'a Contextualist method, sitting between the two poles of essentialism and constructionism, and characterised by theories such as critical realism' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.81), meaning that it is suited to the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of this research. Proponents of thematic analysis also argue that it is well suited to addressing research questions about experience, suitable for large data sets, and can be used across multiple methods of data collection (Clarke & Braun, 2013); arguments which provide further justification for its suitability for this research.

When it comes to composing the research data into themes, there are two main reasons for why this is appropriate in the case of this study; the first of these is being able to tell the overall story of the culture and lived experience of support, and the second is the ability to explore the complexities and individualities across and within those experiences. According to Braun & Clarke (2006) the themes presented in thematic analysis should tell the story of the data concerned and offer a rich, overall description of the data set. They argue that producing this kind of overall description is of particular value to studies focused around under-researched areas, where the views of participants on this subject may not be known; as is true for this research. If it were the case that presenting a thematic analysis simply

involved defining, naming and summarising themes, then I might be inclined to agree with the critique that TA is limited to the production of such generalised accounts only. However, when writing up themes, researchers using thematic analysis are expected to produce individual analyses of each, contextualising them in relation to existing literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is in these individual analyses, and the discussion of each theme, that TA allows for the exploration of the complexities and individualities within the data set. When it comes to discussing the themes constructed from this research data, TA has allowed me to examine the commonalities, the differences, and the relationships that exist within/across individual accounts and experiences (Gibson & Brown, 2009); thus enabling me to provide both an overall account of the culture and experience of support represented within the data, but also allowing me to explore the complexities across the data set.

Though Braun and Clarke (2006) focus predominantly on the use of thematic analysis for written and spoken data, and not for observational data, this approach to data analysis is argued by Jones and Watt (2010) to be the most common approach taken up by ethnographers, and it was therefore deemed suitable for the ethnographic approach taken to this study.

3.5.3 Maintaining the 'whole'

'The whole is greater than the sum of the parts'

- Gestalt

In agreement with the critique lobbied by van Manen (1990), Hollway & Jefferson (2000) also argue that the deconstructing or 'fragmenting' of data involved in thematic analysis, leads to the risk of taking it out of the context of the 'whole'. Approaching analysis in this reductionist way has been argued to leave us with 'disembodied research discussions that are largely missing the voice of the participant' (Hoskins & Stoltz, 2005, p.99). As has been

emphasised throughout this thesis, though the notion of giving voice is problematic, silencing the voice of the participants is something this study aims to avoid at all costs; therefore, it was felt that addressing this possible outcome of thematic analysis was of utmost importance.

In order to address this issue, the decision was made to include two 'typical narratives' of drop-in sessions at Women's Zone, as part of the analysis of the data; one of a typical busy day, and one of a typical quiet day. Though the analysis and discussion presented in chapters five and six are the result of a thematic approach to analysis, the freedom provided by ethnography enabled the incorporation of these narratives and the more descriptive approach seen in chapter four, and ensured I didn't fall into the trap of 'methodolatry' (Chamberlain, 2000). According to Chamberlain, research carried out within the qualitative paradigm often falls prey to the privileging of methodological concerns over other considerations, and the desire to maintain a 'pure use' of a particular method or approach. Chamberlain (2000) warns of the consequences of being too anchored to a particular approach, which for this study would arguably have been the disembodiment of data, and an inability to transfer an understanding of the experience of Women's Zone, to the reader. Therefore, while the approach to analysis seen in chapter four is rather more descriptive, and the inclusion of the constructed narratives represents a divergence from the thematic approach seen in the following two chapters, the way in which the discussion in chapter four worked to address some of the limitations of a purely thematic approach, and therefore strengthen the research, resulted in the conclusion that it was more important to include it, than to follow a thematic approach to the letter.

The construction of typical narratives was an approach taken up by Turner (2012) who also carried out an ethnographic analysis based on observations, and, in doing so, sought to offer the reader some insight into her student participants' first term at university. In the same way, my aim in constructing these narratives is also to provide insight into Women's Zone's drop-in service, and to make my experience of participating within the service more accessible to the reader. Like Turner's narratives of induction week, the 'busy day' and

'quiet day' narratives presented in chapter four were constructed from the observational data collected through field notes, both from a familiarity with the data, and sometimes from direct extracts. In presenting these narratives, the reader is able to see how the themes that have been drawn out of the data play out in practice, how they interact and intersect, and how they make up the picture of support. If 'dissecting' the data into themes is to be thought of as disembodiment (Hoskins & Stoltz, 2005), presenting these 'typical day' narratives is a means of 'fleshing it out', of highlighting its human-ness.

When choosing the kinds of days to represent in the constructed narratives, I spent time looking through the data, and reflecting upon my own experience as a volunteer-observer in the setting, and felt that the key distinction was whether the drop-in session had been busy or quiet. In my own experience as a volunteer, it was the business of the session that made the most difference to how I was able to provide support and interact with service-users, something that was also evident in the data. While a quiet session meant that service-providers were able to spend the entire time with an individual service-user, if necessary, and focus solely on their needs, a busy session sometimes meant service-providers juggling the needs of five or six different service-users and trying to respond to all of them at once. In presenting a busy and quiet day narrative my aim was therefore to give the reader a fuller insight into the experience of participating in the service on days where it was at its most different.

The process of creating these composite narratives began with multiple readings of my field notes, and the noting down of interactions/practices that happened across a number of sessions, and therefore felt typical. In some instances the interactions/practices described in the narrative are a combination of data extracts from multiple field note entries, and in other instances they are direct extracts from one entry that seemed representative.

In using these composite narratives as data I was acutely aware of the extra layer of interpretation involved, and that I had made decisions about which interactions and

practices to include, and therefore which to exclude. In order to manage this, I tried to remain as close to the data as possible. While some instances were combined to create one interaction in the busy/quiet day narrative, there were no interactions or practices added.

In order to minimise the risk of the themes drawn out of this data being taken out of context, the 'busy day' and 'quiet day' narratives will be presented in chapter four, before the two chapters discussing the more analytic themes.

3.5.4 The process of analysis

Braun & Clarke's (2006) six phase model was used as a guideline to direct the analysis presented in chapters five and six, which began with numerous readings and re-readings of the data. The approach to analysis was entirely inductive to begin with, and therefore codes were assigned to all data extracts without a particular focus. Initially this was done by hand, but when the amount of data proved unmanageable this way, I moved to using the NVivo software for coding. After reviewing the initial codes assigned to the observation data, I became aware that many needed revising or removing due to overlap, and so a second round of coding was carried out. At this point I began to see several preliminary themes within the codes, but had yet to finish collecting interview data. For this reason analysis was put on hold until all data had been collected. Once the interview data had been collected and transcribed, I repeated the same process of reading and re-reading, followed by coding. Rather than producing a number of interpretative themes, the first attempt at grouping the full data set by codes actually resulted in the production of several descriptive categories. While it was clear that I was mindful of remaining close to the data, it seemed that I had avoided carrying out any actual analysis or interpretation. As a result, I returned to the data, this time attempting to approach it with a more analytic lens (an example of this coding can be seen in appendix nine). After some more time spent revisiting codes and grouping them, two superordinate themes were constructed from the data. Initially these themes were referred to as 'power' and 'identity', however, after spending some time writing up each of

the themes, it was clear that these labels did not fully reflect the data included, and in the case of the theme labelled 'identity', neither did the analysis and discussion adequately echo the thread that grouped the data together. In light of spending some more time reflecting upon the latter theme, and trying to ascertain what was at its core, I re-titled it 'knowing me, knowing you; negotiating self and other', and re-structured the analysis to better reflect what the data was saying. The theme of 'power' was also revised to 'power and powerlessness'. A schematic representation of the themes identified can be found on page 133.

When it came to writing up the discussion of the two themes constructed from the data, and of the more descriptive approach seen in chapter four, insights from the volunteer handbook (Appendix one) were included where relevant and useful. Bowen (2009) describes the process of document analysis as one of appraising, or making sense of, the data contained in the documentation. While thorough readings of the documentation did enable me to make sense of what it included, data from the documentation was also used to make sense of the observational and interview data discussed within the two analytic themes. The data collected from the volunteer handbook was particularly useful in helping to understand the place from which support was being offered, and also to highlight contradictions that existed in the service culture between its ethos and its practices, and therefore helped to illuminate the complexities of the setting.

Theme One - Power and Powerlessness

The theme of power and powerlessness was a pervading thread throughout much of the data collected through both interviews and participant observations, and is discussed in chapter five. This theme is comprised of two main sub-themes; *exercising power* and *service-provider powerlessness*. The sub-theme of *exercising power* considers the ways in which service-providers often exercised power over service-users through controlling practices such as censorship and discipline, but also the ways in which service-users sought

to exercise power themselves. The sub-theme of *service-provider powerlessness* considers how powerlessness was a significant part of many service-provider experiences, due to both internal and external factors contributing to a sense of being out of control. This theme also considers the way in which service-providers sought to deal with a feeling of powerlessness through finding meaning.

Theme Two – Knowing me, knowing you; negotiating roles and relationships

This theme discusses the ways in which service-providers and service-users in Women’s Zone negotiated their roles, identities and relationships with one another. This theme is comprised of three sub-themes; *service-providers; professional roles and personal identities, service-users; belonging and individuality, and making sense of service-provider-service-user relationships*. The first two sub-themes consider the ways in which service-providers and service-users value both their shared roles, the ‘us’, and their personal identities, the ‘me’, within Women’s Zone. For service-providers this looked like distinguishing between their professional roles and personal identities explicitly, in order to validate and maintain both, and for service-users this looked like valuing the sense of belonging they experienced due to shared experiences, but also who they were as individuals due to that which was not shared. The final sub-theme offers case-study style examples, which demonstrate how individuals participating within Women’s Zone attached different meanings to their identities, roles and relationships, and the way in which this impacted on their lived experience.

‘Women’s Zone’; Understanding ‘what they do’

As already discussed in section 3.5.3, in addition to the two, more interpretative themes, chapter four will consider data relevant to the question ‘what do they do?’ as raised in the literature and discussed in chapter two. This chapter will include an outline of the areas of service-provision offered by Women’s Zone, which have been constructed through noting

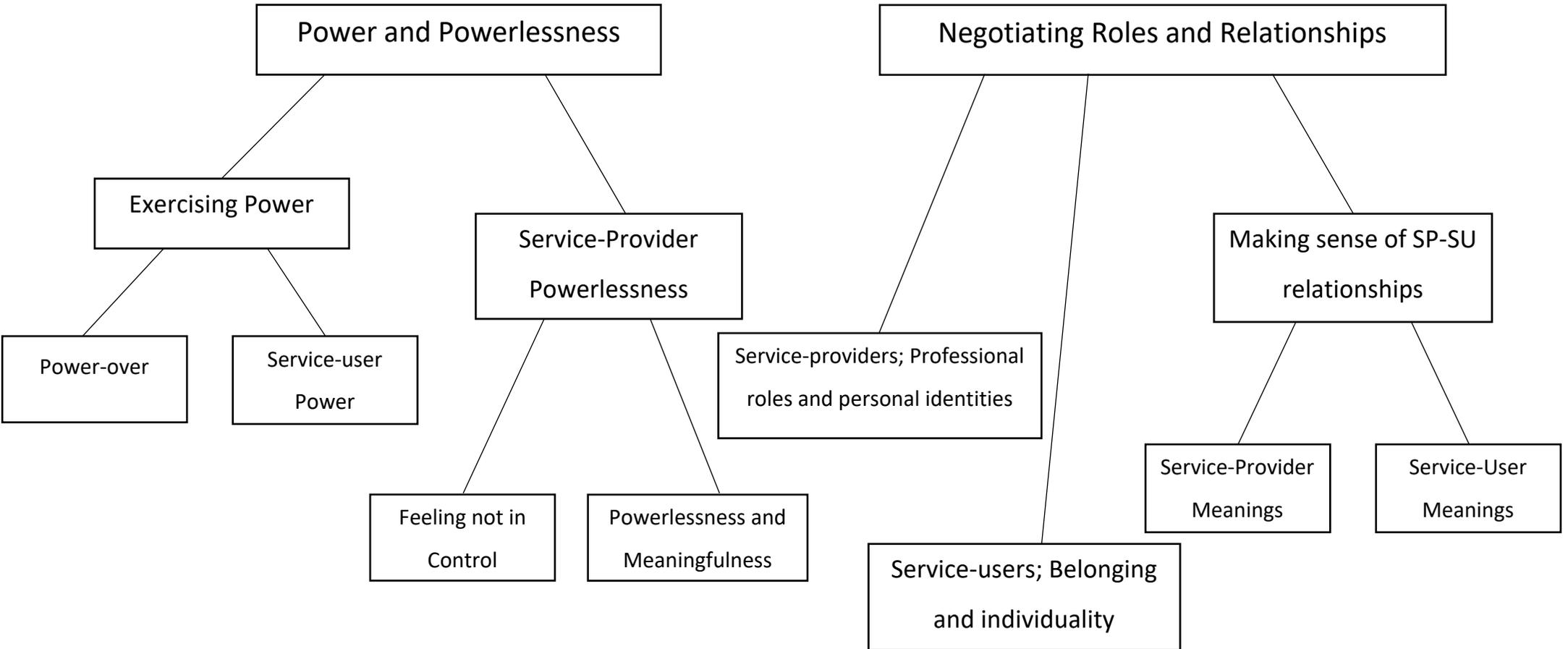
the kinds of support recorded within field notes; discussed within the literature, and mentioned within the service documents. Though the process of constructing the overview of service-provision was not a detailed bottom-up coding of activities, it did enable the development of some conceptual categories which seemed useful for grouping the areas of service-provision. This chapter will also present the two 'typical narratives' constructed from observational data, and will draw out key point for analysis and discussion.

Summary

It has been argued in this chapter that taking a critical realist approach to ethnography has allowed this research to gain in-depth, rich data, in a way which is sensitive to the participants being studied. The combination of observation and interviews, and comparing these to service documents, has allowed for the building of rapport and exposure to the culture of the service, as well as giving space for those taking part to share their stories and have some kind of voice. While there are many complex issues relating to ethics and reflexivity, this research has remained committed to a strong ethical position, and to being reflexive, throughout. The choice to carry out thematic analysis fits with a broadly inductive approach to theory, and the flexibility of this method enables the incorporation of beneficial parts of other approaches and theories. The addition of typical narratives is important in addressing the limitations of thematic analysis, and will allow for a more human reading of the data.

The following chapter will present the areas of service-provision offered by Women's Zone, and the analysis of two constructed narratives of typical drop-in sessions.

Figure 3 - Schematic representation of themes identified



Chapter Four - Women's Zone; Understanding 'what they do'

Introduction

This chapter will attempt to contextualise Women's Zone and consider the question of 'what they do' through categorising the areas of service-delivery offered, and through two constructed narratives. Section 4.1 will discuss the practices of the services that can be thought of as largely formal, or material, and will consider how they reflect those discussed in section 2.2.1 of chapter two. Section 4.2 will then present two constructed narratives of a busy and quiet day in the drop-in, and will use these narratives to discuss some of the more interpersonal practices enacted within Women Zone that make up an extra 'layer' of 'what they do'.

4.1 'What they do' – aspects of service-delivery

Data from both interviews and observations revealed a number of aspects of service-delivery or formal practices of 'support', which I have grouped under the headings harm-minimisation; intermediary; neutral ground; activities; access to resources; provision, and special events/trips, and which will now be discussed in order to address the question of 'what they do' and therefore the research aim of exploring the practices of the service.

4.1.1 Harm-minimisation

As a sex work support service with a dedicated building, Women's Zone is able to offer on-site support for issues around substance-abuse; violence; housing; sexual health; physical

health, and mental health .In order to promote good sexual health and minimise risky sexual behaviour, Women’s Zone has posters on the walls of the main drop-in space detailing statistics and information about STIs and safe sex practices, the drop-in building also includes a dedicated nurse’s clinic where service-users can undergo on-site sexual health checks. In addition to these checks, the on-site nurse is also available to support the service-users with their general physical health, and to provide appointments to discuss any concerns without the service-users needing to book them in advance. On-site support for mental health is offered in the form of a cognitive behavioural therapist who sees service-users on a weekly basis, usually before the drop-in is open to other service-users. In addition to CBT, Women’s Zone also offers service-users the opportunity to book an appointment with a complimentary therapist who visits the centre regularly. As was the case for most of the services discussed in the academic literature and evaluations (see BASIS, 2016; James-Hanman & Roberts; 2013; Pitcher, 2006), Women’s Zone also offers support around issues of violence and safety. Service-provision in this area includes service-providers filling in ‘dodgy punter’ reports with service-users following an incident, displaying up-to-date information via a ‘dodgy punter’ board within the main drop-in space, and distributing this information through hand-outs. During my time observing the drop-in, there was also a first-aid training session provided by an external expert that service-users could sign up to attend following the drop-in. Again reflecting the areas of service-provision discussed in the literature, Women’s Zone also offer needle exchange services on-site, and have a dedicated member of staff for supporting service-users dealing with homelessness and housing issues.

4.1.2 Intermediary

When it came to aspects of support that Women’s Zone could or did not offer, staff and volunteers often acted as intermediaries, signposting service-users to other services and carrying out referrals, a method of service-delivery referenced several times within the academic literature (see Saldanha & Parenteua, 2013; Whowell, 2011). During my time in the drop-in, referrals were made to an external mental health team on behalf of several service-users, and service-users who requested training or education programs were

signposted to relevant organisations in the area, with whom Women's Zone often had well established working partnerships or relationships. Women's Zone also acted as an intermediary between service-users and the police, providing police with information and liaising with them on incidents reported by the service-users. There were a number of instances during my ten months of observations when sex workers who were known by police to be service-users at Women's Zone, went missing. When this happened, Women's Zone were contacted by the police and asked to let them know if the service-user showed up to a session. This kind of partnership represents one of the ways in which Women's Zone worked with other services/organisations to promote the safety of sex workers, and perhaps demonstrates how specialist services for sex workers can collaborate with the police to both promote sex worker safety and better the relationship between the police and the sex working community.

4.1.3 Safe space

In addition to staff and volunteers at the drop-in acting as intermediaries and signposting and referring to external services, the physical space where the drop-in is held also acted as a safe space for service-users to access/meet with external professionals and services. Chapter 2 discussed the many barriers preventing sex workers from accessing more generalised support, such as stigmatisation and criminalisation. The existence of Women's Zone as a 'safe space' therefore meant service-users were able to access this external support in a space where they knew they were safe(r) from such prejudice. This included one-off or occasional visits from external professionals, and those who attended the drop-in on a weekly or monthly basis. Included in the list of professionals/services who attended the drop-in regularly was a solicitor, who sat at a table near the kitchen and was available to give advice on family law, or to set up appointments regarding other areas of law; a drugs worker who attended the drop-in one session a week and attempted to engage with the drug-using service-users, offering them an appointment with the service she worked for and access to a 'script' [a prescription for methadone to aid the process of withdrawal]; and a number of professionals who lead workshops once a week. During my time observing the

drop-in there was also a representative from a local dental project who attended the drop-in to try and get the service-users to sign up for appointments, and some professionals who came in to talk to the women about domestic violence. Due to the majority of service-users facing a number of different issues and challenges, many were also engaging with other services, such as social services or housing services. In these cases, the drop-in at Women's Zone often provided a neutral ground for service-users to meet with their case-worker/key-worker from these services.

4.1.4 Activities

As was the case for the sex work program in CATIE's (2010) case study, Women's Zone also offer a range of activities for service-users to get involved in. These activities are mainly arts and crafts based, and during my time observing included knitting; jewellery making; colouring; decorating gingerbread men; artwork; picture-framing; textile work; drama workshops, and poetry and creative-writing. Specific art workshops offered also included seasonal projects, such as making Halloween masks; making things to sell at the annual Christmas fair to raise money for Women's Zone; and projects based on the service-users' own experiences.

4.1.5 Access to resources

As well as support related to harm-minimisation available in the drop-in, Women's Zone also provides service-users with access to resources such as three drop-in computers and the drop-in phone. While a number of the homeless service-users still had a mobile phone, or access to one, access to a computer was something they did not have. For this reason, service-users used the computers for a variety of reasons, including; accessing Facebook and keeping in touch with friends and family; CV writing or job applications; listening to music; accessing google search, and, in the case of one service-user, running her AVON business.

4.1.6 Provision of material goods and services

Like a number of services in the literature, Women's Zone's provision went beyond the supply of free condoms and lube, and included, food provision, with hot meals being offered three times a week; the provision of clothes, especially during the winter when wet weather often meant some of the homeless service-users arrived completely drenched in the only clothes they owned; the provision of gift bags, particularly for new service-users or those needing emergency supplies, which included personal attack alarms, shampoo, conditioner and body wash, tampons, soup sachets etc., and the provision of material goods for the home, often in the case of service-users moving out of DV hostels into their own place.

4.1.7 Special events/trips

As with several of the services discussed in Broadway's (2008) review of sex work support in Lambeth, Women's Zone also offered a number of 'leisure activities' that service-users could take part in if they desired. In some cases these activities took place on site, like the annual Christmas fair and meal, and in some cases they required off-site trips. During my time observing the drop-in at Women's Zone, the trips offered included a number of trips to the cinema with a service-provider and a small group of service-users; a trip to the beach with a few service-providers and a coach-load of service-users; a trip to a garden centre; a one off trip to a local pub/restaurant who offered Women's Zone several tickets to the launch of their Christmas menu, and a swimming trip where a service-provider would take a group of service-users to the local swimming baths once a week.

Summary

This section has presented the aspects of service-delivery offered by Women's Zone, which largely make clear the formal, or material, practices involved in support. Overall, these practices appear to reflect those aspects of service-delivery identified in the current literature and discussed in chapter two. However, as found by Whowell (2011) during her time observing outreach for male sex workers, there appears to be another layer to these material practices, which section 4.2 will now consider.

4.2 The story of Women's Zone

This section will attempt to contextualise, and in some senses, humanise, the material/formal practices identified in section 4.1 through presenting two typical narratives of a busy and quiet drop-in session at Women's Zone. Everything included in these narratives is either a direct extract from observation data, or constructed from combining several similar extracts. The narratives themselves are therefore not two actual days within Women's Zone, but representations of several similar days during my observations. These narratives will now be presented and used to reflect on the practices involved in service-delivery.

4.2.1 Narrative of a busy drop-in

Drop-in development worker, Jo, was leading today's drop-in and so led the briefing with myself and the three other volunteers who would be helping with the session. There were two service-users who had been banned for bad behaviour and we were told that if they came to the door we needed to hand them a letter explaining this. Service-user Candy was still considered a missing person and was now around six months pregnant and still assumed to be using. If she came to the session we were told to go and get a member of staff. The briefing took place in the kitchen area of the drop-in, as usual, while Dave set up for his art and framing workshop on the table in the main drop-in space. We were expecting a busy

drop-in due to the popularity of Dave's weekly workshop. Some service-users had mentioned in previous sessions that hearing about these workshops was their initial reason for accessing the drop-in, and many had become regulars.

Once the briefing was over, some of us chatted while others lifted the shutters and the blind on the door. One of the volunteers had mentioned that there were some service-users waiting outside, and so Jo headed to the front desk to buzz open the door as soon as it was time. The three service-users who had been waiting came into the drop-in room after being signed in by Jo. A service-user I hadn't seen before went over to the workshop table and began looking through the art resources available. Dave introduced himself and asked if she would like to have a go at anything. The service-user told him about the awful day she was having and how she just wanted to make something simple and 'chill out'. Dave put a canvas and some art supplies in front of her and she sat down and began to paint.

Sarah, a regular service-user who attended drop-in every Friday, among other days, came over to the kitchen. I asked if she wanted her usual 'nice cup of tea with milk and two' and she nodded, seemingly unimpressed at having her order remembered. She asked if there was any hot food and I explained that it was a Friday so we only had toast, pot noodles and cups of soup. She placed her order and I told her I would bring it to her, so she went and sat at the sofas alone and got her knitting out of a plastic bag.

The third service-user was chatting with another volunteer over the kitchen counter about troubles with her housing situation, and after a while they left together to make a phone call in one of the smaller meeting rooms.

The doorbell noise sounded and I waited a while, assuming Jo was still at the desk. When it continued I went to the reception area and found it empty. I could see two service-users waiting outside through the window in the door and so I buzzed them in from the desk. Both were women I had met before but neither seemed to recognise me. I asked them both for

their names, dates of birth and addresses so I could sign them in. As usual they reeled off their details in rapid time and I struggled to note them down, having to guess the spelling of the area they were staying in. The two women went through to the drop-in room and as I was signing them in the doorbell went again. This time when I looked up it was a man at the door. I remembered from training that we weren't supposed to let men into the drop-in, and I didn't recognise him as one of the two male volunteers or the male member of staff. Whilst I was trying to decide what to do, Jo came through the door that leads up to the staff office and opened the front door where the man was waiting. Instead of opening it fully, she stood with her foot in it and kept it mostly closed. They had a short conversation in which she asked who he was and he asked whether a particular service-user was in the drop-in. Jo told him she couldn't give him that information and after a few more tries he left, shouting and swearing about it being 'ridiculous'. The service-user and volunteer who had been making the phone call appeared at the desk and the service-user asked for needle exchange. Jo said she would do it as neither me, nor the other volunteer, had received training. They went into the needle exchange room together and the volunteer sat at the desk to record the phone call on the monitoring form on the back of the register.

I re-entered the drop-in room and found Sarah waiting at the kitchen counter holding her pot noodle. Another volunteer had finished her order for me but she wasn't happy with the level of water and pointed to the line where she wanted it filling to. The doorbell went again and quickly after, three more service-users joined the drop-in. Service-user Debs came over to the kitchen and said hello, as we'd been at a number of sessions together. She asked for a brew and then went and sat at one of the computers. When I took her brew over she began chatting to me about her daughter and showed me some pictures of her on Facebook. She was trying to organise a birthday treat for her and a friend and asked for some ideas. Whilst we were talking, I noticed that case worker Tracey had joined the drop-in and was talking to one of the other two service-users who had joined the session with Debs. The two women were sat at a table near the kitchen and Tracey was squatting down next to one who appeared to be drifting in and out of sleep. One of the volunteers handed Tracey a coffee for the service-user and she drank most of it with shaky hands. Tracey continued chatting to her

gently and the other woman began to get irate. She began reprimanding Tracey for 'pecking her head' and pleading with her to just let the woman sleep. The two women finished their drinks and left, promising Tracey they'd come back to fill in some forms.

I heard the door go again and another service-user entered the drop-in crying, she asked to see Jo in one of the meeting rooms and they left together, Jo giving Tracey a 'look' as she went. A service-user named Jennifer arrived, and as usual she sat at the table nearest the door and refused any offers of food, drink or activities, after about ten minutes of sitting with no interaction, she left again.

The service-user who had been in needle-exchange came back in to the drop-in room and asked if she could have some condoms. I went with her to the desk and handed her two bags of mixed condoms from the box, she requested only flavoured and so I swapped out the non-flavoured ones. She then said goodbye and left. I signed some more service-users in who were talking loudly with one another about drugs, I knew we weren't supposed to allow conversations about drugs, but I never felt able to challenge service-users on this, and so I left them to go through to the drop-in. All three joined the art table with Dave, who got out the canvases two of them had been working on the week before and not finished. One of the women picked up the paints and carried on, the other told Dave she didn't want to finish that piece and wanted to start on something new. I took over some more drink orders and some toast for the women who had just joined and then pulled up a chair next to one of the other volunteers. Some of the women were talking about how quiet it was out on the beat today, and Debs joined in from the computers to say that one of her regulars hadn't shown up. Some of the women at the table shared stories of their favourite regulars, who predominantly seemed to be men that paid for services other than sex, such as a disabled regular who paid for one of the women to hug him in his car. They talked about how some of the women on the beat would steal his wallet when they were in his car, but how he kept coming back. When the conversation turned to stories of incidents with 'dodgy punters', the other volunteer offered some advice around safety and checked with the women that those who wanted to, had reported the incidents via ugly mugs. One of the women was going to a

costume party at the weekend, and so talk quickly turned to that. When their canvases were finished, Dave showed the women how to frame them, though some already knew from being regulars at his workshop, and then he hung them on the picture wall.

The service-user who had been in the meeting room with Jo re-joined the session and sat at the art table. Her speech and behaviour suggested she had some form of special needs. She was rifling through some half-finished art work, trying to find her own and started to become agitated when it didn't appear to be there. Dave tried to help her, but she began to shout and swear. Jo came over and stood next to the service-user and told her calmly that she needed to calm herself down and speak to Dave respectfully, or she would have to leave. The service-user smiled and let out a child-like giggle, and then decided to start over on a new canvas.

The session began to wind down and about five minutes before closing Dave started to clear away the art. The service-users left in their small groups and we were about to meet for the debriefing when another service-user buzzed on the doorbell. Jo went to answer and we saw the service-user run past the kitchen and in to the toilet. Jo came back in to the kitchen and told us the service-user had been hopping around at the door and said she was desperate to use the toilet. After about three minutes Jo knocked on the toilet door and asked if everything was okay. Service-users have been known to do drugs in the toilet in the past and so there was a typed sign on the door saying that if you were longer than a few minutes then someone would knock to check on you. The service-user didn't respond at first and so Jo kept knocking and saying her name, she eventually responded by shouting at Jo to leave her alone and saying that she just wanted some privacy. This continued for another ten minutes with Jo trying to coax her out of the bathroom and the service-user shouting obscenities from inside. Myself and another volunteer had to leave to catch our trains, and so we made our apologies and left, Jo still trying to persuade the service-user to come out of the toilet.

4.2.2 Reflecting on the busy drop-in narrative

While the 'formal' practices of support, made clear through the categories discussed above, are clearly important in addressing the needs of service-users, this narrative makes clear the importance of the relational aspects of support, and the way in which the relationships in the drop-in are both significant and complex. As is demonstrated in the narrative, the relationships between the service-providers and service-users within Women's Zone vary. In some cases, service-users can form strong bonds with particular service-providers, who they will then ask for specifically if they have any issues, or simply want to talk. An example of this is seen in the narrative where staff member Jo was requested for a one-to-one by a service-user who had entered the drop-in in a rather emotional state. In contrast, there are service-users accessing the drop-in who appear to have no interest in forming any kind of relationship with service-providers beyond that required to access support and the specific interventions they require. This kind of attitude is also demonstrated in the narrative, in the extract where I signed in two service-users whom I had met and interacted with several times before, yet who showed no acknowledgement of knowing me, or at least no acknowledgement of this being of any importance.

In addition to the *variation* evident across the relationships within Women's Zone, this narrative also demonstrates the *complexities* of the service-provider-service-user relationship, which seemed particularly evident for volunteers, who do not have the official titles or authority that comes with being a paid member of staff. While volunteers within Women's Zone do provide support and specific interventions, and therefore interact with service-users on a more formal level, the interaction demonstrated in the narrative between myself and service-user Debs also makes clear the way in which service-users interact with volunteers at a more informal level. Though I had provided more 'formal' support to Debs on a number of occasions, such as sitting in on her phone-calls and working through various forms with her, the way in which she discussed her daughter with me and asked for my advice on where to take her for her birthday, suggests a relationship that went beyond purely that of a professional providing interventions. In this way, the narrative seems to

suggest that the meaning attached to the role of volunteer, and therefore the relationships had with them, is perhaps more blurred than that of a paid member of staff, with their assigned title and responsibilities. When it comes to the relationships between service-providers and service-users, McGrath and Pistrang (2007) argue that 'processes similar to the therapeutic alliance are fundamental to effective helping in a wide range of contexts, including that provided by helpers with little or no professional training' (p.591), and though their research focused specifically on homeless young people, Whowell (2011), Sanders-McDonagh and Neville (2012), and Broadway (2008) have all highlighted the importance of the quality of this relationship, and of building trust, in order to be able to carry out the more formal practices of support within specialist sex work support services.

In the same way that this narrative makes clear the multifaceted nature of the relationships within Women's Zone, it also demonstrates how this was true for the concept of service-user roles and identity. While the narrative describes service-users gathering around the activity table and discussing some of their shared experiences of sex work, it also demonstrates how they would just as quickly discuss areas of their life outside of sex work, those which could be thought of as individual, such as their plans for the weekend. The way in which service-users negotiated their self-concept within Women's Zone, and in particular their shared roles and individual identities, was a significant theme within the data, and will therefore be discussed in more depth within chapter six.

As well as voicing their individuality through discussion of their lives outside of sex work, service-users at Women's Zone also appeared to exercise individuality through their use of the drop-in. The narrative makes clear the diversity in engagement-level of service-users, and the way in which they interacted within the drop-in space. While some appeared to come to Women's Zone solely to access specific interventions, and therefore wasted no time in requesting them as soon as they arrived at the drop-in, others, such as Debs, appeared to mix accessing the more formal aspects of support with a more informal use of the centre, such as using the computers to chat with friends on Facebook, or sharing stories with the other service-users in the centre. As in seen in the narrative, there are also those

service-users who don't appear to engage with either the formal or informal levels of support, such as Jennifer, who would refuse any offers of support, whether formal or informal, and whose reasons for accessing the drop-in were not clear.

The variation and complexities in the relationships within Women's Zone, and the variation in service-user engagement-level and use of the drop-in, all evident within the busy-day narrative, begin to make clear how the experience of Women's Zone, and the meaning attached to it, will vary for individual service-providers and service-users. The factors affecting experience, and the diversity in meaning attached to Women's Zone and the roles within it, will be discussed in more detail in the following two chapters.

4.2.3 Narrative of a quiet drop-in

Today's briefing was led by case worker Emily, who was heading up the drop-in session. She reminded us that one service-user was still excluded, but wasn't likely to show up anyway. She discussed the behaviour of a particular service-user and her concern that she was growing more disrespectful towards staff and volunteers. We were told to ensure her requests for food were dealt with by an individual service-provider, as she was apparently making the same request to multiple service-providers to try and get more than one share. Emily then reminded us of the food rules and that service-users could only have one portion of hot food which they were not permitted to take out of the drop-in. We were also directed towards the dodgy punter board, and the two new assaults that had been added. Emily told us to try and make the service-users aware of the new information and said we had some updated hand-outs if they wanted to take something with them.

After the briefing, we all chatted a little and caught up on each other's weekends while one of the volunteers finished cooking the veggie chilli that was today's hot meal option. As well as Emily and myself, there were three other volunteers helping out, a social work placement student, and Emily said drugs worker Jane would be joining the session as well. It wasn't

until one of the volunteers pointed out the time that we realised we should have opened the shutters and the door ten minutes prior.

The drop-in remained empty for a further half an hour after we opened, and Emily asked for some volunteers to put some needle exchange packs together. Myself and the social work placement student offered and headed to the nurses' room. After ten minutes or so we re-joined the drop-in and there were two service-users who had arrived. There were no scheduled drop-in activities for today, and so one of the service-users was sat at a table near the kitchen reading a magazine and eating a bowl of chilli, and the other was chatting to Emily at the computers.

The social work placement student noticed the time and told me she needed to head off to meet a service-user at her flat so they could go to an appointment together. Not long after she left, Jane (the drugs worker) arrived. She said hello and then noticed the service-user at the table. She started in the service-user's direction, who then saw her and rolled her eyes. They had a short, but heated, exchange about why the service-user had missed her appointment. Jane repeated the same questions over and over and eventually the service-user got up and left, shouting 'I've tried to work with you people, I really have'. Jane came back over to the kitchen, seemingly unfazed, and told us there was a service-user she was trying to engage with who she'd spotted on the beat earlier that morning, she was going to head out and try and find her.

Two service-users arrived and one of the volunteers went over to greet them. There was a trip to the cinema happening today that had been advertised for a number of weeks and these service-users, along with three others, had signed up to go. The volunteer said she would wait another five minutes, and then they would leave. She went to the front desk to try and contact the other service-users she had numbers for. While they were waiting, I asked the two service-users why they had signed up for the trip. They both told me they had been on trips before and really enjoyed them. One of the women had been on a trip to

Blackpool and described it as 'fun and jokes with the girls'. The other had been on a one-off trip to the launch of a Christmas menu at a nearby restaurant, and told me how she'd forgotten she was with Women's Zone and just felt like she was out with friends. The volunteer returned from the desk saying she'd had no luck. The two service-users had a hot drink and one quickly ate some chilli, and then they left with the volunteer.

A service-user I'd met a number of times entered the drop-in and I offered her some chilli. She asked for it with a few rounds of toast and went and sat at one of the tables near the kitchen. Another service-user entered the drop-in and joined her at her table. They seemed to know one another and chatted about various things. The second service-user mentioned something about drugs which was overheard by Emily who had been walking back from the computers to the kitchen. She reminded them that they weren't to discuss drugs in the drop-in and then encouraged them to take a look at the updated dodgy punter board. They began talking about the rise in violence on the beat, both from punters and between the sex workers themselves. The second service-user declined the offer of hot food, saying she had somewhere to be, and left.

The drop-in remained quiet for a while, with only the service-user on the computer and the service-user finishing her chilli at a table near the kitchen. Emily went up to the office to get some paperwork done and myself and another volunteer talked while we tidied the kitchen. A short while later the service-user who had 'had somewhere to be' returned. She was drooped over and her legs looked like they might buckle under her weight at any moment. She seemed to be trying to get to the toilet but stopped outside where we could see her from the kitchen. Emily returned from the office and went over to the service-user, trying to engage her in conversation. The service-user didn't seem particularly aware of Emily talking to her, and gave no response. Her legs appeared to become increasingly unstable and she began swaying on the spot. Emily gently steered her back through to the drop-in room and sat her down at a table near the kitchen. The service-user put her head on the desk and appeared to fall asleep. Emily told us to keep an eye on her and left to get case worker Tracey from the upstairs office. The other volunteer made a coffee and handed it to Tracey

when she joined us. Tracey crouched down next to the service-user and said her name, gently but repeatedly, trying to rouse her. The service-user lifted her head groggily a few times and took the coffee from Tracey, spilling it slightly as she sagged back into sleep. Eventually the service-user came to a little more and had a quiet conversation with Tracey while she drank her coffee.

A few minutes before the drop-in session was due to end, Jane returned saying she'd had no luck finding the service-user she wanted to talk to. The other volunteer mentioned that the service-user from earlier in the drop-in didn't seem happy, 'my job isn't to make them happy' Jane replied, 'it's to keep them alive.' She went to say her goodbyes to Tracey and Emily and then left. When it was time to close Tracey walked the service-user she had been sat with to the door, she still seemed fairly under the influence of something and Tracey kept a hand on her back to support her as she walked. Emily shouted the service-user who had spent the session on the computer over and asked if she'd like to take the chilli home. The service-user seemed pleased and left with a Tupperware full of veggie chilli and rice.

After closing the blind and the shutters we met in the kitchen for the debrief. Emily said she was pleased because the service-user who had taken the chilli had told her she was now allowed contact with her son again, something she'd been waiting on for a number of years. We discussed the service-user who hadn't been able to stand and Tracey said she was concerned her drug-use was getting worse. She said she'd noted it down on the monitoring form and had talked to the service-user about making a referral to a drugs service. This led to the other volunteer raising the exchange between Jane and the service-user who'd walked out. Tracey and Emily said they had spoken to Jane in the past about the way her approached clashed with that of Women's Zone, but it hadn't seemed to make much difference. We finished the debrief and the other volunteer and I signed out.

4.2.4 Reflecting on the quiet drop-in narrative

While the previous narrative demonstrated how busy days within the drop-in meant service-providers having to manage multiple issues and requests in quick succession, this narrative makes clear that service-provider experiences were largely dependent on whether or not service-users attended the drop-in, and there were therefore sessions where low numbers meant service-providers had little to do. As is seen in the narrative, service-providers would usually pass the time by catching up with one another, or finding a task to complete. Though quiet days often meant there was less to do, this narrative still contains some significant insights, which will now be discussed.

While the previous narrative highlighted the influence of relationships and engagement-level on service-user experience, this narrative highlights some of the ways in which experience can vary for service-providers. The quiet drop-in narrative discusses how the drop-in session was attended by service-provider Emily, a number of volunteers (including myself), and also a social work placement student, and drugs worker Jane. This extract makes clear the variance in backgrounds of the service-providers at Women's Zone, which is likely to affect the meaning they attach to the role of service-provider, and therefore their experience of enacting this role within Women's Zone. One of the ways in which the different background of the service-providers can be seen to impact meaning and experience is in the example of the clashing approaches of drugs worker Jane and of one of the volunteers, who questions Jane's blunt approach. The way in which service-provider approaches varied due to the meaning they attached to their role, and that of the service-user, will be discussed further in chapter six.

In addition to illuminating the varying ways service-providers attached meaning to their roles and their interactions within the drop-in, and the resulting variation in experience; this narrative also demonstrates a number of controlling practices carried out by service-providers within the drop-in, such as censoring service-user discussions and enforcing rules within the centre. Like the issue of negotiating roles and relationships, the issue of negotiating power within the centre, and the way in which service-providers enacted

controlling practices, was also a significant theme within the data, and will therefore be discussed in more depth in chapter five.

4.2.5 Reflections on the service provided

While both the busy drop-in and quiet drop-in narratives provided some individual insights into service-provision at Women's Zone, which have been discussed in sections 4.2.2 and 4.2.4, there were also a number of significant insights which were evident across both of the narratives, which will now be discussed.

Though the role of service-provider at Women's Zone did involve carrying out specific interventions and offering support around the areas of service-delivery discussed in section 4.1 of this chapter, both the busy drop-in and quiet drop-in narratives make clear that a significant part of the experience of service-providers was managing the multiple and complex needs of service-users. In addition to service-providers offering more 'formal' support around homelessness and drug-use, the narratives demonstrate how they had to also manage the effects of these issues within the drop-in. Within the busy drop-in narrative is an example of service-providers having to manage the effects of homelessness on those within the drop-in, where service-provider Tracey is trying to interact with a service-user who is struggling to stay awake, a common issue within the sessions. Within the busy day narrative is an example of another issue service-providers had to learn how to manage; service-users accessing the session under the influence of drugs. Though it was common for service-users to attend the drop-in whilst they were not completely sober, there were also a number of instances such as that seen in the busy drop-in narrative, where service-users attended the drop-in exhibiting the full effects of a 'hit'. As is seen in the narrative, service-providers had to learn how to manage this, which often involved trying to speed-up the sobering-up process, to the point where they could be sure service-users would be safe when they left the drop-in. In addition to managing the effects of service-users' complex needs, the busy drop-in narrative also demonstrates how service-providers sometimes had

to manage antagonistic behaviour. This is demonstrated in the examples of service-provider Jo having to challenge a service-user on her aggressive behaviour towards the art therapist, and having to deal with the service-user who locked herself in the drop-in toilet.

These insights are important, as they demonstrate that the practices of support or 'what they do' cannot be understood by simply identifying the areas of service-delivery offered, and that the experience of support for service-providers involves more than just enacting the 'formal' practices of support. They are also important when it comes to safeguarding and supporting service-users. The way in which managing the needs of service-users was experienced by service-providers in this setting will be discussed in more detail in section 5.2.1 of the following chapter, and the implications of these findings for the support context will be considered further in chapter seven.

In the same way that service-providers appeared to engage with an 'extra layer' of support, beyond the 'formal' practices, the busy and quiet narratives demonstrate how support was more than these practices for service-users also. The busy drop-in narrative includes examples of service-user engagement with the art activities, in this case those offered within the weekly workshop run by external professional, Dave. These examples demonstrate the way in which the activities, though the same, 'did' different things for different service-users. For some service-users, these activities were the reason they initially accessed the drop-in, therefore acting as a kind of bridge for them to access any specific interventions they might need. As is seen in the narrative, the art activities also acted as a distraction for some service-users from the challenges they were facing, and as a means of facilitating calm. The narrative also demonstrates how these activities facilitated engagement, in some cases this was one-to-one conversations between a service-user and service-provider, and in other cases, such as that seen in the narrative, it was a large, group discussion in which service-providers were able to offer advice and support.

In addition to the art activities, the quiet drop-in narrative also demonstrates the way in which the trips offered by Women's Zone had meaning beyond the more material practices of support. While the service-users attending the cinema trip in this narrative both discussed enjoying the trips they had previously been on with the service, they also discussed forgetting who they were with, and feeling as though they were just having fun with 'the girls'. As mentioned above, the way in which service-users negotiated their roles and identity within interactions in the drop-in will be discussed in more depth in chapter six, but the quiet-day narrative suggests that the trips offered by Women's Zone, provide service-users with experiences that enable them to feel as equals with service-providers, and as valued beyond their role as a service-user.

Overall, this chapter has demonstrated how support within Women's Zone happens at both the 'formal' and 'informal' levels; those practices which are involved in carrying out specific interventions, such as filling in a housing form with a service-user, and those that happen around them, such as looking through decorating ideas with a service-user on the computers. While the discussion so far may have presented these levels as separate and distinct, the constructed narratives make clear how these levels of support are very much linked, and how the lines between them are somewhat blurred. Within the busy-drop in narrative is the example of a volunteer and a service-user having an informal conversation in which the service-user mentions the issues she's having with her current housing situation. This conversation then leads to the two making a phone-call together in one of the meeting rooms. This example demonstrates how the more informal levels of support can lead to service-providers carrying out more formal practices of support, and how the two levels overlap. This is also seen in the group discussion around the activity table, in which a volunteer is able to offer support and advice around incidents with clients. In both of these examples, it would seem that the more 'formal' support, or interventions offered, would not have occurred without service-providers engaging in the more 'informal' practices, therefore suggesting that both levels have value, despite the informal practices being largely hidden within existing literature.

Summary

The analysis and discussion presented in this chapter have demonstrated that there is an extra layer to the more formal practices of support, more commonly discussed within the literature, and outlined within the categorisations of service-provision in section 4.1. While the formal practices of support are clearly important, this chapter has made clear the significance of the informal practices that occur around them, largely in the context of relationships within the centre.

As discussed in the rationale for this study (pp.73-78), this research is more concerned with exploring the processes that make certain outcomes possible, rather than evaluating the outcomes themselves. This chapter has demonstrated the value of relationships within Women's Zone, and the informal practices of support that happen within them; therefore highlighting the significance of the interpersonal processes that occur within the support context.

The following chapter will present the first of two themes drawn out of thematic analysis and will consider some of the more specific practices carried out within the centre, and a significant aspect of service-provider experience.

Chapter Five - Theme one – Power and Powerlessness

Introduction

The theme of power and powerlessness was a prevalent thread running through the data, and related issues were both discussed in interviews and observed in practice during participant observations. As is shown in the schematic representation on page 133, this theme is comprised of two sub-themes; ‘Exercising power’ and ‘Service-Provider Powerlessness.’

Section 5.1 will consider the ways in which service-providers and service-users exercised power within Women’s Zone. Section 5.1.1 will begin by discussing the practices enacted by service-providers which exercised power over service-users and sometimes led to disempowerment and infantilisation. Though many service-providers talked of free choice for service-users, as is emphasised in Women’s Zone’s Mission statement (Volunteer Handbook, p.4), this section will discuss how choice within the drop-in is largely framed by service-providers. It will then consider how service-provider practices of censorship and enforcing rules and discipline can arguably be thought of as disempowering, and, in some cases, as leading to the silencing of both service-users and service-providers, or the infantilisation of service-users. Section 5.1.2 will then consider data which demonstrates how service-users also exercised power, both as a response to the restriction of choice, and through the exercising of choice themselves, and will discuss why this doesn’t negate the existence of a power-imbalance within the service.

Section 5.2 will then consider the contradictory finding of service-provider powerlessness, and how, despite service-providers exercising power over service-users, powerlessness seemed to be a significant aspect of their experience. This section will discuss how a sense

of powerlessness often came from service-providers feeling they were not in control, and how there were a number of different circumstances which lead to this, that can largely be grouped into internal and external factors. In many ways, the ability of service-providers to 'do' their role and provide support was dependent upon the physical state of service-users in relation to complex needs such as drug-use and mental health, section 5.2.1 will therefore discuss data demonstrating how service-providers felt a lack of control over whether service-users would present as able to engage in support, something which often resulted in a sense of powerlessness. This section will then consider external factors, and how Women's Zone's interaction with, and sometimes reliance on, external services, often led to service-providers feeling unable to help and not in control of what, when and how support could be offered. Following this, section 5.2.2 will then discuss how many service-providers appeared to deal with a sense of powerlessness through finding meaning; while a sense of meaningfulness did not eradicate experiences of powerlessness, it did add a sense of purpose and therefore made them bearable. Section 5.2 will conclude by considering how service-provider powerlessness might be viewed as a positive, in the way in which it enables support in this context to come from some shared experiences and understandings.

5.1 Exercising power

This sub-theme will consider the ways in which both service-providers and service-users exercised power within Women's Zone, and how the meaning of service-user power, and related concepts, is determined by interactions within the drop-in.

5.1.1 Power-over

According to Allen (2016), there are several types of power, with power-over being the most closely linked to agency. Within Women's Zone, service-providers appeared to exercise power-over service-users through practices around shaping choice; censorship; rules and

discipline, and infantilisation and disempowering practices. This sub-theme will now explore these practices.

Choice

One of the ways in which power relations played out in Women's Zone was around the issue of service-user choice. Within the data there is evidence for the choice of service-users being both enabled and constrained by service-providers.

The following quote from service-provider Heather's interview suggests that choice was of great significance to those providing support within the drop-in:

'It's very much about letting the service-users choose what they want' (Interview 4 - Heather)

This focus on service-user choice is also seen in Women's Zone's mission statement, as discussed in section 3.2.5 of chapter 3, and is therefore part of the underlying ideology of the service. This is an aspect of service ideology service-providers seemed aware of, with a number viewing choice as a key element of empowering the service-users, as is seen in the following quote from service-provider Jo's interview:

'But empowerment's such a loose, woolly word that it could be anything, erm, one of the ways that I see it is choice, for them to have choices' (Interview 5 - Jo)

Though not explicitly framed in this way by service-providers, much of their data suggested they perceived service-user choice in the center to be entirely free. Service-provider Jo spoke of service-users 'completely choosing' their engagement, of a lack of conditions put

on their decisions in order not to sway them, and of service-users never being ‘forced’ to do anything, as can be seen in the following extracts from her interview:

‘and they [the service-users] completely get to choose the engagement’ (Interview 5 – Jo)

‘we don’t force them to do anything, they don’t have to paint a picture to get a drink, or, erm, you know, they don’t have to have a one on one meeting in order to be able to do an activity, erm, so I think that in itself, the fact that they can choose and they have a little bit of control here, and it is a safe space, I think that in itself empowers them’ (Interview 5 – Jo)

Despite this, data from this study clearly suggests that service-user choice was often still shaped, or framed, by service-providers.

In some cases, the shaping of service-user choice took on a more overt form. At one stage during my observations, the three drop-in development computers were out of use, and it was suggested by service-provider Jo that once they were fixed, service-users should have their access restricted to a limited amount of time each session, as is seen in the following extract from field notes:

‘Jo suggested that, once the computers were up and running again, service-users could be given hour-long time-slots in order to stop them coming in and ‘just spending the whole time on the computers.’ (Field notes – April 4th)

Jo’s proposal here, and her justification for it, suggest that service-user choice around engagement is not ‘completely’ free, but actually framed by service-providers’ perceptions

of a 'good' and 'bad' use of time in the drop-in. In response to these perceptions, Jo felt it appropriate to control service-user choice through restricting their computer access.

In addition to limiting service-user choice, there were also instances in which it was intentionally removed. When asked about the importance of boundaries, service-provider Heather discussed the deliberate removal of service-user choice around taking food out of the drop-in, as can be seen in the following quote:

'...in those instances they [the service-users] can be bullied into doing that [taking food out to give to others], so, if we don't give them a choice, then they're in a position where they can say 'well they won't let me take food out' so, you know, I think that that's a safer way of-of-cause, you know, they're already in a lot of danger, you know, why give them an extra thing to be worried about.' (Interview 4 - Heather)

As is shown in the quote, Heather justifies the service intentionally removing service-user choice as a necessary measure to protect the women, to keep them 'safe' and to avoid 'danger.' Though Women's Zone appears to fit most closely with Oselin and Weitzer's (2013) category of neutral sex work support, as was discussed in section 3.2.5 of chapter three, the paternal approach to support evident in this extract, and in other data so far discussed, seems to reflect some of the critique more commonly lobbied at radical feminist style services. The fact that service-users at Women's Zone are adult women and also a group often framed as vulnerable, meant service-providers appeared to be walking a fine line between safeguarding and support, and infantilisation. Further examples of service-providers taking up this kind of paternal approach to support will be discussed in section 5.1.4.

The juxtaposition between service-providers' perceptions of choice in the center as free, and the practices of controlling and removing this choice, is mirrored in the literature on

client participation practices within mental health. According to Broer, Nieboer and Bal (2014), though the dominant discourse across support culture is one of client participation in which service-users are encouraged to be involved in decisions and make autonomous choices; many analyses suggest that service-providers remain in control of how client participation is performed, and when and how service-users are allowed to use their voice. This study suggests that, while the underlying ideology of Women's Zone is one of 'empowerment' and free choice, this is not always reflected in the on-the-ground practices.

In addition to controlling and removing service-user choice, there were also examples in the data of service-providers shaping service-user choice in more subtle ways. When discussing her experience of being a service-user at Women's Zone, 'Claire' spoke of the way in which her case-worker influenced her desires for support, as is seen in the following quote from her interview:

'Yeah, she [case-worker] sees in you what you need, but you might not necessarily want [she laughs] and she has this way of turning it round to make it so that actually it is what you want.' (Interview 1 - Claire)

While Claire's extract clearly demonstrates the case-worker exercising influence over her choices around what she wanted from support, it is important to point out that Claire spoke of this encounter in a very positive manner, as is seen in the following quote which follows the previous statement from her interview:

'It's one strength to the next and like, that's been my experience of Women's Zone, I don't have a negative word to say about it' (Interview 1 - Claire)

Claire's data complicates straightforward conceptions of power, which view it as always negative and repressive, particularly when exercised by professionals over clients (Broer et

al. 2014). This kind of power can be thought of as power-over (Allen, 2011), or 'getting someone to do what you want them to' and is rallied against by many groups who view it as domination. Looking back on this experience, rather than feeling her autonomous choice was ignored in favour of what the case-worker wanted for her, Claire felt that she was truly being 'seen', that ultimately these things were what she desired for herself, and that it took the case-worker influencing her thinking to make her realise this. Power in this context therefore appears to be both positive and negative. In Gallagher's (2008) writings on power as government, he discusses how, in certain systems, those in positions of authority exercise power in managing people, not through crushing their agency into submission, but in cultivating it in particular ways. He argues that, while this process of influencing the ways in which people conduct themselves can be seen as subjugation, 'developing a human being's ability to govern herself...equips her to become an independent actor, no longer so beholden to externally imposed regulations.' (Gallagher, 2008, p.401). Applying Gallagher's arguments to Women's Zone and Claire's data, if service-providers can affect the ways that service-users govern themselves to the extent that service-users do so without their input, service-providers can be seen to have equipped them with more independence and the ability to make autonomous choices. Whilst this argument might be helpful in presenting a more complex analysis of power, others considering ideas of power and governance would argue that choices arrived upon as a result of this process of influence cannot be considered autonomous (see Rose, 1993; 1999). The way in which choice relates to power in this context is summarized well by Drydyk (2013) in the following extract:

'Power is sometimes an asymmetry in which the choices that one group makes shape or determine the choices that another group has...power then can be understood as asymmetry involving agency' (p.256)

The data so far discussed demonstrates the way in which the choices of service-providers in Women's Zone shape and determine the choices available to service-users. In this way, service-providers can be seen most often to take up the position of 'decision-makers' and service-users the position of 'decision-takers' (Drydyk, 2013). According to Hallett (2003),

this process can be viewed as those participating within Women's Zone 'negotiating the order' through interaction. Through legitimizing their own practices of exercising power through restricting, removing and controlling service-user choice, service-providers become those who are able to 'define the situation' in which the interactions that comprise the negotiated order take place. This is important, because it demonstrates that service-providers have both literal power in their positions of authority and their enacting of explicit rules and discipline, but also 'symbolic power' in their ability to frame the meaning of choice within the centre.

Overall, data from this study suggests that, though service-user choice is positioned as a priority by the service and the service-providers, this doesn't always translate to on-the-ground practices. 'Power-over' service-user choice is exercised in a number of ways by service-providers, from the subtle through to the removal of choice altogether. While this may seem inherently negative, the reality of power relations within Women's Zone is more complex than simply 'bad' or 'good' and is experienced differently by different service-users. When it comes to the meaning of choice, if data from service-provider interviews and service documentation was looked at in isolation from observation data, it would seem reasonable to interpret the meaning of service-user choice within Women's Zone as significant and free. However, the interactions between service-providers and service-users within the drop-in, discussed in this section, demonstrate how the meaning of choice is not consistent; while some interactions show the privileging of service-user choice, others demonstrate how choice can sometimes be interpreted as something unavailable to service-users.

Censorship

In addition to the practice of shaping service-user choice within the center, there were a number of other controlling practices carried out by service-providers, which exercised power over service-users to varying degrees. One of these practices was censorship. As with

the shaping of service-user choice, censorship was carried out in a range of ways which sat along a spectrum from the most subtle, to the most overt.

Leaning sharply towards the latter end of this spectrum was the practice of prohibiting certain topics within the drop-in. During training, and through the time I spent as a volunteer-researcher within the drop-in, I learnt that there are particular subjects which service-users are not permitted to discuss. Though these prohibited topics are not identified explicitly within the service documentation, advice given during training and the behaviour of service-providers within drop-in sessions made clear that they existed, and that the most commonly censored topic was that of drug-use. While service-users could discuss stories of recovery, such as getting off drugs and finishing rehab; they were not permitted to make plans to get drugs, or to generally talk about drugs in a positive manner. The consequence of doing so was often the silencing of service-user voices, as is seen in this extract from field notes:

'She [service-user] then whispered 'are we getting some coke?' and Hannah [service-provider] and I laughed. 'I can lip-read you know' Hannah said; she had been stood behind Shell [service-user] and had seen exactly what Becky [service-user] mouthed. 'And you aren't a very quiet whisperer' I added. We all laughed but when the two tried to continue talking about drugs, Hannah quickly challenged them and told them to 'talk about it outside'.' (Field notes – 8th Feb)

The concept of 'giving voice' has already been discussed in the methodology chapter, and though found to be problematic, the practices associated with promoting the voices of the oppressed have been linked to empowerment (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). In contrast to this the practice of silencing, as seen in the previous extract, is associated with disempowerment and the propagation of oppression (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). When considering practices of power, Gallagher (2008) argues that it is better to look at the effects of the practices in question, rather than the intention behind them. Therefore, whilst the intention of

ensorship in Women's Zone is to prevent service-users engaging in conversation that might be perceived as harmful, or damaging to recovery; the effect is the silencing of service-user voices. Therefore, whether intentional or not, this practice appears to be in conflict with the service's ethos of empowerment, discussed in section 3.2.5 of chapter 3. The final line of this extract 'talk about it outside' also demonstrates a kind of 'hear no evil' approach to support. Hannah clearly displays an awareness that the two service-users will discuss drugs in this way, however, rather than allowing this conversation to occur within the drop-in, giving service-providers the chance to engage with it and offer guidance; the two women are instructed to remain silent about it until they leave.

In addition to the overt practice of prohibiting certain topics within the centre, service-providers also exercised censorship through steering conversations in certain directions. During one drop-in session, a service-user had been asking me questions about my wedding after noticing my rings, a conversation the art therapist continually attempted to shut down, as is seen in the following extract from field notes:

'I noticed that, all the while Jade [service-user] was asking about me, the art therapist was making attempts to bring the conversation back to Jade; 'enough about her' she would say 'what about you.' (Field notes – 30th Sep)

The therapist's discomfort during this exchange seemed to be linked to a power-imbalance which expected service-users to be fully open and willing to share about their own lives, and yet required service-providers to do nothing of the sort. In fact, the art therapist's response to my own sharing suggests that not only were service-providers not required to share, in some ways they were required not to. This argument is supported by an exchange that occurred between myself and a case worker following the previous conversation, which can be seen in the following extract from field notes:

'When I went through to reception to do this, Tracey [service-provider] asked if she could have a quick word. 'You know before, when you were sat at the table with Jade, I noticed that you were showing her your ring. It's fine to chat with them but we need to be really careful about things like that, as we don't want to create an 'us and them' divide. Obviously Jade is homeless and doesn't have much money, so showing her your diamond ring just widens the gap between our situation and theirs.' (Field notes – 30th Sep)

This extract demonstrates that, in addition to power being exercised over service-users through the practice of censorship, power was also exercised over service-providers in a similar way. Gallagher (2003) describes power as relational, a view which suggests that the ways in which power is exercised in Women's Zone need to be put in context. Hence, to understand how much power each service-user exercises, this needs to be placed in the context of how other service-users exercise power over that service-user (and vice versa); how the volunteers exercise power over the service-users (and vice versa); how the staff exercise power over the volunteers (and vice versa), and so on. This approach demonstrates how the capacity of service-user Jade to exercise power, is related to the way in which power was exercised over me by case worker Tracey in this exchange.

Rules and Discipline

In addition to prohibited topics, there are also a number of other rules within the centre, some around food, and others around use of the drop-in; such as no sleeping, and time-restraints on toilet use. In the same way that I learnt about which topics were off limits to service-users through interactions within the centre; these rules weren't explicitly stated within the service documentation, but were taught in training and learnt through participation in the drop-in. While I began my time as a volunteer with a perception of service-user agency as prioritised; choice as relatively free, and empowerment as key to Women's Zone's approach to support, interactions within the centre in which service-

providers appeared to censor certain topics and enforce certain rules, changed the meaning of these concepts for me.

Referring back to Gallagher's (2008) writings, whilst the intention of the rules within Women's Zone appeared to be maintaining a safe space for service-users, the effect on service-users was often frustration or confusion due to a lack of understanding or adequate explanation, as is seen in the following extract from field notes:

'Vera [service-user] went on the computer to order some products (she is an AVON rep) and found she couldn't log in; I sat in on two phone calls whilst she sorted it out. She asked if she could take the phone call at the computer, I checked with Kelly [service-provider] and she said calls had to be taken in a private room. Vera got gradually more agitated as the password debacle continued and said 'this is annoying me now, this not being able to take the call here [at the computer]'' (Field notes – 1st Feb)

In this instance, I was unable to explain to Vera the reasons behind her not being allowed to use the phone in the communal space, as I myself was unaware of what they were. This was not the only instance in which service-providers appeared to find themselves defending rules to service-users without being able to give an adequate explanation of why they existed, suggesting that the normative practice of exercising power over service-users through enforcing rules becomes internalized by service-providers despite a lack of understanding.

When broken, service-providers enforce these rules by disciplining service-users, as is seen in the following quote from field notes discussing service-user exclusions:

'The briefing was a short one, the only thing shared was that Keisha [service-user] had been temporarily banned from the centre due to her behaviour during recent drop-ins; if she came to the door, we weren't allowed to let her in and had to give her a letter detailing the info about her exclusion and the process that would follow.'
(Field notes – 9th June)

According to Simpson, Cleggs and Freeder (2013) discipline is one of the ways in which organisations exercise power over those involved, and though carried out by the majority of service-providers to varying extents, the disciplining of service-users in Women's Zone represented a point of tension for many. In a number of cases, service-providers appeared to experience a tension between their personal and professional views of discipline. In her interview, Emily discussed how upsetting she found having to temporarily exclude service-users from the centre, and her disagreement with stopping users of services like Women's Zone from having access, as is seen in this quote from her interview:

'Yeah, and I found that [service-user exclusions] really, really difficult and I've been really upset by it because it-it's, because I don't ever believe people should be stopped from using services, like kind of as a blanket rule I think that people should be able to still come' (Interview 2 - Emily).

The way in which Emily, as a case worker, carried out discipline despite personal disagreements, can be thought of as a kind of self-censorship. Simpson et al. (2014) argue that all organizational relations are premised on power, and that power-over in this context includes both the disciplining of others, and the discipline of oneself. In the same way that the silencing of service-user voices by service-providers can be thought of as a disempowering practice; service-providers enacting discipline despite questioning its value can also be seen as disempowering. According to Drydryk (2013, p.253) 'a reduction in the degree to which people's activities are autonomously or deliberately chosen', in other

words those activities supported by one's own values and views, is a reduction in agency, and a reduction in agency can often lead to disempowerment.

In order to deal with this tension, Emily justified these rules to herself as necessary measures, as is seen in this quote from her interview:

'the people that have been suspended did take the piss really, but, they-there wasn't much else that we could do' (Interview 2 - Emily)

In a way, Emily appeared to switch from her personal view, to that of a professional within Women's Zone, something that will be considered further in the following chapter.

For other service-providers, this tension was dealt with by either bending the rules, or breaking them entirely. This is demonstrated in the following field note extract in which case worker 'Paula' handed out three large bags of needle exchange kit to a single service-user:

'The service-user was surprised saying 'you'll get done for that.' 'You let me worry about that' Paula had replied 'and you get on with worrying about injecting safely' (Field notes – 4th April).

In some cases, differences in how these tensions were managed resulted in conflicting service-provider approaches to enforcing rules and carrying out discipline.

Infantilisation and disempowering practices

As was briefly discussed under the heading 'choice', in addition to service-providers directly exercising power over service-users through the practices so far discussed, there were examples in the data of service-providers carrying out disempowering practices that sometimes resulted in the infantilisation of service-users.

When asked about times that seemed significant to her at Women's Zone, service-user Debs discussed how much she had enjoyed the drama workshops that used to be provided within the centre. She then went on to talk about how the new drama workshops weren't 'as good', as demonstrated in the following extract where she responds to my question about why she felt that way:

'cause, like, I don't know, I think the two girls that do it now, I think they just struggle on like what to do, because like they're probably used to working with children or something like that, and they-it's a difference when you come in and you work with adults, even though like the adults that come in here have got problems, you can't treat them like children 'cause they're not children, they're adults.' (Interview 6 – Debs)

Debs' assumption that the women now leading the drama workshops are 'probably used to working with children' seems to suggest their approach to the activity is infantilising, or at least experienced to be. According to Kitwood (1997), infantilisation refers to practices which treat an adult as though they were a child, and comes under a type of malignant social psychology which undermines the personhood and wellbeing of the individual under care. Though Kitwood's (1997) writings have not often been applied to contexts outside of dementia care, Raineri and Cabiati (2016) argue that they have much to offer all caregivers, regardless of the type of user group they are working with. In the case of Women's Zone, this approach is experienced negatively by service-user Debs as it conflicts with the way she, and other service-users, view themselves.

In the same way that some of the practices involved in the activities could be argued to be infantilising, or are at least experienced as such; so too could some of the practices around access to resources. Though service-users largely monitor their own computer-use in terms of the sites they access, all three of the computer screens face out into the rest of the drop-in space, meaning service-users are afforded no privacy when it comes to their browsing and on-screen activities. As a volunteer at Women's Zone I was not made aware of any rules around what sites the service-users were allowed to access (only that music had to be listened to through headphones; a rule that was often ignored), and therefore there appeared to be no apparent reason for needing to monitor them in this way. The outward-facing screens seemed reminiscent of a household rule a parent might implement in order to monitor their children's internet access and keep them safe online, and the result was simply that service-users couldn't have conversations via social media sites with family, friends, or romantic partners, without them being observable by everyone else in the room.

When it came to accessing the drop-in phone, service-users were only permitted to do so in a private room with the company of a service-provider. In one instance during my time volunteering, a member of staff seemed to suggest this was due to not wanting service-users to be using the phone to arrange business with punters, or to call their dealers. This seems understandable in the latter case, from a harm-minimisation perspective, and perhaps in the former case, due to a possible fear that this might be considered operating a sex selling establishment. However, the former may also suggest an underlying assumption that the service should not be supporting women to sex work, despite a service ethos and philosophy that professes a lack of judgement about the sex industry, and a position against encouraging exit.

In addition to practices that appeared infantilising, there was also evidence in the data of practices which seemed to reflect some of the other elements Kitwood (1997) includes within a malignant social psychology of care settings, such as stigmatization and disempowerment. During my time as a volunteer-researcher at Women's Zone, Ellen (an external service-provider from an organization offering training courses to vulnerable

people groups and individuals) attended the drop-in once a week for around two to three months to lead an arts and crafts workshop. Her sessions included various different activities, such as fabric painting onto tote bags, and stenciling. To mark the 25th Anniversary of women's Zone, Ellen ran a project she referred to as 'the butterfly effect', an art project based on the service-users' lives, which she discusses in the following extract from field notes:

'At this point Ellen [external professional delivering art sessions] arrived and I went over to help her set up. She asked how I'd been and we caught up for a short time. As we were chatting she unpacked 3 large pieces of card, one covered in butterflies, one with 'Women's Zone' in the middle and lots of the female gender symbol, and the third with a background that seemed to resemble paving slabs. I asked what she was doing and she said that they were running a project called 'the butterfly effect' for the service's 25th anniversary. She pointed at the paving-slab-like picture and said 'it's supposed to resemble the women's journey through from the ugly chrysalis, to their participation in Women's Zone and the help they received here, then thinking about their future hopes and dreams. This is probably the most controversial bit,' Ellen gestured at the piece of card with the butterflies on. 'Most of the women find it really hard to think about hopes or dreams, and didn't really know what to say when I asked that question.' (Field notes – 9th June)

Ellen's description of the service-users' pasts as the 'ugly chrysalis' stage seemed to be both a stigmatised perspective and a rather patronising one, if not simply just insulting. There was a sense in which she presumed to know the women's journeys, and her attachment of the phrase 'ugly' to the paving-slab picture, seemingly representative of street-sex work, demonstrated a clear, moralistic judgement and an expectation that this was either in the past, or would be. Ellen's statement that the women 'find it really hard to think about hopes and dreams', though meant with good intentions, seems to reflect some of the negative assumptions discussed in section 3.1.3 of the previous chapter, as a consequence of the concept of 'giving voice'. As discussed in this chapter, presuming to 'give voice' infers an

underlying assumption that the group/individual doesn't have a voice and is therefore in need of another who can speak for them (Ashby, 2011). In the same way, Ellen assumes the service-users' lack of response to her questions about their future to be due to an inability to imagine one, and therefore a lack of voice when it comes to their future ambitions. Her project was therefore designed so that she could 'give voice' to hopes and dreams she didn't believe the service-users would otherwise have had, or at least have articulated. Overall, Ellen's 'butterfly effect project' seemed to both perpetuate sex work stigma, and disempower the service-users through assuming them to have no voice of their own when it came to their futures.

5.1.2 Service-user power

Despite the data suggesting a power-imbalance positioning *service-providers* largely as the exercisers of power; there were also examples in the data of *service-users* exercising power in various ways, though arguably not 'power-over'.

Like many of the women accessing the drop-in, service-user Jan was very particular about her food order, and would always ask for a pot noodle, some orange squash, and a bag of biscuits that was as full as possible. Due to Jan's diabetes, service-providers Kelly and Paula decided her biscuit access, among other things, needed restricting, as is seen in the following quote taken from a briefing session recorded in field notes:

"If she [Jan] asks for anything, or needs anything today' Paula said 'Send her straight over to one of us, so we all know who's dealing with her requests.'" (Field notes – 18th January)

Jan's response was to work her way around all of the service-providers attending the drop-in that day, and ask each for a portion of biscuits, without the other service-providers

hearing. This way, she was able to exercise power, and take back some control from the service-providers who had decided she was only to have one portion of biscuits; putting her back in charge of her own consumption.

In some instances, the way in which service-users chose to exercise power was in seeming acts of rebellion against the power being exercised over them. This often looked like breaking both the explicit and implicit rules of the center, and sometimes seemed to be a direct reaction to service-providers shaping, determining or limiting choice. In one instance, a service-user made a comment about not having sex worked for a period of time and the response she received from the service-provider sitting with her was affirming, arguably framing sex work as a negative. The service-user responded by changing the conversation to a discussion about drug-use, a prohibited topic within the drop-in, as is seen in the following quote from field notes:

'Kenya [service-user] mentioned that she hadn't been out working recently, 'good' was Emily's [service-provider] response...Kenya then made a joke about heading off to score some heroin' (Field notes – 11th Dec)

In the same way that the disempowering practices carried out by service-providers appear to conflict with the service's ethos of empowerment; Emily's affirming response to Kenya's lack of involvement in sex work seems to conflict with the service's support of sex workers' right to 'self-determine' (Appendix one) when it comes to whether or not they sell sex, and their stance in taking 'no moral judgement' (Volunteer handbook, p.2) on sex work.

In addition to exercising power as a *reaction* to the restriction of choice, data from observations demonstrates how service-users exercised power and control *through* exercising choice. Though perhaps not 'completely chosen' to the extent service-provider Jo perceived; there was clear evidence of service-users exercising choice around engagement in the center. Upon first entering the drop-in, service-users made choices about where they

placed themselves, something which appeared to signal the level of engagement they desired that particular day. Service-users who desired interaction and to be approached tended to join the workshop table, discussed in the previous chapter as a hive of activity; those who desired to speak with a few, or even one particular service-provider would come over to the kitchen hatch; those who desired engagement with a smaller number of other service-users would sit at one of the small, round tables near the kitchen; and those who wished to be left alone would head over to the far side of the room and sit on one of the sofas. Service-users would also exercise choice over engagement and interaction through moving from one area of the drop-in to another, as seen in this extract from field notes:

'Sarah and Claire [both service-users] joined us for the entirety of the session; Sarah spent it knitting, as usual. She began on the sofas, but moved to a table when other service-users began to join her.' (Field notes – 8th September)

As well as exercising choice around engagement-level, data collected during observations demonstrates how service-users used the activities on offer within the drop-in as a means of exercising choice. This included service-users choosing whether or not to take part in an activity; choices around what they did and didn't want to create and who they were creating something for; choices around how long they took part and when they finished, and choices around whether or not to have their art displayed within the centre. Some examples of this can be seen in the following extracts from field notes:

'Jan [service-user] started colouring in a picture, but quickly told us she 'didn't fancy it today' and pushed the paper away.' (Field notes – 15th Feb)

'At this point Millie decided she was bored and went to leave 'I'm done now' she said to Ellen [the external professional leading the art workshop]. Ellen didn't seem perturbed at all, like the art therapist sometimes did, she just smiled and nodded. 'I can keep it for you to finish next week?' She asked. 'No' Millie responded 'I'm bored

of it now'. 'You can finish it' she told Kendra [another service-user], and left.' (Field notes – 2nd November)

'Jan [service-user] decided she was bored colouring and asked if she could do some cross stitch, Jen [service-provider] went and got her some things out of the cupboard and Jan began sewing.' (Field notes – 4th Jan)

According to Perkins and Zimmerman (1995), empowerment is about individuals gaining and exercising control over their lives, and while being able to control your involvement in an art activity does not necessarily equate with autonomy and whole-life control, it arguably provides the women with a safe space in which to exercise choice and control without the potential of any real, negative consequences; thus enabling the women to practice exercising choice, and empowering them to exercise choice and control over other, more significant, aspects of their lives. The art activities therefore appear to provide an example of one way in which the service is able to develop the service-users' abilities to 'govern themselves', and therefore equip them to become 'independent actors' (Gallagher, 2008, p.401), without having to exert influence over them.

Summary

While there is clear evidence in the data of both service-providers and service-users exercising power, it is important to note that this may not always be the same kind of power and therefore does not suggest an equal distribution of power across all actors within Women's Zone. According to Gallagher (2008) thinking of 'power' in the singular is too simplistic, and we should instead think of 'powers'. Such a conceptualization of power can be seen in a classroom setting, where 'the power a teacher exercises over her pupil is not the same as the power that those pupils exercise to resist the teacher's demands' (Gallagher, 2008, p.398).

What is important here is understanding how these powers are exercised, over whom, and to what effect? (Gallagher, 2008). Analysis of the data collected for this study adds to this understanding and suggests that power within Women's Zone is most often exercised through controlling practices over service-users, resulting in the restriction of choice, agency and service-user power.

When it comes to the meaning of service-user power within Women's Zone, the data discussed within section 5.1 demonstrates how it is constantly changing as a result of interactions within the centre. While there are many examples in the data of interactions in which service-providers constrain service-user choice and agency, arguably disempowering them, there are also examples of service-users exercising power through resisting these controlling practices. The discussion within section 5.1 therefore demonstrates how the meaning of service-user power within Women's Zone, and of related concepts, is not fixed and consistent, but is instead fluid and changeable, directly influenced by the practices of those participating within the drop-in, and how these practices are interpreted.

5.2 Service provider powerlessness

The second sub-theme identified was service-provider powerlessness. While the sub-theme of 'exercising power' largely discussed the constraints put on service-users within the centre, rather than service-providers, the decision was made to develop service-provider powerlessness as a theme for a number of reasons. In relation to the discussion so far presented in this chapter, the sub-theme of 'service-provider powerlessness' demonstrates the limits of service-provider power within Women's Zone, and the fact that it is not as straightforward as service-providers being the 'powerful' and service-users being the 'powerless'. In addition to this, service-provider powerlessness is a significant finding due to it being both unexpected, and largely unacknowledged within support literature. While

there appears to be increasing consideration of powerlessness as part of the experience of nurses/care staff within the literature on nursing and health-care (see Kornhaber & Wilson, 2011; Pieranunzi, 1997; Young, Froggatt & Brearley, 2017), there is a paucity of support literature considering powerlessness as part of the experience of volunteers and professionals involved in service-provision.

As already mentioned, a sense of powerlessness pervaded service-providers' accounts of their experiences within Women's Zone, and was also observed on many occasions within the drop-in. The following sections will discuss some of the key factors contributing to a sense of powerlessness, how this was experienced by service-providers and how it was managed. Due to the relevance of the neighbouring literature on support in other contexts, such as support for housing and homelessness, and on health-care and nursing, both sex work support literature and neighbouring literature will be referenced, in order to reflect upon the findings of this study.

5.2.1 Feeling not in control

In many instances in the data, service-providers' sense of powerlessness seemed to come from a feeling of not being in control. The circumstances which contributed to this will now be discussed.

Section 5.1.3 has already outlined the way in which service-users and service-providers within Women's Zone were disempowered through certain interactions, such as those in which service-providers enforced explicit and implicit rules, sometimes despite their own personal disagreement. Data from this study also demonstrates several other kinds of interaction within the centre, which contributed to service-providers feeling a sense of powerlessness due to not feeling in control.

When it came to fulfilling their role within the drop-in, interactions between service-providers and service-users sometimes led service-providers to perceive the service-users as in control, and themselves as lacking control, which ultimately led to a sense of powerlessness. This is seen in the following quote from service-provider Heather's interview:

'It's a bit, kind of, disappointing almost because you wanna help them, you wanna provide something, but you can't because in the end it depends on them coming in' (Interview 4 - Heather).

Whilst there are always factors which mean service-providers in any agency are never in complete control of interactions or service-user response (nor does this research advocate that they should be), the existence of multiple and complex needs among a number of service-users at Women's Zone meant that service-provider-user interactions, and service-user responses to support were particularly unpredictable, as already discussed in the previous chapter. Service-users could respond entirely differently to support, and even to the presence of service-providers, depending on the state of their mental health. Sometimes there was a clear and gradual decline which service-providers could observe and factor into their approach, and at other times a service-user's behaviour could switch during a session, as can be seen in the following extract from field notes in which service-user Lorna's behaviour in the drop-in seems to switch from stable to unstable, resulting in her interpreting the presence of service-providers as 'surveillance':

'Lorna [service-user] got several compliments on her outfit when she arrived, she chatted really pleasantly with Maria [service-provider] and me for a while and asked for some food... at one point, after I told her that her Panini was ready, she had a sudden outburst, shouting 'You're a clever one you and I fucking love ya!' No one really acknowledged what had happened and just continued what they were doing. Kelly [service-provider] appeared in the kitchen and Lorna began muttering

something about there being too much 'surveillance' and 'why is everyone always surveilling me?' (Field notes – March 14th).

In the same way, interactions with service-users were often dependant on their physical state in relation to alcohol or drugs. The kinds of interactions service-providers were able to have with service-users, and the level of support which could be given was, on occasion, entirely dependent on the level of substances in their system and the impact this was having. In her interview, service-provider Jo discussed the difference in atmosphere of the afternoon and evening sessions as resulting from different levels of intoxication, as is seen in this quote:

'It is different, erm, in terms of the people that come in and ma-kind of what arises really, erm, the days tend to be a little bit more chilled and I think a lot of it has got to do with intoxication, I think by the time you get to ten o'clock at night people have had a lot more than they have at two o'clock in the afternoon' (Interview 5 - Jo).

As well as its general impact on the drop-in, the intoxication of service-users also had an individual impact on the extent to which they could engage with support. In some instances, service-users would attend the drop-in fully coherent and aware, and begin a discussion with a service-provider relating to some aspect of support. They would tell the service-provider they were nipping out and would be back to finish talking soon, and return exhibiting the full effects of a hit. In some cases, this meant that they were unable to continue the conversation due to a lack of awareness, and in severe cases, an inability to talk at all.

In addition to the drug and alcohol related needs of some service-users impacting on their physical state in the drop-in, the status of many as homeless also had an obvious impact. Service-users falling asleep within the drop-in was a common occurrence, and in many

instances, was a result of homelessness. An example of this can be seen in the following extract from field notes:

'When Susie [service-provider] approached Laurie [service-user] to try and wake her up, there was a lot of protesting from her sister. 'Leave her alone miss' she repeated 'she hasn't had any drugs today, I swear. She just hasn't slept in 5 days.' (Field notes – 8th September)

In addition to service-users' mental/physical state in relation to substance use and mental health, the regularity of service-providers having to deal with service-users falling asleep in the centre, also appeared to be a factor which led to service-providers feeling a lack of control of when and how they were able to fulfil their roles.

As discussed in chapter one of this thesis, the multiple and complex needs of sex workers, and in particular street sex workers, are commonly discussed within sex work literature, with issues around housing or homelessness; drug and alcohol addiction, and related mental and physical health problems among the most broadly cited (Hankel et al. 2016). This is not to say that all sex workers have all, or indeed any, of these needs, nor is it to say that the only people with these needs are those involved in sex work; it is simply to say that for those providing support for this client group, the experience is one of dealing with more needs than those directly related to sex working. These complex needs are a significant part of the reason Women's Zone exists. They are also arguably the reason why their '*user-centred*' (Appendix one) approach, discussed in section 3.2.5 of chapter 3, can often be observed to manifest through flexibility, and while this remains an important and fitting way of delivering support to this client group, the data from this study suggests that it is also important to understand that these complex needs may lead to service-providers feeling out of control and may contribute to a sense of powerlessness.

In addition to the more *indirect* relationship between a service-user-led approach and service-providers feeling not in control, data from this study also suggested a *direct* relationship between taking such an approach and experiences of powerlessness. Adopting a user-centered approach meant that the provision of support within Women's Zone was dependent on whether service-users attended the drop-in, and whether they desired support or not, as is seen in the following extract from service-user Jo's interview:

'Some of it is dependent on how much they want you to be-to be in their lives, you know it's very difficult to-you can't force people to want to have you-some people lead us a merry dance and they just give us lip-service, say what we want them to say, and then other people come in and bare, you know, all their deepest, darkest secrets and why they're in a mess and have a bit of a crisis' (Interview 5 - Jo).

The relationship between a service-user led approach and service-provider powerlessness is not unique to sex work support, and has been discussed in relation to a number of other contexts, including in Jarman, Smith and Walsh's (1997) study of therapists treating children with anorexia nervosa. Within this study, Jarman et al. argued that the feeling of being not in control experienced by the therapists seemed to be related to taking up a flexible, client-centred approach to intervention. While such an approach was of real benefit to the client, it didn't afford therapists the sense of security and safety that comes with being, and feeling, in control. Though Women's Zone's flexible and client-centered approach is arguably one of the key ways in which they are tailored to working with sex workers, this research suggests that there are real tensions that this approach can produce for service-providers.

The tension between 'doing something' and taking a client-led approach to support comes both from within Women's Zone, and from the wider context in which it sits. As a support service working specifically with sex workers, Women's Zone is set within the broader cultural context of both sex work, and support services. As a result, Women's Zone is

influenced by (and in turn influences) the debates and policy around each of these areas. As discussed in chapter one, issues of sex worker agency and empowerment are both key aspects of debates around sex work, understood differently, but valued equally by those with opposing views. In addition to this, client-led approaches and service-user involvement have become dominant policy goals in support culture across many countries, including the UK (Broer et al. 2014). In many ways, power in this context is constructed as largely negative when it is exercised by service-providers, a perspective which leads to professionals fearing being accused of exerting power over clients (Broer et al. 2014). On the one hand then, service-providers at Women's Zone feel pressure to ensure support is 'user-centered', led by service-users and focused on promoting their agency; whilst on the other hand feeling the pressure to 'do something', to provide support and help in some way, as is seen in the following quote from service-provider Heather's interview:

'You wanna help them, you wanna provide something' (Interview 4 - Heather)

In some ways, this pressure can be argued to originate from within the service. According to the volunteer handbook for Women's Zone, part of the role of service-providers is to *'motivate service-users to engage with services'* (Appendix one). Data from this study suggests that understandings of the concept of engagement varied with service-provider, but most involved getting service-users to sit down and to interact with service-providers or an activity. The pressure to achieve engagement appeared to conflict with the pressure to allow service-users to lead support, and as a result service-providers felt powerless to fulfil their roles. In a sense they were trapped in inactivity whilst they waited for service-users to present with an issue that required support, and a desire to engage, as is discussed in the following extract from service-provider Emily's interview.

'Where it's like death-deathly quiet some days but you-and you're just sitting waiting for the, like, crisis, crises to happen... so it's that, kind of, waiting for things to

happen, but you just wish that people would see before that hit it, erm, so yeah, it's that feeling of feeling a bit powerless I guess' (Interview 2 - Emily).

Service-providers discussed becoming accustomed to unfulfilled promises of future engagement and seemed to cope with this through measuring their expectations, as is demonstrated in this quote from service-provider Dave's interview:

'Also I find that everybody says 'oh I'll come, what day are you here? Oh I'll come' and er I always go 'alright' expect-I hope that they will come, but never expect it' (Interview 9 – Dave).

Data from this study suggests that, though the complex needs of sex workers may be the very reason for support, dealing with them in this context may result in service-providers feeling a lack of control of support and ultimately powerless.

In a number of service-provider interviews, a lack of control and issues of powerlessness were discussed in relation to issues with other services external to Women's Zone. In particular, service-providers discussed issues in relation to statutory services and service-user interactions (or lack of) with such services. Some service-providers explicitly stated how such services had *'failed'* the women accessing Women's Zone, as is seen in the following quote from service-provider Emily's interview:

'Obviously the system fails quite a lot with regard kind of sexual assault an-and even trafficking, and erm, kind of general abuse' (Interview - Emily).

Examples of particular ways in which service-users had been *'failed'* by other services were often related to the specific needs of this group and how they were not being met, not

being considered at all, or in some cases being actively ignored. Service-providers' examples included early closing times which didn't reflect sex workers' schedules, a lack of flexibility in services, and government action which had a negative impact on sex workers in particular. Service-Providers who discussed the 'failings' of statutory support for this client group went on to discuss the resulting limitations this put on the support Women's Zone, and they themselves, could offer, and in many cases how this contributed to a sense of powerlessness, as is seen in the following quote from service-provider Tracey's interview.

'your hands are tied because of, you know, the lack of statutory services' (Interview 3 - Tracey)

Tracey also discussed how government action like cuts to crisis loans and the introduction of the bedroom tax could actually undo progress the service had made with service-users. For example, there were instances in which service-users who had exited sex work (due to a personal desire to do so), had to re-enter the sex industry due to their benefits not coming in soon enough to pay their rent, and crisis loans being largely unavailable to keep them afloat until it did:

'We might get them so far ... and it can just take them back to square one ... cause if other, you know, statutory services, yeah, just did-did what they're supposed to do, then this might have not happened' (Interview 3 - Tracey).

Service-provider Jo discussed how the extent of support she was able to offer was dependent on the external services she would have to partner with in various situations, and in particular, on their opening times. Women's Zone operates afternoon drop-in sessions five days a week, and evening drop-in session three days a week, in order to be as accessible as possible for sex-working women. In Jo's interview she expressed how this was not the case for many external services, and therefore whilst she felt able to deal with service-users' issues when they presented during afternoon sessions; she felt powerless to

do anything if issues presented themselves during evening sessions. Jo's discussion of this can be seen in the following extract from her interview:

'one of the other reasons as well is that there-there's no other services open at that time, so erm, someone comes in the day and they've got problems with their housing or they've got problems with their money or whatever else, there's something proactive you can do about it, you can be like 'oh we'll ring PWP, or we'll ring housing, or ring whoever' and sit down and work through it, if somebody comes in in the evening, er, especially like ten o'clock at night, apart from emergency accommodation provision, which we do have at DA where you can ring up and get them a bed for the night, everything is either 'come back tomorrow' or 'this is what you can do' and you have to talk them through it, and you kind of er-without doing anything too proactive at the time.' (Interview 5 – Jo)

The data so far discussed in the latter part of this section demonstrates how service-providers expressed a reluctant dependence on external services, and how the limitations of such services left them feeling powerless to help. As discussed in section 2.1 of chapter two, issues around sex workers accessing and engaging with statutory services are well-documented within sex work research, with findings suggesting sex workers experience stigmatisation within more generalised support (Clark, 2006; Gorry et al. 2010; Mosedale et al. 2009; Whittaker et al. 2011). While this finding may not be novel, data from this study suggests it is important to consider the impacts that this has on specialist sex work support, and on the experience of service-providers within specialist services. Findings from this research demonstrate that the limitations of external services for this client group lead to limitations on service-providers in sex work support services, and ultimately to a sense of powerlessness.

In some cases, rather than simply limiting support, issues with external services actually acted as a barrier to support for service-users. This was particularly evident in situations

where 'support' involved service-providers suggesting police involvement; such as when service-users reported incidents and assaults to Women's Zone. In a number of these instances, past negative experiences with the criminal justice system, and with the police themselves, meant that service-users were suspicious of such involvement or downright refused it. As a volunteer, this was a situation I myself faced on several occasions, an example of which can be seen in the following extract from field notes. During this particular drop-in session, the service-user discussed in the extract had talked about her history of sex working, which included harassment by the police and reporting an incident, but never receiving justice. The following extract includes discussion of the latter, and my own reflections upon how such experiences might deter service-users from reporting again in the future:

'Whilst talking about her younger days sex working, she [service-user] said that she had been abducted and described the assault that then followed in graphic detail. I asked if she'd reported it and she said that she had done, with the license plate number as evidence. Apparently the man was never caught. It occurred to me that someone who has been harassed by a policeman, and failed by the justice system, would need a lot of time and investment to ever build trust again.' (Field notes – 8th September)

In these instances, I too experienced a sense of powerlessness that came with being unable to 'help' due to barriers that existed as a result of something that was not in my control.

While this sub-theme has largely considered powerlessness as an individual issue, which works itself out through interactions within Women's Zone, the relationship between service-provider powerlessness and the limitations of external services suggests that it can also be seen as a systemic issue, arising from problems with the structures surrounding and interacting with the service, and with those participating in it.

In addition to the external factors so far discussed, data from this study suggests that Women's Zone (either as an organisation or the individuals within it) also experienced stigma and a lack of belonging at the hands of 'the system'. In her interview, Emily discussed how Women's Zone doesn't always fit in with other services, and the stigmatised response it often receives, as is seen in the following extract:

'So there's been a couple of incidents actually where-at awards, we've won awards for like our amazing volunteers and, erm, for the work that we do, but actually whenever-I think it's a struggle for us to win anything ...there's just a lot of er, discrimination around it, you know...it's hard to raise money for us because it's not really, kind of, it's not like we're looking after sick puppies here [laughs] but erm, and it's also the fact that people find it a bit funny, you know like, I don't know if it's a bit of an embarrassment thing of talking about it...erm, when we've won awards before and they've even called out our name and people in the room-a room full of other organisations ... have laughed or giggled...other people that still don't see the worth in what we do or don't really understand' (Interview 2 - Emily).

Within his writings on stigma, Goffman (1963) suggests that stigma not only affects the individual bearing it, but also those who closely associate with them. This is referred to by Phillips, Benoit, Hallgrimsdottir and Vallance (2011) as courtesy stigma, and though research has most commonly focused on how this impacts upon loved ones, Phillips et al's (2011) study explored the impact of courtesy stigma on those providing front-line services to sex workers in Canada. As discussed by Emily in the previous extract, service-providers within Phillips et al's (2011) study described perceived and enacted stigma from other professionals outside of the service they worked/volunteered in. Through participant observations, semi-structured interviews and a short, self-administered questionnaire, Phillips et al. (2011) concluded that, while the *impact* of courtesy stigma on service-providers was not significant, it may have been 'more pivotal to organisational culture...than it would appear on the surface.' (p.691). They argued that the experience of courtesy stigma was likely to have played a role in the low sense of accomplishment reported by service-

providers in their study. In light of their findings, it could be argued that the sense of being powerless to help experienced by service-providers in this study, and the resulting feeling that they weren't fulfilling their roles, could in part be due to the courtesy stigma experienced as a result of working with such a stigmatised group.

Overall, in addition to a sense of powerlessness arising through interactions within Women's Zone, there also appear to be a number of systemic issues which impact on service-providers' lived experience, often resulting in a sense of powerlessness and sometimes in experiences of stigma and alienation.

5.2.2 Powerlessness and meaningfulness

As has been demonstrated in section 5.2.1, data from this study shows that powerlessness was a significant part of service-provider experience in Women's Zone. For many service-providers, powerlessness was an emotional experience which was sometimes expressed through feelings of frustration, disappointment, and sadness, as is demonstrated in the following quote from service-provider Emily's interview:

'It's frustrating for me personally because I want to come to wo-you know the reason I work here, and the reason why I went into social work is cause I want to help people and I want to do stuff, and I want to be- an I'm that kind of person, just kind of personally, where I really like being busy, and I really like having a lot to do, and I hate sitting still and, and here there's so-there's such kind of like an ebb and-ebb and flow' (Interview 2 - Emily)

Emily's desire to 'help' or 'do stuff', as is seen in the above quote, seemed to lead to a feeling of powerlessness when circumstances meant that she was unable to do so, as is seen in the following quote from her interview:

'Yeah, exactly, so it's that, kind of, waiting for things to happen, but you just wish that people would see before that hit it, erm, so yeah, it's that feeling of feeling a bit powerless I guess' (Interview 2 - Emily)

In some circumstances, service-providers' sense of powerlessness came from the tension between the 'potential' and the 'actual' of support provision. Service-provider Jo discussed this tension in her interview, as is seen in the following extract:

'They [Women's Zone] specifically pick people that have got knowledge in it [sex work support], that have got background in it, people that have got all this massive bank of skills and knowledge, and then you come in and you make a brew [laughs] and actually I think sometimes as a volunteer it's really difficult to-not to feel like you're being wasted, but to-I think it's hard not to get into that role and er, and feel like, you know, 'I've got all-I know all about this kind of thing', or 'I've got experience in this kind of thing' and actually all I'm doing is sitting and speaking to women and erm, and just having conversation with them and making them brews and I think that can be quite difficult' (Interview 5- Jo).

The type of people Women's Zone choose to be service-providers means that the drop-in is largely staffed by experts who see the importance of specialist sex work support. However, the fact that such service-providers are likely to approach their role with a desire to help, an expectation of doing so, and a sense of meaning, inevitably led to disappointment when the reality of service-provision didn't match these expectations.

As stated in section 5.2.1, service-provider experiences of powerlessness have been discussed as part of the research findings in studies across a number of different contexts. In Berglund, Nässen and Gillsjö's (2015) study looking at health care professionals' experiences

of working with older adults with long-term pain, powerlessness was also found to be significant. Similar to the data under discussion here, the health-care professionals they interviewed often expressed a sense of powerlessness through frustration and sadness, and in the same way that a feeling of powerlessness in this study was related to service-users' desire to engage with support, Berglund et al. (2015) linked it to the older adults' willingness to comply with the proposed interventions. Powerlessness has also been found to be a significant aspect of experience for, mental health professionals (see Broer & Nieboer, 2014); GPs doing lifestyle counselling (see Abildsnes, Walseth, Flottorp & Stensland 2012); and service-providers conducting therapeutic interventions with children with anorexia nervosa (Jarman et al. 1997), to highlight a few contexts. Like the service-providers in this study, those from each of the studies given as examples here approached support from a service-user involvement/client-led perspective, therefore supporting findings from this study that suggest a relationship between adopting such an approach and experiences of service-provider powerlessness. Interestingly, Abildsnes et al. (2012) found that the GPs in their study experienced powerlessness both for themselves, and for their patients. When patients failed to make changes in their life as a result of life circumstances that weren't in their control, the GPs felt a sense of powerlessness *for* them. While data so far discussed for this sub-theme suggests service-providers themselves felt powerless to do anything to help, Abildsnes et al's (2012) research suggests that this sense of powerlessness may also have been felt on the part of service-users, particularly as many were dealing with challenges that were not within their control.

Service-providers in Women's Zone appeared to deal with feeling powerless in a number of different ways, and the most significant of these seemed to be through finding meaning in being non-directive. In the case of service-provider Dave, this meant that instead of focusing on the larger goals of support which were not in his control, he chose to find meaning in smaller achievements that didn't necessarily involve him doing anything directly. Discussion of this can be seen in the following extract from his interview:

'There's two different things there's what you write when you're writing a grant application, which is a really high level, erm-sort of high level and really optimistic and erm, what's the word, er [exhales] what you really want to achieve, and the high level things would be about, erm, trying to increase people's self-confidence, erm, trying to improve their self-worth, erm, try and [exhales] lead them to understand that there's other things that they can do, erm ...so I think I can participate and contribute to those kind of high level, erm, targets, but I think also I just try and, erm, think of the day-to-day, err, achievements we can make which is creating a space where people can feel safe, can feel relaxed, and really-really try and forget about what's going on outside' (Interview 9 - Dave)

This way of dealing with powerlessness mirrors the findings from Berglund et al's (2015) study. Due to the nature of their work, and the many barriers to achieving the overall aim of eliminating pain altogether, Berglund et al. found that the health-care professionals in their study were more likely to describe satisfaction in the small achievements. This strategy meant that they were able to cope better in situations where eliminating pain took an extended amount of time, or was never achieved. In this way the professionals were able to avoid hopelessness as well as being overwhelmed by powerlessness.

Section 5.2.1 has already identified how service-providers struggled with inaction. When it came to dealing with inaction, data from this study demonstrates how service-provider Dave created a narrative in which even a lack of service-user involvement had meaning, as is seen in the following quote from his interview:

'Some people, they've been coming down for quite a few months, or even years and then I finally get them to do something and then that's a-so that's a great-a great feeling as well' (Interview 9 - Dave)

Dave's approach to inaction seems to reflect Saldanha and Parenteau's (2013) framing of the inaction observed during outreach in their study as 'active waiting', and is arguably an effective way of dealing with powerlessness, as it enables him to cope with long periods where service-users don't appear to engage with support or make any sort of progress. The previous quote demonstrates how, by constructing the interaction as meaningful, Dave was able to avoid feelings of powerlessness.

In contrast with the frustration and sadness often attached to a sense of powerlessness, a sense of meaning enabled service-providers to feel pride and satisfaction in their role, and to view it as important, as is seen in the following quote from service-provider Emily's interview:

'Like I'm just so proud to work for Women's Zone, as much as I get frustrated at times' (Interview 2 - Emily).

This quote also demonstrates that, even when there is little meaning to be found in the on-the-ground circumstances which led to a sense of powerlessness, service-providers found meaning in being a part of something they saw as important. This finding reflects Phillips et al's (2011) study, which found that service-providers were able to deal with experiences of courtesy stigma, and the resulting feelings of low accomplishment or powerlessness, through the perceived meaningfulness of the service they were in, and of their roles within it.

The way in which service-providers use finding meaning as a way of dealing with a sense of powerlessness is clear in Heather's interview. When asked about moments that stood out to her during her time at the service, Heather quickly followed discussion of an experience of powerlessness with an experience of meaningfulness, as is seen in the following extract from her interview:

'Yeah I think that one of the biggest things for me is, you know, seeing someone act in a way that I know will get them excluded, and I think that was quite sad, erm, and then, I think some of the other moments have been like when a service-user comes in, erm, injured, or hurt, erm, or they've been abused verbally, and they're upset, you know, and erm, we can generally help them with that, you know either take them to a service that can help them or help them ourselves, so I think those have been, kind of, the two important things. Like, something that may not seem important but I think is really important is actually when you see some of the women engage with the activities, so, the art activities, or jewellery-making, or sewing or whatever, and I think that, erm, some of them open up more when we have those, so I think those can be important.' (Interview 4 - Heather).

In choosing these examples, Heather demonstrates her perception of both powerlessness and meaningfulness as significant aspects of her experience as a service-provider, and, like Dave, she also demonstrates finding meaning in that which 'may not seem important'.

Overall, the data would suggest that both a lack of control and experiences of powerlessness became acceptable when service-providers were able to make them meaningful, and though powerlessness is, understandably, seen as negative; there is an argument for powerlessness also being a positive when it is experienced by service-providers in this context.

Agustin (2007) argued, in her ethnographic study looking at outreach with migrant sex workers, that the strengths that made the outreach workers successful at outreach, could also make them bad at it. In the context of this research, it could be argued that a similar juxtaposition exists for service-provider experiences of powerlessness. Whilst powerlessness may be a negative part of service-provider experience and a tension they would rather wasn't there, it is arguable that it is a strength when it comes to offering support to sex

working women. Traditionally, the 'helping' relationship seen in support services such as Women's Zone followed an internalised model of those in a position of power and control, 'giving', 'supporting' and 'providing for' those in perceived positions of powerlessness. According to Agustin (2005b) the emergence of early on-the-ground practices developed to 'do something' about the problem of prostitution showed how 'new understandings of the object of charity permitted the exercise of power.' This patriarchal model of support has long been criticised by feminist researchers who argue that it further disempowers the sex working women accessing support, and how the construction of a 'victim/rescuer' discourse is of far more benefit to the benevolent 'rescuers' than those who are considered to need rescuing (Agustin, 2005; McGrow, 2017). When it comes to Women's Zone, though the experience of powerlessness is not always comfortable for service-providers, the existence of it as a shared experience allows the service to move away from this dichotomy of the powerful and powerless, and enables support to come from some shared understandings. Therefore, in the same way that service-providers found meaning in the circumstances leading to experiences of powerlessness, there is arguably meaningfulness to be found in the experience of powerlessness itself.

Summary

Overall, the data discussed in this theme demonstrates how powerlessness appeared to be a significant aspect of both service-provider and service-user experiences. For service-users, this was most commonly as a result of service-providers engaging in controlling, infantilising, and disempowering practices, and for service-providers this was both as a result of internal factors (including service-user behaviour linked to complex needs), and as a result of the limitations and failures of external services providing generalised support to this client group. In the way in which service-user powerlessness was most often a result of service-provider actions, and service-provider powerlessness was, in part, due to the actions of service-users, both groups can be argued to both disempower and to be disempowered. However, as already discussed, it is not the case that both groups exert the same kind of

power over the other, and it is therefore still valid to conclude that a power-imbalance exists within the service in which service-providers are most often the exercisers of power over service-users.

In light of service-providers engaging in both empowering and disempowering practices, and of data which demonstrates service-users carrying out practices of choice and control, as well as such things being constrained by service-providers, the practices of those within the service appear to both reflect and contradict the service culture as it is described within service-documentation. This theme therefore suggests that the culture of Women's Zone may not be as straightforward as it is intended, instead being made up of some contradictory elements.

While this chapter has largely framed the experiences of service-providers and service-users as shared within the two groups, and focused on the differences and similarities *between* them, the following chapter will consider the way in which the concepts of roles and relationships were negotiated within the drop-in, and in doing so will highlight some of the differences demonstrated in the data as existing *within* the two groups.

Chapter Six – Theme Two – Knowing me, knowing you; negotiating roles and relationships

Introduction

The ways in which those participating within Women's Zone negotiated their roles and relationships was another significant thread running through observation and interview data. This chapter will therefore explore how this was done and the differing meanings both service-providers and service-users attached to their own roles, and to the roles of others.

As is shown in the schematic representations on page 133, this theme is comprised of three sub-themes; *Service-providers; Professional roles and Personal identities, Service-users; Belonging and individuality, and making sense of service-provider and service-users relationships.*

The sub-theme of *service-providers; professional roles and personal identities* will explore how service-providers within Women's Zone validated both of these elements of who they are in the service, despite them sometimes conflicting, through separation and distinguishing between them. This strategy enabled service-providers to continue to be part of the shared 'us' (service-providers within Women's Zone), meaning they were still able to experience a sense of unity, consistency and support, whilst at the same time maintaining their personal identity that sometimes disagreed with the service ideology upheld by the 'us'.

The sub-theme of *service-users; belonging and individuality* will explore how service-users also valued both their shared roles as sex-working service-users at Women's Zone, and their individuality. For service-users, the shared 'us' led to experiences of belonging, and a sense of family that contrasted with experiences of rejection that had occurred outside of the service. Despite the significance of this, the data presented in this sub-theme will also make clear the individuality of service-users, and the importance of acknowledging experiences which are not shared.

The sub-theme of *making sense of service-provider-service-user relationships* will then explore how the different meanings ascribed by those participating within Women's Zone, led to variation in terms of how they perceived their roles and the roles of others, what they perceived the goals of support to be, and the practices they performed as a result. This sub-theme will use case-study style examples from three service-providers and two service-users in order to demonstrate the importance of individuality and how it impacted upon experiences of the service. These examples have been chosen due to the richness of the individual participant's data allowing for a clear picture of the way in which the meaning they attached to the service impacted upon the practices they enacted, and their experience of participating within it. For the three service-providers, the meaning-framework of sex work they drew upon appeared to have a significant impact upon their perceptions of service-user agency, and the way they carried out their role as a result. For service-users, their perception of what support should look like, and therefore what the roles of service-providers was, had a significant impact on which service-provider practices they experienced positively, and which they experienced negatively.

6.1 Service-Providers; Professional roles and personal identities

Data from this study demonstrates how service-providers appeared to distinguish between their professional roles as service-providers, and their personal identities. When asked

about her relationships with service-users, service-provider Jo demonstrated this distinction, as can be seen in the following quote from her interview.

'It's not like they're having a relationship with you personally, they're having a relationship with you as a service-provider with the service' (Interview 5 - Jo)

This distinction was also evident in service-provider Emily's interview, as can be seen in the following quote which shows her response to my question about whether helping service-users to 'exit' sex work was important to her.

'me personally, or me as within the organisation?' (Interview 2- Emily)

When it came to the service-providers' professional roles and their personal identities, both appeared to have value. In the case of their professional roles, belonging to a collective group of service-providers seemed to have value due to the sense of unity it created, the consistency it produced in terms of providing support, and the feeling of being supported by the rest of the group, as can be seen in the following extracts from service-provider interviews:

'it's good because you can rely on them [other service-providers] to be-to be consistent with it, none of them are pulling favourites or pulling favouritism' (Interview 5 - Jo)

'everything needs to be really cohesive and people need to be getting on, because if you're not doing that kind of, like, things aren't united here' (Interview 2 - Emily)

'So I think, there has to be consistency across the staff as well, because, actually if I say no then somebody goes 'well so and so give it to me' erm, I-we have to all stay on an organisational basis and never start doing it personal' (Interview 5 - Jo)

While data from this study suggests that service-providers saw value in their shared professional roles and belonging to a collective group, it also suggests that they saw value in their personal identity, therefore demonstrating the importance of both the 'us' (shared professional roles) and the 'me' (personal identity) in this setting. In a sense, the 'me' appeared to have value in the way in which it enabled service-users to portray that 'I am not the 'us', I am also 'me'. In some cases, the 'me' was in conflict with the 'us', as is seen in the following quote where service-provider Emily discusses her personal disagreement with the service's practice of exclusion.

'I found that really, really difficult and I've been really upset by it because it-it's, because I don't ever believe people should be stopped from using services, like kind of as a blanket rule I think that people should be able to still...the people that have been suspended did take the piss really, but, they-there wasn't much else that we could do' (Interview 2 – Emily)

Through the use of the personal pronoun 'I', Emily is able to show her personal disagreement with this practice, and by switching to her shared professional role, she is also able to justify it as a necessary measure 'we' had to take. In separating the 'me' and the 'us', Emily is able to 'save face' in terms of the part of 'me' which did not want to be seen as supporting certain disciplinary practices, but also to maintain the 'us' who are the ones carrying them out. In Goffman's writings on self-presentation within social encounters, he discusses how the self is constantly negotiated, claimed, legitimated or denied (Burr, 2002; Goffman, 1959), and how individuals carry out 'face-work' – actions taken to make whatever they are doing consistent with face (Goffman & Best, 2005). Face is defined by Goffman and Best (2005) as an image of self that we portray, and therefore Emily can be

seen to be carrying out face-work in order to maintain a portrayal of both the individual aspects of self, and those aspects which are shared with other service-providers. Through separating her personal identity from her professional role, Emily as the individual is able to be maintained, as is Emily as the 'us', the result being that both her personal identity and her professional role within the service, are validated.

In addition to being a useful strategy for achieving self-validation, the separation of personal identity and professional role seems to be a useful strategy for self-protection. Like Emily, service-provider Jo demonstrates the strategy of separating the 'me' and the 'us':

'I think-obviously it's very trite to say that all relationships are important because even if it's a bad relationship you've got one, regardless of what it is, erm, but-cause I was gonna say that I don't think some of them are ever real, I don't think it can ever be a real relationship because it's always-you're in a-you're in an organisation, do you know what I mean, it's not like having a relationship with you personally, they're having a relationship with you as a service-provider with the service... it's difficult because it can-it can never be a fully working relationship because you're part of a service, erm, so it's not a personal relationship, and, you know, and to that point as well, obviously we have people that are suspended and then they come back in and you know, if somebody was to do something [1] bad, then it's dealt with on an organisational level, erm and you kind of have to be professional, you have to-if someone's quite offensive to you, you have to put that to one side, so the relationship is never fully transparent anyway' (Interview 5 – Jo)

Creating this distinction allows Jo to protect her personal identity and keep it separate from her professional role within Women's Zone, another type of self-preservation which means that when she has a particularly hard day within the centre and a service-user chooses to 'do something bad' or be 'quite offensive'; though it may affect her professional role within the service, she still has those individual aspects of self which she 'kept separate'. She

therefore does not risk her involvement in Women's Zone undermining her whole sense of self. This strategy of self-preservation is paralleled in literature outside of sex work support in other professional contexts in which individuals are exposed daily to situations that may take an emotional toll. In Mackintosh's (2007) study of nurses working in surgical areas, she carried out sixteen interviews which aimed to explore how the nurses coped with the daily experiences they were exposed to. One of the key findings from this study was the way in which the participants distinguished between themselves as a person, and as a professional, a strategy which they described as a way of protecting themselves from a range of difficult professional situations. Mackintosh (2007) describes the nurses' apparent ability to switch between these 'two persons', and how their perception of these interconnected aspects of self as separate enabled self-preservation. The findings of Mackintosh's (2007) study suggest that, while distinguishing between personal identity and professional role may be a useful strategy in general for maintaining conflicting identities/roles and obtaining self-validation, it is of particular significance in settings like Women's Zone, where service-providers are likely to face emotional challenges on a regular basis. In this way distinguishing between personal identity and professional role becomes a coping mechanism and a means of protecting the self, whilst enacting a potentially emotionally taxing role.

6.2 Service-Users; Belonging and individuality

As was the case for service-providers, data from this study also demonstrated how service-users valued both their collective service-user role within the service (the 'us') and their personal identity (the 'me').

The following extract from service-user Claire's interview demonstrates how service-users' shared experiences of sex work led to a sense of being 'one of us':

'C: Like, when I first come and engaged in the centre, I'd not sex worked for like six-month, but I felt the need that I had to lie to get in [laughs]

B: To say you were currently sex working?

C: //yeah, and it's like 'no, you joined the club years ago kid, you're one of us' and like I understand that now' (Interview 1 – Claire)

This sense of being 'one of us' was experienced as a belonging and a familiarity by many service-users, as can be seen in the following quotes from interviews:

'just basically getting involved in something, feeling a part of something, that's it' (Interview 6 - Debs)

'that's why I feel like family coming here' (Interview 7 – Sanya)

'Just seeing, like, familiar faces it was, I'd lost all me friends, all me family don't really speak to me, so I come I here to just like see a face I know, someone I can just waffle crap to [laughs]' (Interview 8 – Mel)

'Ooh! Ooh! I love Women's Zone, Women's Zone are ace, Women's Zone are like your family aren't they?' (Interview 1 – Claire)

While belonging is generally considered to be an important aspect of identity and self-validation (Rocca, 2013), it is arguably even more significant in the context of Women's Zone, and in particular for the sex-working service-users. Data from this study demonstrates

how many of the women accessing the service had experienced some form of rejection or estrangement from family and/or friends due to their involvement in sex work, as can be seen in the following extracts from interviews and field notes:

'Annie [service-user] began talking about how she had spent the last week in London 'you can make bare dough down there' Jan [service-user] interjected. 'I suppose so' Annie said 'but I wasn't working, I was looking after my sister's kids. My family are okay but they don't get what I do at all, they're forever saying 'why can't you do a normal job?!' They don't get that this is what I'm doing.' 'What is normal anyway?' I said, 'exactly' she responded. 'but then she asks me to have her children for the week; they want you when they want you.' 'I know what you mean' Anita [service-user] said 'my family have all grown up and got married and had kids and forgotten I'm around. That's why I'm glad I found this place before Christmas, this place is great.' Annie agreed 'it is, I'm so glad I found it again, it's been really nice to be back.'" (Field notes – 4th Jan)

'I was on my own, no have nobody, no money, erm, problem with family, I got lots of other stuff problems and Women's Zone always help me out when I was really bad situation, yeah' (Interview 7 – Sanya)

'Because sometimes you feel like you've got nowhere to go and you've got no one to help you, but when you come here [Women's Zone] everyone helps you, even the girls help each other that come... I was coming before I went to prison, and then when I come out I weren't on me own 'cause I had these [people at Women's Zone]... I'd lost all me friends, all me family don't really speak to me, so I come I here to just like see a face I know, someone I can just waffle crap to' (Interview 8 – Mel)

The experience of belonging demonstrated in these quotes can therefore be seen as a kind of antidote to the rejection experienced by many service-users accessing the drop-in, and

therefore seems to be a crucial feature of support and a significant aspect of service-user experience.

Also reflected in the data was the sense in which service-users felt they belonged to something that was 'for us'; both 'for us in the way in which it was sex-worker specific, and 'for us in the way in which those offering support were on their side. The following extract from service-user Claire's interview, where she compares Women's Zone to other services, demonstrates the importance of Women's Zone being 'for us' in only supporting sex-working women.

'they [support services before Women's Zone] weren't there like for specific reasons and like they'd come round with sandwiches and bring the rest of town and the rough sleepers all up here with em, and it just made it, argh. So, Women's Zone being there it was just for the girls was loads better, cause you didn't have like punters and pimps following you on and things like that so you could just go in there and be on-be by yourself' (Interview 1 – Claire)

As well as being clear about Women's Zone being 'for us, Claire also discussed how Women's Zone is 'for us', as is seen in the following extract where she talks about their enduring efforts to gain convictions for assaulted/murdered sex workers.

'the things that stand out for me-and I think they stand out for all the other girls as well, it's like erm, the way they [Women's Zone] work with the police a-and the getting convictions, this is real stuff they're getting now, this isn't like where the way it used to be where it was just like 'Oh Claire, who's blacked your eyes and broke your nose? Aah, okay then, right okay, if you see 'em again, let us know.' You know what I mean, it's none of that now, it-cause they hold 'em to account and it's like, girls that have been missing for years and we've not yet found the bodies, or we've not yet found who's killed 'em, they're still looking, you know and it's all this stuff, you pick

up the Evening News and you're getting updates and it's like 'yeah, if Women's Zone weren't behind that, we'd have got nowhere.' Do you know what I mean? Like last year or the year before, my good friend she got murdered and left over in erm the fruit market, at the back of the fruit market in town, and er, I seen a thingy from my mum, an appeal that was 25 years on about her daughter, and it was like 'I'm being supported by Women's Zone'' (Interview 1 – Claire)

Like service-providers, the data so far discussed in this section demonstrates how belonging to a collective group was also of value to service-users. However, also like service-providers, there were limits to belonging made evident in the data, which demonstrated the ways in which service-users, whilst experiencing belonging in Women's Zone, were also separate and distinct, as can be seen in the following quotes from interviews:

'you get to meet people [in the drop-in], er, obviously people with different needs and different situations' (Interview 6 – Debs)

'Because we are all different, some of the girls got own problems, all the girls got different problems and erm, we don't know each other proper, we just see it at Women's Zone and down on the street, or sometimes other way, we don't know each other, that's why we are not all friends like I got that other friend' (Interview 7 – Sanya)

'B: You said something about, erm, coming here allows you to be a part of something, does-is that important to you?

D: Err, not to me in particular but some people like, I don't really have much in my life anyway, but some people [other service-users] don't have nothing' (Interview 6 – Debs)

As well as service-users demonstrating the 'me' through highlighting that which was not shared during their interviews, service-users' individuality was also made evident during observations in the drop-in. It is clear from the data collected that sex work, and related topics, were not often discussed in the sessions, with service-users far more likely to engage in conversations about other aspects of their lives, as can be seen in the following quotes from field notes:

'We began chatting, and Debs [service-user] told me that she had just come from a salon to book her daughter and friend in for a birthday treat. She showed me the receipt so I could see the name of the salon, she seemed quite proud when I'd heard of it before and commented on how nice it was. After the girls were finished at the salon, she was planning to take them to a fancy restaurant for lunch.' (Field notes – 23rd May)

'Vera [service-user] spent most of the session talking to me about topics to do with religion or her church. She told me that she was going to be doing a 'pause for thought' at her church in a few weeks and needed to decide on which topic she would call people to pray for.' (Field notes – 1st Feb)

'She [Laura – service-user] told us about her partner and that she'd been with him for 6 years. She said that he'd recently gone out onto the beat and picked up a 23 year old, done some drugs with her and been sexual with her (although Laura's description was rather more graphic). She said she was heartbroken. 'I hate men' Kaydie [service-user] said as she walked over from the computers to join us. 'All the problems in my life only started when I started dating men.' (Field notes – 25th April)

Davis' (cited in Burr, 2002) study on the interaction between physiotherapists and their patients discusses how the physiotherapists sought to take up an entirely professional role through assigning a patient-only identity to those they were treating, and how in response the patients enacted certain strategies in order to avoid becoming 'only' a patient. These strategies included emphasising the temporary nature of their injuries, and asking the physiotherapist questions about his/her own life, but also providing personal details about themselves and their lives. While the above extracts may not represent the same kinds of strategies being enacted, Davis' findings offer an interesting reflection on their significance. Though there is much debate and speculation about sex work and therefore about the roles sex workers should play as service-users within specialist support, it is clear that those accessing Women's Zone cannot be seen as service-users 'only'. These women are individuals who may all share experiences of sex work, but who are also mothers, women of faith, significant others, and much more.

Overall, data from this study suggests that, while service-users valued the 'us' and the sense of belonging and family it yielded, they also valued the 'me' and their personal identities outside of their service-user roles.

6.3 Making sense of service-provider-service-user relationships

Section 6.1 has considered how service-providers and service-users negotiated their collective roles and personal identities within Women's Zone, and how both were seen to be of value in different ways. This section will now consider how those participating within Women's Zone ascribed meaning to their roles, identities, and relationships as a result of their interactions within the centre. Though the meanings discussed were identified through inductive thematic analysis, they are presented as they apply to individual service-providers and service-users, in order to highlight the differences *within* the groups, and to create a picture of how these meanings impacted their whole approach to support.

Rather than comprehensively covering all of the ways in which those participating within Women's Zone made sense of their roles, identities and relationships, section 6.2.1 and 6.2.2 will discuss key examples, which highlight the different ways meaning was ascribed, and offer important insight into how this influenced individual practices and experience.

6.3.1 Service-provider meanings

For service-providers, the meanings they attached to the roles of service-provider and service-user within Women's Zone, appeared to have a significant influence over both how they perceived support, and how they approached it; in turn impacting on both their own experience of support, and on service-users'. Data for each of the service-providers discussed demonstrates how each ascribed meaning slightly differently, and how this led to differing practices and experience. This section will outline the ways in which service-providers derived these meanings from interactions within the service, and through drawing upon existing meaning frameworks. Each of the three service-providers will be discussed separately, with each section given a title which I feel captures the meaning they derived from their interactions within Women's Zone.

Emily – Championing victims

Throughout case worker Emily's interview, she appeared to draw upon a 'framework of meaning' of support which conflated the role of service-provider with that of an advocate, a champion of vulnerable women. From early on in her interview, Emily describes herself as a supporter of women, as is seen in the following extract from her interview.

'But I've always been interested in kind of Women's rights and erm, kind of, supporting women in general' (Interview 2 - Emily)

Emily also appeared to draw heavily on the notion of sex workers as victims, which was reflected in the implicit victim discourse that ran throughout her interview. This discourse is demonstrated in the following quote in which Emily discusses the reasons she believes women enter sex work, framing this as a result of trauma, chaotic lifestyles, or necessity, as opposed to an agentic choice.

'the reason that they're working is because they're on the street, or the reason that they're working is because they're drug use is completely out of control or-or they're being abused and they're being forced to do that' (Interview 2 - Emily)

The meaning Emily attaches to sex work appears most closely aligned with the perspective of the oppression paradigm (Weitzer, 2009) discussed in chapter one, which views those who sell sex as victims of an oppressive, patriarchal society (Majic, 2014), and those who buy it as 'woman haters' (Farley, 2004, p.1101), and while this doesn't lead to a focus on exiting, as Oselin and Wetizer (2013) argue that support run from within this paradigm should; it does influence Emily's approach to support in other ways. When it comes to her role as a service-provider, and the advocacy Emily feels is a significant part of that role, the meaning Emily attaches to sex work leads her to perceive part of the role of service-provider as helping others to see the 'victim side of things' and to become more 'victim-focused', as is seen in this quote from her interview.

'it's nice that they've [other professionals] come here [Women's Zone] and erm, and they're seeing kind of like the victim side of things erm, and they're becoming more victim-focused because of organisations like this' (Interview 2 - Emily)

Emily contrasts the meaning she attaches to the identity of sex worker – victims who do not exercise agency in entering sex work, with the 'ridiculous' public perception that sex

workers are responsible and therefore deserving of the difficulties they may be facing, as is seen in the following extract from her interview.

'People still think that sex workers are, you know, er, there's just a lot of er, discrimination around it, you know like, 'they deserve to be where they are' or 'they're' you know, 'it's just because they're using drugs and they want to use drugs' or, you know 'it's their own fault for going back to an abusive relationship' ridiculous things like that' (Interview 2 - Emily)

In presenting the opposing view of sex work/sex workers as 'ridiculous', discriminatory and oppressive, Emily is able to invalidate the perspective of sex workers as agentic and responsible, through conflating this with the perspective of sex workers as deviants, and validate the meaning she attaches to sex work, thus validating the meaning she attaches to the symbols of service-user – victims in need of support and championing, and service-provider – advocates of vulnerable women.

The meaning Emily attaches to sex work and therefore to the role of service-user within Women's Zone, also leads her to derive certain meanings from interactions within the centre. One example of this is seen in relation to service-user non-engagement, which is interpreted by Emily as service-users protecting themselves from being 're-traumatised', or seen as a result of a fear of change due to life experiences that have been consistently negative, and a resulting assumption that service-users don't know any different (or arguably better). This interpretation can be seen in the following extract from Emily's interview.

'it's frustrating, because you know that if someone would come in and do a housing assessment, or go int-to the town hall and do that, or let you put in a referral to the drugs service, or, do anything really, but a lot of it is ... the fact that they're terrified of what their life would be if things changed...cause actually, addressing some of the

stuff that they're experiencing is gonna be so traumatic for them, that they don't want to even talk about it, they don't want to even start their story because, like, where do you start if you've experienced like 20/30 years of abuse, and you've been using heroin for 15, and you don't-you couldn't imagine your life any different, or you're using to deal with your emotional issues because of childhood sexual abuse or something? You know, like, where do you actually start? And how do you pin that person down to re-traumatise them, essentially' (Interview 2 - Emily)

Within this extract, Emily also appears to contradict the victim discourse drawn on throughout her interview, which denies the agency of sex workers, through assuming some agency on the part of the service-users in resisting interventions, suggesting the meaning Emily attaches to the role of service-user has changed as a result of interactions in Women's Zone where she has observed service-users to exercise some agency; therefore, while drawing on a victim discourse of sex work means that she views the challenges faced by service-users as outside of their agentic choice and control, certain interactions within the centre lead her to ascribe more agency to the service-users than purely drawing on a victim discourse would.

Tracey – caring for survivors

Like Emily, case worker Tracey also assumes much in the way of service-users' traumatic pasts, however, unlike Emily, Tracey doesn't appear to draw on a framework of meaning that sees sex workers as victims, instead seeing them as survivors, as is demonstrated in the following quote from her interview.

'our...service-user group is such a unique group of women who are just... absolute survivors, they really are, so many of them have been through so much stuff, and constantly, and they're still going through stuff, that you just think 'wow, you're still

here' you know, that is absolutely amazing...we have some real amazing characters, you know, really resilient, real hardy women... I just admire them, do you know what I mean, for actually-what they've been through, what they're going through, what they probably will end up going through more of, erm, but yet they still-they'll still come in and crack a joke and, you know, kind of have a right laugh and, you know, yeah, yeah, I think, yeah, pretty amazing group of women' (Interview 3 – Tracey)

The victim-survivor distinction is an important one to make, as it has significant implications for the meaning attached to the roles of service-provider and service-user, and the practices enacted through interactions as a result. According to Jean-Charles (2014) while the label of victim implies passivity, the label of survivor implies agency. While both labels indicate a forcible removal of power, the label of survivor is associated with the regaining of power, and is often used as an indication of how those who have experienced trauma have strived to carry on with their lives and make choices. As a result of perceiving the sex working service-users as survivors, Tracey sees her role as service-provider to involve empowering the women to become autonomous decision-makers, as opposed to speaking on their behalf and making decisions for them, like Emily, as is seen in the following extract:

'we might want the women to do things, but it's about what the women want... it's all about what that individual wants, do you know what I mean? And I think if we go into something thinking 'well this is what we want for them, this would be the better thing' do you know what I mean, we can al-we can always talk about, you know, talk through someone's choices with them, talk through someone's, you know, what are their goals? What are their desires? What do they want to achieve? Erm, but it's always got to come from that individual' (Interview 3 – Tracey)

This is of particular significance to Tracey, as choice is something she feels the service-users accessing Women's Zone will often have been denied in their lives, as is seen in the following quote:

'it's all about that kind of, you know, asking someone what they want, I think that's quite a big thing as well sometimes, do you know what I mean, cause quite often the women have never been asked what they want, they've been told they should do this or they should do the other' (Interview 3 -

Data from this study also made clear a number of other examples of the meaning Tracey attaches to sex work and the role of service-user, influencing the meaning derived from interactions within Women's Zone. During her interview, Tracey discussed the practice of service-providers checking in with service-users they haven't seen in a while, which simply involves asking how they are doing when they first come in to the centre. Though seemingly insignificant, Tracey's assumption that service-users may not have had anyone else care about them due to 'damaged family environments', means that she sees this practice of checking in as particularly important, and as making a difference to service-users, as is seen in the following extract from her interview.

'some of the women come from like very dysfunctional families, well, who's not got a dysfunctional family? That's the nature of them right? [laughs] but erm, you know, they might have come from a really damaged family environment and-and not actually have anyone care about them, or, you know, worry about them, and they get that from here, you know, if we've not seen someone in a while, we'll enquire as to how they're doing cause we've not seen them and, you know, I think it does-it does really, kind of, erm, make a difference for them' (Interview 3 - Tracey)

Tracey's assumption of 'damaged family environments', and of the significance of these for service-users, also means she views rule enforcement as a way of modelling healthy boundaries in relationships, which she assumes service-users will not otherwise have experienced. This approach to support also seems linked to her perception of service-users as survivors. Unlike Emily, who seeks to speak for service-users, whom she views as largely

voiceless, victims; Tracey's perception of the women as survivors who have exercised agency in oppressive situations, means she seeks to *model* and lead by example, in order to encourage further agency through empowerment. Tracey's approach to support is demonstrated in the following extract from her interview:

'so it's also important to be really forceful with boundaries, just because-you know especially with women who, you know, they might-might have come from, you know, kind of had that, kind of, damaged family, and they don't have that-such a great idea of boundaries and-so that's why it's-the reason why it's really important that we reinforce those, erm, and that, kind of, you know, it's also like you're-you're teaching as well, do you know what I mean, it's that kind of like lead by example' (Interview 3 - Tracey)

In addition to assumed negative treatment in service-users' past relationships informing the meaning attached to the role of service-user, Tracey's perception of service-users as receiving negative treatment at the hands of other services, also seems to inform the meaning of Women's Zone for her. As a result of the judgement she expects other services to enact, the meaning of Women's Zone is a rare space for sex workers to go, where they can be themselves and avoid judgement, as is seen in the following interview extract.

'I guess really I see it [Women's Zone] as somewhere for women involved in sex work to be able to come and, you know, they might not, you know, they might not get a great response from other services, mainstream services, you know, healthcare etcetera, you know, I think they can kind of, they can come here and they can just be totally honest about who they are...they can come here and they can just totally be who they are, you know they don't have to, erm, pretend that they're something they're not, or they're, you know, something else is going on for them that's actually not, or vice versa, so erm, well they can just come and say it how it is, and, you know, they're not gonna get judged' (Interview 3 - Tracey)

When it comes to the influence of the meaning she attaches to sex work, data from this study demonstrates how Tracey's perception of service-users as agentic survivors means she sees her role as that of a teacher, who must 'lead by example', rather than an advocate who must speak on the service-users' behalf.

Heather – working with individuals

Whilst Emily and Tracey both appeared to draw on ideas from within the oppression paradigm (Weitzer, 2009) in their assumptions that service-users will have experienced trauma/damaged relationships; volunteer Heather appeared to draw upon notions of sex work included in the polymorphous paradigm (Weitzer, 2009), which states that experiences of sex work vary and that sex workers are not one, homogenous group. Throughout her interview, Heather described service-users as a diverse group of individuals with various needs, varying backgrounds and life stories, and various levels of agency:

'everyone has a different story, so it's not generic, it's not like 'oh well they're a sex worker, she's probably using drugs, she might be homeless, she may be sex working because her partner's forcing her to' you don't know because it might be little bits of that, it might be none of that, you know, it could be anything, so I think the stereotype of everyone being on that same level, erm, you know, I think I've been challenged as well-challenged as well thinking that they would all come from similar backgrounds, which they don't, definitely' (Interview 4 - Heather)

As a result of this view, Heather saw the variation in engagement-level within interactions in the drop-in as a positive, and a reflection of the individuality of the service-users. In the same way, Heather also saw inconsistent rule-enforcement as service-providers tailoring the

service to the individuals they were working with, and not as unfair treatment, as is seen in this quote.

'I think we do treat them individually, so even small things like, there are some people who, when they ask for a specific biscuit, we will go get that specific biscuit for them, whereas other people, if they're being totally fussy, we'll just like 'no, just have what's here' (Interview 4 - Heather)

When compared with the way in which service-provider Tracey interpreted consistent enforcement of boundaries as a positive due to her assumptions about service-user's 'damaged family environments', Heather's interpretation of inconsistent rule-enforcement as positive, due to the individuality of service-users, makes clear the significant influence of the meaning attached to the identities of sex worker and service-user on the meaning derived from interactions within the service.

Like Tracey, Heather also sees the meaning of Women's Zone as a safe space for sex workers to come and be, however, as a result of her perception of service-users as individuals, Heather appears to have a less prescriptive idea of what participation in this space should involve, as is seen in the following quote from her interview.

'it's a safe haven for them, and that-it doesn't matter what that means in term of what it entails, if it entails, erm, therapy, or seeing a nurse, or getting a brew, doing some art, it doesn't matter because they know that when they walk in here they're safe, they can-if they want to just sit alone in the corner, they can sit alone in the corner, erm, but regardless of-of anything else, you know, they're safe, and I think that's a big thing, the big important thing really' (Interview 4 - Heather)

As a result of her polymorphous view of sex work, and of experiences of agency within it, Heather felt service-providers should offer service-users choice within the centre, and avoid further demeaning service-users where a lack of agency had been part of their experience of sex work:

'some women choose to do sex work, some women aren't forced in to it and we have to accept that, erm, and I think from an individual perspective, I think it's right to give people the choice, I don't think that because they're sex workers they shouldn't have a choice, erm, because it's so demeaning and they're demeaned enough already'
(Interview 4 - Heather)

The importance of offering choice to service-users appeared to conflict with some of the practices carried out by service-providers to ensure the drop-in remained a safe space, such as excluding service-users who had behaved in a way that was deemed unacceptable. This appeared to result in Heather experiencing a tension between two things which she interpreted as meaningful, but conflicting, as is demonstrated in the following extract.

'some of the marking moments, I guess, for me, that have been important is when people have been banned, erm, because I think it's caused me to think quite a lot about, you know, does that make them more vulnerable? And, can we justify doing that? And-you know but then equally we have to keep the service safe for the other service-users' (Interview 4 - Heather)

Due to her view that the service-users will have exercised varying levels of agency within sex work, Heather seems to see her role as service-provider as a facilitator of choice. Data from Heather's interview would suggest her approach to support sits closer to the service-user-led end of the spectrum than the approach taken up by Emily or Tracey.

6.3.2 Service-user meanings

As with service-providers, the meanings attached to the roles of service-provider and service-user, by the service-users within Women's Zone, seemed to have a significant impact on the way in which they derived meaning from their interactions within it.

This section will consider data for two service-users within Women's Zone, and how the meaning they attached to their roles, identities and relationships resulted in very different lived experiences. Discussion of the data for each service-user has again been given a title which I feel reflects the overall way in which they ascribed meaning.

Claire – Inspired to change

Data from service-user Claire's interview demonstrated, more so than any other, the influence of the interactions within Women's Zone on the meaning attached to the roles of service-provider and service-user.

Within her interview, Claire discussed how her interpretation of some of the practices of service-providers had changed since she first began accessing support:

'even like some of the things that used to piss me off, like the child protection stuff and like that, I now understand why all that's in place, and I understand it's coming from a good place too y-it's not for-I don't think of it like with all the resentful feelings that I used to have, it's not about that' (Interview 1 – Claire)

This shift in ascribed meaning seemed to be a result of interactions within Women's Zone that led Claire to feel the service-providers were *for* her and on her side. Initially, Claire's

trust in the service-providers came largely from the fact that they were paid professionals, and therefore had a contractual obligation to be there for her, to be reliable, as is seen in the following extract from her interview.

'and I know it's an' horrible way to think about it, but, in my mind it was like, 'well Women's Zone aren't gonna let me down cause they get paid' and er, that's the fact of it, Women's Zone won't let you down cause they get paid' (Interview 1 – Claire)

However, consequent interactions with service-providers led her to view them as being *for* her and on her side, in a way that went beyond simply doing their jobs. The following extract shows Claire discussing the support she received during her battle with cancer, and how she felt it went beyond the remit of paid professionals:

'but, it runs so much deeper because you're not erm, I noticed small things that don't come under a remit of a service that I was getting, it was personal for me... Erm [crying] erm [sniffles] when I lost all me hair [sniffles] they went and got me hats and scarves and stuff...but normally you wouldn't get that, that's somebody who's actually gone out, picked the hat up and thought 'ooh that's soft'' (Interview 1 – Claire)

As discussed in section 6.1.2, Claire also talked about the significance of service-providers working to secure convictions for sex workers who had experienced assaults whilst working, a practice which led her to further trust the intentions of the service-providers within Women's Zone. As a result of these interactions, the meaning Claire attached to the role of service-provider shifted from paid professional, to something rather more personal and relational, as is demonstrated in the following quote where she compares the service to her family, and infers service-providers to take up more authoritative positions within that family.

'it's like a family, it's showing you what-what normal kids get at home, we get it here in our 30s and 40s [laughs] this-that's exactly what it's like... a family hierarchy as well, you know' (Interview 1 – Claire)

Referring back to the first extract included from Claire's interview, it seems that these interactions led her to form a positive view of the intentions of service-providers, therefore shifting the meaning of the interaction discussed in this extract from a cause of anger and resentment, to an 'understandable' practice that came 'from a good place'. In addition to her interactions within the centre shifting her view of some of the practices of service-providers, data from her interview suggests it also changed the meaning she attached to her own identity. Within her interview, Claire discusses who she was when she first accessed Women's Zone, describing herself as vulnerable, lacking self-esteem, and as someone who didn't want to see that her life could be different:

'but, back then it was like erm, well-and as well, I didn't want any more. All I wanted was me condoms and me pins, I didn't want anyone to help me or save me or show me that what I did was good or-I didn't want any of that, I just wanted to be left alone, so even if-I could've been-the-well they were, they were saying to me 'look this doesn't have to be the way' but I didn't hear it' (Interview 1 – Claire)

In contrast, Claire described how, through her involvement in Women's Zone, she came to see that she had a right to feel good about herself, a right to be listened to and be noticed, and a right to have expectations of life, as can be seen in the following quotes from her interview.

'it [Women's Zone] gives you a benchmark, erm, I think, I'd say, I would say 100% of the women that access Women's Zone have got relationship problems, erm, and, I've

been-I personally-I was with a guy d-til just recently, for 7 years, he wasn't bad to me, but, he didn't care about me neither, so, it's like, making you see that you can have different, you can actually be listened to, you know, it like, a relationship means that, yeah you do get noticed, and you get listened to and no he isn't better than you, and no he isn't more deserving than you' (Interview 1 – Claire)

'I've learn-I've grown since I've been here, I've learnt that is is-you do have to have expectations on life, it's good to have expectations on life' (Interview 1 – Claire)

In some ways, the shift in Claire's identity can be described as her moving from being an outsider, on the edge of society, without her own community and with few aspirations; to an insider, a homeowner who now aspires to have a job and 'give back'. Though Claire first accessed Women's Zone as someone with a negative self-concept who felt disconnected from others, belonging to the collective 'us' led to the formation of a positive self-concept, and a desire to have healthy relationships in which she was valued. The way in which her interactions within Women's Zone led to this identity shift can be seen in the following extract from Claire's interview:

'they make you like see that that's a life, but this is a better life, and it's achievable...So now, I've got my own place, where, it's mine, everything in it is mine, my bills are paid up...I want to be in work in 6 month, that would never have happened, did I ever want a job? Are you shitting me! Nooooooo! Do you know what I mean, they've inspired me to become a member of society' (Interview 1 – Claire)

Overall, Claire's interactions within Women's Zone appeared to have had a profound impact on the meaning she attributes to certain practices within the centre; the role of service-provider, and her own identity.

Debs – Accessing a professional service

While the meaning Claire attached to the role of service-provider shifted from paid professional to something more personal, for service-user Debs it appeared to remain as the former throughout her time accessing the drop-in. As a result of viewing the service-providers predominantly as professionals enacting a service, Debs saw them as able to act as interpreters of sorts. In the following extract, Debs describes how a case-worker from Women's Zone acted as an interpreter for her in a meeting with another professional service.

'she came and took up a meeting concerning my daughter, which er helped me out because like, at other meetings that I'd gone to-in the past I'd gone to on me own, and I didn't fully understand like the Morse code, because she worked in women's social services department, she could sort of like inform me of what the Morse code wh-their lingo of talking, she could sort of like help me out in that way' (Interview 6 – Debs)

The view of service-providers as professionals is significant to Debs, as it makes her feel like she has someone on her side who is from the professional world she feels excluded from, someone who understands it and can interpret it for her, as is seen in this quote.

'it was still nice to know that she was there because the other people that was there, when I was voicing my opinion about certain things, they were saying like 'oh' or 'you can't be saying this' or 'you can't be saying that' and it just felt like nobody was really on my side sort of thing, so with Samantha there, she sort of like... she could explain it to them from a professional level' (Interview 6 – Debs)

In a similar way, service-providers being professionals meant that they could act as intermediaries, they could bridge the gap between service-users and the external services they needed to work with, as is seen in this extract:

‘when I had trouble with me benefits, they [service-providers at Women’s Zone] put me on to shelter, er, the workers from women’s zone put me on to some workers from shelter and they dealt with me case’ (Interview 6 – Debs)

Despite the positive elements of viewing service-providers as predominantly professional, this view may also have been the reason Debs interpreted certain interactions in the centre as largely negative. Unlike service-provider Heather, who saw inconsistent rule-enforcement as tailoring the service to its diverse service-users; Debs interpreted any kind of ‘tailored’ treatment negatively, due to a feeling that this represented a lack of equal treatment, perhaps as a result of this conflicting with what she saw as a professional approach to support:

‘cause they’ve [the service-user’s] come in here [Women’s Zone], which is supposed to be an equal place.. ‘but then they come in here and they like take the piss basically, and they get given like, you know, 2-3 bowls of food... some of ‘em come in here and they get, like, special treatment off certain people, certain workers, you know what I mean and I see that going on and er, I do find it a bit annoying, you know what I mean, ‘cause I’m like ‘well, like, you know, why are we not all getting treated the same?’ (Interview 6 – Debs)

‘some people will get put off coming here because like they’re like ‘well, you know, that person’s been treated better than me, so what’s the point in me coming in here’ (Interview 6 – Debs)

As is demonstrated in the latter quote, Debs saw a lack of uniformity in how service-providers interacted with service-users as special treatment, something which conflicted with her view that service-users are equals and therefore deserve equal treatment:

'the way I look at it, when I come in here is no matter what-what err, predicament or what situation the service-user's got, that we're all like the same... whether you've got a flat or not, you should be treated the same' (Interview 6 – Debs)

In addition to Debs' perception of service-providers as professionals arguably leading to frustration when she felt treatment was unequal, this perception also led her to attach a rather conflicting meaning to interactions than that which was demonstrated by service-user Claire. While Claire attached a positive meaning to interactions where she perceived service-providers to be going beyond their remit, Debs seemed to see such interactions as service-providers being unprofessional and becoming 'too involved', as is seen in the following extract.

'the only thing that annoys me about certain members of staff and volunteers is that sometimes they can be too involved with you, as in too-too in-too in your business... I don't know how they get it explained to them upstairs when they first start here, but they seem to think that they can come downstairs and just like, not have a [indistinct] as such, but like throw themselves full whack on a service-user' (Interview 6 – Debs)

While Claire described Women's Zone as her family, Debs' view of service-providers as predominantly professional meant that she saw their attempts to be 'friendly' as negative, and was largely sceptical:

'another thing that's quite annoying as well is that erm, not just with volunteers but with staff as well is like they come across like friendly, when really they're just being

like-sometimes they are just being nosey, you know what I mean and just like want to know everything about you' (Interview 6 – Debs)

Overall, her view of service-providers as professionals seemed to result in Debs viewing support almost like a formal exchange. It led her to expect professionalism, not caring, and therefore interactions perceived as unprofessional were interpreted negatively. In this way, despite being service-users within the same service, and experiencing many of the same kinds of interactions, the lived experience of Debs and Claire was vastly different.

Summary

Section 6.1 and 6.2 have demonstrated how service-providers and service-users negotiated both their collective roles and personal identities, and how they enacted certain strategies to maintain and validate these, though they were sometimes in conflict. When it comes to service-users, this finding may be of particular significance in the way in which it suggests the importance of specialist sex work services both valuing service-users' collective roles and shared experiences, but also recognising that they are not 'only' sex workers/service-users, and valuing their personal identities too. The implications of this finding will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Section 6.3 has highlighted the differences in the way those participating within Women's Zone ascribe meaning, and the impacts of this on practice and experience. The discussion within section 6.3.1 suggests that the position taken on sex work by service-providers, particularly in relation to issues of agency, acts as a meaning framework which influences the meanings ascribed within Women's Zone. In this way, it appears that the discourses and debates discussed in chapter one do influence the context of support, but perhaps not in the consistent way Oselin and Weitzer (2013) suggest (discussed in chapter two). In terms of consistency, the differing meanings ascribed by service-providers suggest that, even in a

service where service-providers describe a sense of unity and consistency, as section 6.3.1 of this chapter demonstrates is true for Women's Zone, the meanings they ascribe are likely to be different, and therefore, so is their approach. Though Women's Zone's philosophy (appendix one) describes a service-user-led approach, data discussed within this theme demonstrates how service-provider approaches, resulting from ascribed meanings, were not always consistent with one another, or with the organisational approach. In some cases, these differing approaches caused clashes between service-providers, but in other cases they were more subtle, and largely went unnoticed.

The discussion of the differences in service-provider meanings within section 6.3.2, adds to understandings of the differences in the lived experience of this context. Through the examples of Debs and Claire, this section demonstrates how two service-users accessing the same service can have very different experiences of similar kinds of interactions. In this way, the findings of this study provide support for the argument that evaluating specialist sex work support is incredibly difficult, as discussed in chapter two. Trying to determine whether support is 'good' or successful becomes almost impossible when the meaning attached to support, and the experience of it, varies with individual service-user.

Overall, this theme has highlighted the many complexities and inconsistencies that exist within the context of Women's Zone, and the importance of understanding individual experience. Section 6.2 has also demonstrated that, in order to understand experience, it is crucial to understanding the meaning-making process.

The following chapter will consider the implications of these findings for specialist sex work support.

Chapter Seven – Discussion, Conclusions and Implications

This chapter will consider the contribution to knowledge made by this thesis, and where the findings of this research sit in relation to existing sex work support literature. It will begin by revisiting the aims which have guided this research, and considering the findings that have emerged as a result of exploring these aims. It will then consider the implications of these findings for the context under study, before reflecting on the process of research and some of the key decisions made.

7.1 Discussion and Conclusions

This section will restate the three aims which have guided this research, and will consider how the findings of this study support, and expand upon, existing research in this area.

7.1.1 Exploring culture and practice

Chapter 2 of this thesis presented Killet et al's (2016) argument for the need to understand the culture of a setting in order to explore its complexity; culture being defined by Killet et al. (2016) as a combination of underlying ideology and everyday practices. As a result, the first two research aims of this study focused on illuminating the culture of Women's Zone, and the everyday practices that both construct and reconstruct that culture. These aims were:

1. To explore the lived culture of a support service for sex workers
2. To explore the practices of service-providers and service-users which together constitute the nature of the service

The findings presented in this thesis have demonstrated how the culture of Women's Zone is one of tension, ambiguity and contradiction, where underlying ideology and everyday practices are sometimes in harmony, and other times in contention. This finding seems to provide support for some of the arguments put forward by Oselin and Weitzer (2013), discussed in chapter 2. Though this chapter highlighted some of the limitations of Oselin and Weitzer's (2013) research, which attempted to categorise specialist sex work support, the findings of this study provide support for their core argument – that the type of service, defined by the paradigm of sex work the service aligns with, and the injustice framework created as a result, have a significant impact on the clarity of programmatic goals and the roles of service-providers and service-users. As discussed in chapter 2, Oselin and Weitzer (2013) argue that, while radical-feminist services and sex-work services are clear about what they see as the injustice of sex work, and the source of this injustice, neutral services do not provide the same clarity. As a result, there is ambiguity around what the aim of support should be within neutral services, how this should be achieved, and therefore what the roles of service-providers and service-users should be. Chapter 3 considered the underlying ideology of Women's Zone, as described in the service documentation, and concluded that it is most closely aligned with Oselin and Weitzer's (2013) category of neutral prostitute-serving organisations (PSOs). The ambiguity around what support should look like in Women's Zone, what the service is aiming to do, how support should be delivered, and what the roles of service-providers and service-users are, seen in the data presented in the previous chapters, therefore supports Oselin and Weitzer's (2013) suggestion that the nature of neutral PSOs leads to ambiguity around service delivery. When it comes to what the aim of support should be, chapter 6 demonstrated the confusion experienced by some service-providers at Women's Zone, one of whom expressed disagreement with what she perceived as a service aim of encouraging service-users to exit sex-work, an aim which actually appears to contradict that which is described in the service documentation. Chapter 6 also made clear the variation in how service-providers perceived their role, and the role of service-users, leading to an inconsistency in practices and approach.

While Oselin and Weitzer (2013) used data from specialist sex work service websites to demonstrate the significance of underlying ideology, and the resulting injustice framework created, for developing clear programmatic goals and providing clarity around service-provider and service-user roles, therefore supporting their argument in theory, this research has used ethnographic data to provide support for this argument in practice. This research has also expanded on Oselin and Weitzer's (2013) work to demonstrate the ambiguity and tension that can exist *between* policy and practice in this context. When it came to the underlying service ideology of being 'user-centred' (Appendix x) through the practice of service-user empowerment, though service-providers demonstrated an awareness of this in their interviews, and a personal agreement with this, chapter 5 has made clear that service-user practices were often *disempowering*, and therefore in contradiction with this ideology and aim. One possible explanation for this is the model of support taken-up by Women's Zone. As discussed in chapter 3, at the time of this research Women's Zone had only one volunteer who had experienced sex work, and no paid members of staff who had, therefore whilst service-providers are keen that service-users 'lead' individual support sessions, this is the only level at which service-users *can* lead. In other words, sex-workers within Women's Zone (with the occasional exception) are only ever the recipients of support. As a result, service-providers at Women's Zone are attempting to achieve sex worker empowerment within a model in which this is not inbuilt, resulting in a discourse of service-user participation (see Appendix x), whilst in practice service-providers remain in control of when and how this is performed.

When it comes to addressing the power-imbalance evident in Women's Zone, discussed at length in chapter 5, the principles of peer-led sex work support, discussed in chapter 2, may provide a solution. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2013), peer-led models in which sex workers are involved in design and delivery at *every* level, lead to power-sharing and power-shifting. As a result, there are many tensions around power within Women's Zone that a peer-led model seems to address. Chapter 5 discussed the issue of rules and discipline within the service, and how service-users often experienced confusion around, and disagreement with, the rules service-providers were enforcing. In

contrast, peer-led models state that sex workers should be involved in the development of any service rules (NSWP, 2015), therefore preventing situations where service-users are being asked to comply with rules they don't understand and/or disagree with. A peer-led model would also help to address tensions around 'giving voice', discussed in chapters 3 and 5. As a result of the lack of sex-worker participation in service design and delivery at Women's Zone, attempts to 'give voice' often reinforce a power-imbalance and the stigmatisation of sex workers. This can be seen in the example of the art therapist 'Ellen', discussed in chapter 5, whose 'butterfly effect' project sought to 'give voice' to service-users whom she assumed to be without. The fact that sex workers within Women's Zone are most often the recipients of support means that sex worker 'voice' is currently granted or denied (as seen in the practice of censorship discussed in chapter 5) by service-providers. Taking up a peer-led model of support in which sex workers exercise meaningful participation would take away this layer of 'permission' around when and how they use their voice, as their voice would be deemed even more significant than the voice of non-sex-working service-providers. Further, a peer-led model of support would offer a clarity that might help to address tensions around service-providers within Women's Zone wanting to 'do something' but also to be service-user-led, which is shown in chapter 5 to result in feelings of powerlessness due to a perceived lack of control. Taking up a peer-led model would clarify for non-sex-working service providers that they are not *supposed* to be in control, or indeed that it is not up to them to 'do something', to create change, or to be responsible for sex worker empowerment. A peer-led model provides the clarity that Oselin and Weitzer (2013) argue neutral PSOs to be lacking, in making clear that those who have actually experienced sex work should be in control of service delivery, and that sex worker empowerment happens as a result of their meaningful participation, and not as a result of non-sex-working service-providers granting it.

Overall, a peer-led model of support would allow Women's Zone to address the contradiction of attempting to be service-user-led, without being led by service-users.

7.1.2 Exploring experience

Chapter 2 of this thesis discussed Kinmond's (1999) argument for the importance of exploring experience and asking 'the people who know'. The third aim guiding this research was therefore:

1. To explore the experience of those participating in the service, how they understand it and the meaning they attribute to it

Chapter 6 highlighted the significance of the individuality of those participating within Women's Zone, and particularly the service-users. It also made clear the impact of this individuality on the experience of support, demonstrating the variation in how different service-users experienced the same service-provider practices. Chapter 2 discussed the move towards a more holistic approach to sex work support, which addresses *all* of the needs of sex workers, and not only those related to sexual health. Chapter 6, however, provides support for an expanded conceptualisation of what a holistic approach involves. Though the data presented in chapter 6 made clear the value of service-users shared experiences as sex workers, and of the belonging and sense of family they experienced at Women's Zone as a result, it also emphasised their individuality and the fact that they were also mothers, women of faith, significant others and much more. This finding provides support for the kind of holistic approach described within a peer-led model of sex work support, which views service-users first as people, then as sex workers. The SWEAT good practice guide to integrated sex worker programming (Rangasami, 2015) argues that it is vital for programmes to support individuals as whole people, and that 'individuals should be acknowledged for their multifaceted entirety, and not simply for one or two aspects of who they are...An important aspect of this is to acknowledge individuals as mothers, daughters, women, men, gay, straight, transgendered, HIV positive, HIV negative, old and young etc. – to acknowledge all identities and aspects of the person' (Rangasami, 2015, p.17). Therefore, while providing sex work support which addresses the many different needs sex workers

may have, is an important part of a holistic approach, recognising the complex and multifaceted identities of sex workers as people, and supporting their individuality, is just as significant.

While the SWEAT guide is focused on sex work projects in South Africa who are involved in the Red Umbrella programme, a partnership programme funded by the global fund to fight Aids, TB and Malaria through NACOSA (a social services organisation in Cape Town) (Rangasami, 2015), the supporting findings of this thesis, which researched a sex work project in the North of England, demonstrate the transferability of their argument - that a holistic approach should focus on identity and individuality, as well as need, and make clear the significance of these concepts in practice.

The findings of chapter 6, which demonstrate the individuality of service-users at Women's Zone and the resulting variation in the experience of support, also make clear that one size does not fit all when it comes to specialist sex work support. Though this chapter has so far argued for the value of a peer-led model of support and an expanded holistic approach, the findings of this thesis highlight the way in which service-user experiences of these models/approaches are still likely to vary. When it comes to implementing such approaches, good practice guidelines for collaborative sex worker interventions (WHO, 2013) are clear that because peer-led models are sex-worker driven at their core, it is impractical to take up a fixed and inflexible approach to implementing them. Instead, these guidelines, and the findings of this research, suggest that any approach to sex work support must be flexible, tailored to the particular group of sex workers accessing it and to the individuals within that group, and constantly open to change in order to meet their changing needs.

7.1.3 Original contribution to knowledge

The thesis is one of the first studies to explore the microprocesses of specialist sex work support, and in doing so to illuminate issues of power, identity and role as they occur in

everyday practice within this context. The findings produced by this exploration provide support for Oselin and Weitzer's (2013) argument that sex work projects aligning with their category of neutral prostitute-serving organisation, experience ambiguity around programmatic goals, the practices necessary to achieve these goals, and the roles of service-providers and service-users. While Oselin and Weitzer's (2013) research provides support for this argument in *theory*, the original contribution of this thesis is in providing support for this argument in *practice*, and in demonstrating how this ambiguity can lead to tensions, contradictions and inconsistencies in service delivery. This research has also expanded on Oselin and Weitzer's (2013) by demonstrating how tensions and contradictions can exist *between* the policy and practice of a sex work service.

The findings of this thesis also provide support for an expanded conceptualisation of a holistic approach, which sees whole person support as not only addressing the multiple needs of sex workers, but also supporting their multifaceted and complex identities, and viewing them first as people, then as sex workers. While the evidence for this approach in the SWEAT good practice guide (Rangasami, 2015) comes solely from South African sex work projects under the red umbrella programme, the original contribution of this thesis is in demonstrating the transferability of their holistic approach to sex work support, and in making clear the importance of the individuality of service-users in practice.

In addition, the findings of this research also provide support for Whowell's (2013) argument that sex work support goes beyond formal/material practices, and demonstrate the significance of the often unseen 'informal' layer of support. However, they also expand on Whowell's (2013) research to provide an original contribution to knowledge in demonstrating how this 'informal' layer of support can lead to experiences of service-provider powerlessness.

7.2 Implications and recommendations

This section will consider the implications of the findings of this study for specialist sex work support, both in terms of written policy, and everyday practice. Following this, recommendations for further research will be made in light of the findings of this study.

7.2.1 Implications for policy and practice

Discussion of the findings of this study has made clear the ambiguity and tension between the written policy and everyday practices of Women's Zone. This research therefore suggests a need for sex work services to spend time going through policy and underlying ideology with service providers, and having an open discussion about concepts like 'empowerment', what they actually mean and what they look like in practice. While the discussion section of this chapter has argued that taking up a peer-led approach would provide clarity around such concepts, the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2013) are clear that there are many sex work projects who are yet to implement such a model, and to move from 'doing for' sex workers, to 'being with' sex workers, and eventually to being 'run by' sex workers. While this remains the case, this research would recommend that such services, and particularly those who most closely align with the category of neutral service (Oselin & Weitzer, 2013) and are therefore more open to ambiguity in practice, should dedicate time to exploring their underlying ideology with those participating, and to clarifying their programmatic goals, how to achieve those goals, and what service-providers' and service-users' roles are in achieving them. For services like Women's Zone, whose models mean sex workers are predominantly the recipients of support, and not often involved in service design and delivery, this research recommends service-providers having open and reflexive conversations about what a service ethos of 'empowerment' actually means, and what it should look like in practice, in order to address some of the ambiguity, tension and inconsistency. However, it is important to acknowledge that both the findings of this study, and the literature on peer-led models of support, suggest that sex-worker empowerment can only really be achieved if the sex-working service-users are actually part of this conversation.

When it comes to reflexive practice, the findings of this research also suggest the significance of this in relation to experiences of service-provider powerlessness. As demonstrated in the previous chapters, what is involved in delivering 'support' at Women's Zone, is more than just the formal practices, a finding which supports the work of Whowell (2011). Like Whowell's (2013) ethnographic research, this study also illuminated the often unseen 'informal' layer of support, however, this research expands on Whowell's (2013) to make clear the way in which this often led to service-provider experiences of powerlessness, due to much of this 'informal' layer of support not being in their control. Chapters 4 and 5 demonstrated how delivering support often meant dealing with the physical effects of service-user's complex needs, and having to manage the limitations of external services. While taking up a peer-led model of support may address some of the causes of service-provider powerlessness, as discussed in the previous section, these issues will remain whether sex workers become meaningfully involved in service-provision or not. As a result, this thesis recommends that service-providers within this context, whether that includes sex workers or not, should receive training and ongoing support, which offers them the chance to reflect on their own emotional responses to the challenges of service provision. This would arguably be of even more importance for services taking up a peer-led model, as the existence of shared experiences might make these challenges even more significant for sex-working service-providers.

7.2.2 Recommendations for further research

This thesis has included a significant amount of discussion around issues of power, such as empowerment and powerlessness, and has demonstrated their importance within the context of Women's Zone. This research was, however, limited to this one setting, and therefore to one kind of service with one model of support. In light of the discussion of Oselin and Weitzer's (2013) categories of support in chapter 2, and of the variation in the perspective on sex work aligned with by different specialist services, further research is recommended which focuses on issues of power across different kinds of sex work services. This research could explore what constitutes empowering practice across different kinds of services, and whether different perspectives on 'what's wrong' with sex work (Oselin &

Weitzer, 2013) lead to different perspectives on how to achieve sex worker empowerment. In addition to exploring service-provision in relation to issues of power, this research could also explore service-user experiences across these different kinds of service, and whether the practices of different services are experienced as empowering or disempowering. The findings of such research could be used to inform different types of sex work service about how their practices are experienced, and to work towards implementing policy and practice that is universally empowering for sex workers.

This chapter has discussed the taking-up of a peer-led model of support as a solution for a number of the tensions and contradictions experienced by those participating in Women's Zone, but it has also made clear that there are many specialist sex work services who are some way off implementing this kind of approach. Further research is therefore recommended which explores the process of sex work services implementing a peer-led approach. This research could explore what the challenges are, and how this transition is experienced by service-providers and service-users. The findings of this research could then be used to create a kind of toolkit for other services who have thought about adopting a peer-led model, but have questions and concerns.

7.3 Reflections

There has already been much discussion in chapter three of the decision to take an ethnographic approach to this research, and the appropriateness of this method for addressing the research aims and exploring the context under study, however, it would be remiss not to briefly reflect upon potential limitations this approach may have produced. While taking an ethnographic approach was suitable for addressing the research aims and for engaging with the complexities of the support context, I am also aware that employing this approach was partly responsible for the decision to research a sole support service. When it comes to the findings of this study, it could be argued that this decision may limit the implications to this one, specific setting. In response to this possible critique, I will first

assert that the primary goal of ethnography is richness of data, and not generalisability (Robertson & Boyle, 1984), and will secondly state that this research has instead sought to offer transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), the notion that 'researchers or practitioners can adapt and apply the conclusions of one study to their own particular situations' (Given, 2008, p.878). Like Agustin (2007), I recognise that one case does not represent universal truths, in this instance about sex work support, however, I would argue that the findings from this study help to illuminate how culture is created and recreated within this setting, and how the practices of those involved can lead to conflicting aspects of lived culture. Further, the findings of this study develop understandings of how the lived experience of support varies with individual. In this way, this thesis adds to understandings of the context of sex work support, and is therefore useful in informing policy and practice.

In addition to reflecting on the influence of an ethnographic approach on the representativeness of this research; it also seems important to reflect upon the impacts of the unique insider-outsider position resulting from participant observation, the most common method of data collection within ethnographic research (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007). While taking up such a position allowed me to access data that may not have been available to me as a complete outsider (Arber, 2006), becoming a participant also presented challenges in terms of analysing the data collected within Women's Zone. Hoskins and Stoltz (2005) highlight the tension that exists for many qualitative researchers engaging in analysis, between a desire to privilege the voice of the participant, and a need to exercise their own expertise in analysing and interpreting the participants' data. They argue that such researchers feel discomfort over the likelihood that the meaning they attribute to the data will differ from the meaning of the participant, therefore resulting in the potential of offense. In the case of this research, taking up an active position in Women's Zone, as a volunteer as well as a researcher, seemed to lead to an even stronger sense of duty to the women (and two men) I had got to know, and who had shared their stories with me. As a volunteer, I too saw value in the work done by Women's Zone, and felt real conflict when it came to writing up my analysis, and particularly the theme of 'power and powerlessness', which arguably reads as most critical of service-provider practices. While the gatekeeper

who had granted me access to Women's Zone spoke all along about being open to a critical perspective, and wanting to be aware of areas for improvement, I still felt a sense of guilt in presenting this kind of analysis after they had granted me access to their space and had valued me as part of their team. Throughout the write-up process I felt acutely aware that, without Women's Zone, I would have no data. This thesis would not be possible without them. According to Hoskins and Stoltz (2005) this conflict comes from deeply engrained ideas about empowering the marginalised, which stem from feminist research principles. I have carried an awareness of such principles with me throughout this thesis journey, and therefore recognise that this is the root of my own dilemma. All of this is to say that my hope in presenting the findings of this study to the service, which will be done through a written summary focusing predominantly on the conclusions and implications discussed within this chapter, and an informal meeting with the service to discuss the summary, is that they would not disempower those at Women's Zone or lead to offense, but instead that the findings from this thesis would provide additional information to further empower them to continue building upon the necessary and significant work they are already doing.

As well as my dual roles as volunteer-researcher leading to dilemmas around analysis and presentation of findings, they also seem to have impacted upon my focus as an observer. In contrast to the suggestion in section 3.4.3 of chapter three, that I was likely to focus more heavily on the service-users at Women's Zone in my observations, due to their perceived difference (Barron, 2013), the analysis and discussion presented in this thesis actually seems to pay more attention to the practices and experience of service-providers, particularly within the theme of power and powerlessness presented in chapter five. It may be the case that this focus on service-providers resulted from the dual roles I inhabited within Women's Zone. While chapter three discussed the significance of dual roles for becoming an insider-outsider, and gaining insider knowledge and experience, my insider role within Women's Zone was limited to that of a service-provider, and it is therefore arguable that I remained somewhat of an outsider to the group of service-users accessing the drop-in. Palmer (2010) discusses how carrying out the role of participant-observer allows the researcher to write from a place of involvement, therefore, the limitation of my involvement in the service to

the role of service-provider may explain why the analysis presented in this thesis seems to focus more attention on service-providers than service-users. This reflection suggests a need for further research within this context, which is carried out by those whose dual roles would include the position of service-user, rather than service-provider.

Chapter 2 of this thesis considered issues around the concept of 'giving voice', including discussion of the power-imbalance inherent within most research methods. When it came to attempting to address this power-imbalance in my own research, chapter 3 discussed my decision to use participant observation in order to provide participants with the chance to ask of me the same kinds of questions I would be asking of them, and to lead to the production of more 'collaborative knowledge'. When I reflect upon this issue, I am led to consider how successful I was in addressing this power-imbalance and in producing 'collaborative knowledge'. While participating in Women's Zone as a volunteer *did* provide participants with the opportunity to get to know me, to question me about the research and about myself in general (though the latter happened far more often than the former), I do feel there were limits to how collaborative the knowledge presented in this thesis was in the end. Though the data presented in chapters 4, 5 and 6 includes the voice of the participants in terms of their responses in interviews and conversations had within the drop-in, participants were not given the opportunity to comment on transcripts, field notes, or any of the analysis carried out. As a result, it would seem fair to say that my own interpretations had a far heavier weighting than those of the participants. In regards to how collaborative participants felt the knowledge to be, I would argue that a seeming lack of co-ownership suggests further limitations to collaboration. It seems fair to say that when you collaborate on a piece of work, you feel some kind of joint ownership of that work, to whatever extent that might be. Though I gave my email address out to each participant who took part, and said they could contact me at any time to ask questions or make suggestions, none did. And though I told each a summary of the thesis would be made available to them if they requested it, I am yet to receive any such requests. Overall I would argue that this lack of response and interest suggests participants didn't feel ownership over their part in the

research, a reflection which highlights the value of participatory action methods in which participants are more meaningfully involved in the entirety of the research process.

7.3.1 Concluding thoughts

The title of this thesis begins with a quote recording during my volunteer training, in which the speaker was describing his experience of providing support within Women's Zone:

'It's like catching lightning in a bottle'

While there were many wonderful quotes from interviews and field notes, I chose this one due to the way in which it captured the complexities of the setting; the challenges, and the energy. Though my reflections make clear that this research is not perfect, nor can any piece of research rightly claim to be, I believe it has captured the same sentiment felt in this quote, which is the same sentiment I experienced during my time within Women's Zone – an incredible mixture of fulfilment and frustration; tedium and wonder, and powerlessness and respect.

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APPENDICES

Appendices

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Appendix one – History & Philosophy and Mission statement from Women's Zone's Volunteer Handbook

HISTORY & PHILOSOPHY

During 1989 a number of workers from the HIV and drug fields in [REDACTED] expressed concern over articles appearing in the national press claiming that sex workers were a 'reservoir of infection' and responsible for spreading HIV into the wider community. Skeptical of these newspaper reports and troubled by the lack of work or research being undertaken with sex workers, these workers decided to investigate the situation in [REDACTED] in more detail.

Informal research with sex workers in [REDACTED] suggested that this group were reluctant to access mainstream health care agencies. The reasons for this reluctance were numerous but included fear of stigmatisation and a lack of understanding of what was offered by different services. In addition, many sex workers were discouraged from using statutory services due to the location of such services and their inaccessible opening times.

Volunteers from the HIV and drug fields expressed an interest in developing a service that would meet the health needs of working women. After a period of consultation with potential service users and other agencies, [REDACTED] night time service came into existence on 28th February 1991.

The service provided condoms for safer sex and clean injecting equipment for safer drug use, together with advice and information around HIV prevention and sexual health. The service also operated as a referral point for women to access health care services and developed links with these services so that working women received improved support.

Mindful of working women's reluctance to access services that they deemed were inaccessible, ██████ operated at a time and in a location to suit the service user, in the heart of the beat and late at night. Although the ██████ service has grown considerably, these services are still at the core of ██████ work.

██████ recognises the diverse experiences of people who work in the sex industry and that they, like everyone in society, have needs and sometimes issues, which have to be addressed.

██████ accepts the individual's rights to self determine with regard to working as a sex worker and makes no moral judgment on those involved in sex work.

██████ believes it is neither advantageous nor realistic to legislate against sex workers themselves or the actual demand for commercial sex.

██████ does not view the economic necessity of working as coercion. The strong economic motivation for people entering prostitution is the same for everyone entering the workforce. However ██████ has a statutory obligation to report any activities that occur against a sex worker's own will or any form of coercion such as child sexual exploitation.

It is neither the intention nor one of the objectives of ██████ to initiate any attempts to persuade sex workers to leave the sex industry or to undermine their self worth. ██████ however will give advice and support to sex workers who wish to leave the sex industry, regarding drug use, educational and employment opportunities, financial problems and social support.

██████ is committed to harm minimisation in relation to the sex industry and drug use. ██████ operates on a holistic model using the knowledge and experience of sex

workers, drug users and professionals with the intention of promoting health and raising the awareness of those involved and those entering the sex industry.

Involving Volunteers

In order to provide the various structured centre session and outreach services, ████████ relies heavily on the resource of volunteers and we try to maintain a volunteer base of 60 volunteers. Volunteers are recruited from a range of backgrounds, including workers from the drug and sexual health field, nurses, midwives, students, former sex workers and drug users and those interested in progressing the work of ████████.

A quarterly rota is organised to ensure a balance of experience and skills for each of its sessions.

Volunteers are very important at ████████ and we aim to provide all the training they need to develop in their role and perform their job effectively. All volunteers are provided with an induction programme that includes background information about ████████, safety issues, practical information around sexual health and drug use and confidentiality.

Further training courses are offered that include sexual health training, mental health, wellbeing and personal development. Volunteers are encouraged to participate in training activities and workshops to develop their skills and enhance their experience of working at ████████.

████████ MISSION STATEMENT

“████████ works with female sex workers to promote sexual health, wellbeing and personal safety whilst offering choice, support and empowerment to promote

individual and positive life changes”

Our vision:

Sex workers in [REDACTED] will be: Safer; Healthier; Happier, and more in control of their lives because they will be able to access services and support that meets their needs.

Our Aims:

- To keep female sex workers safe and healthy by providing sexual health services, needle exchange, advice on dodgy punters and therapeutic services
- To empower female sex workers to make choices about their lives by addressing barriers including addiction to drugs and alcohol, homelessness, lack of education and basic skills and self esteem
- To influence others to improve support and services to sex workers through working in partnership and developing evidence of effective practise

Our values:

- User Centred: We exist to meet the needs of our service users. We respect and accept everyone and do not judge. We respect women’s choices and work to reduce the harm some of those choices may cause.
- Empowering: We support our services users to recognise and develop their strengths and make their own decisions. We listen to our users and involve them in shaping our services.
- Challenging: We challenge our users to be the best they can. We challenge ourselves to provide the best services possible. We challenge other agencies to improve services for sex workers.
- Partnership: We work as partners with our service users; we work with other agencies to ensure coordinated provision which meets our clients’ needs. We share our experiences and knowledge with others and learn from their expertise.

- Effective: We will identify best practise, demonstrate our impact and learn from others.
- Committed: We are passionate about the work we do and the difference we make.

Appendix two – field note examples

2.1 – Narrative-style field notes from Agustin (2007)

It's a pleasant, late summer night. Most of the medical work is over, and some of us are sitting on the edges of big planters on the sidewalk near where the mobile unit is parked. A kind of microcosm of street life has formed around the line-up of West African women and Latin American transsexuals waiting to reach the van's window. Ice cream and cigarette vendors bicker with a drunk, and sex workers accost passing men with varying degrees of insistence, but in general there is tolerance among those occupying the street. Inside the mobile unit a volunteer does an in-depth interview with a sex worker.

A busful of Japanese tourists pulls up at the traffic light next to where I am sitting, and a man inside points his camera through the window at a black woman resting on the kerb. Without hesitation, the woman reaches down, picks up a large chunk of broken pavement and hurls it at him, hitting the window. She throws another, and another, at which point the bus driver opens the door and steps out, yelling at her. But he does not shut the door behind him, and a small figure zooms out of the bus like a tornado. It is the photographer, who throws himself screaming at the woman, pelting her with blows although she is twice his size and weight. Other black women hurry from all directions to reach the scene, and in a matter of seconds a free-for-all is under way. Among those who intercede is the young but senior Anti- AIDS employee on the unit, with seven years' experience in the job. Finally she manages to separate the parties, who are wielding weapons, pulling hair, punching and screaming. I stand watching.

By the time the police arrive, the bus has pulled away and the brick-throwing woman has been persuaded to get out of sight. Business carries on as usual: after all, this kind of fracas is not uncommon on the street (while it feels apocalyptic to the tourists inside a bus). The outreach workers agree that 'African' women react rapidly and aggressively compared with other people, opinions diverging as to whether this is a cultural trait or the product of abuse.' - Agustin (2007)

2.2 Alternative-style field notes from Palmer (2010)

ON (Observational Notes): Teams from Mexico, Argentina, Venezuela, Turkey and Korea are competing in this round, 2.00–4.00pm.

I have a good vantage point being close to the competition podium but fairly central in the stadium. I have a good overview to see all the teams as they rotate from one piece of apparatus to the next.

The team from Mexico seem to stand out visually for some reason. Their gymnastics is not very high in difficulty terms but as a team they seem well coordinated, well matched compared to the others.

All the Mexican gymnasts did Vende swings on Floor, all did Magyar hop on Pommels and all did a drop-chute action before their dismount sequence on Parallel Bars.

The Mexican gymnasts have different individual routines but include repetition of certain elements, which are common to all. The other teams competing this afternoon did not do this so apparently.

I have watched gymnasts from over sixty countries, four gymnasts in each team in the last two days – this team had a very strong aesthetic team image.

TN (Theoretical Notes): The Mexican team seems to have a corporate image to their performance, which is impressive compared to the other teams on display.

Initial impressions; looks very tidy, coordinated, together, traces of similarity but all different.

There seems to be an expectation set up in me (spectating) that each gymnast in the Mexican team would perform a visually similar action. Something that identifies them with that team.

Strong aesthetic impact as a team but their difficulty (of elements) is relatively low in world gymnastic terms.

This collective image seems to identify them as a team rather than a group of individuals.

There may be some kind of aesthetic synergy in that the visual affect is greater than the sum of its parts.

The repeating of aesthetic material seems to create/leave a national signature that identifies them as a team.

The expectation of team image set up by watching this Mexican team seems to influence what I am looking for in other teams.

MN (Methodological Notes): I can make these observations from this secluded position in the stand and they seem quite apparent from this vantage point.

I am quite detached, a fly on the wall so to speak.

I wonder if judges down on the podium see this 'corporate image' as clearly as I do? And how do they respond to it?

Is there is an expectation set up by judges for a team aesthetic? I must think of a way to find out if a judge recognizes aesthetic team image. I am unable to question right now as the competition is going on and I can't get access to them from up here in the stands. Nor is this the time or place to interrupt others' duties and viewing of the competition. Any questions will necessarily be reflective.

I may have to reveal my research role in asking such questions or may get ignored; suspicion of being sponsored or just an idealistic gymnastic crank! I will have to think of a social setting and situation for such a conversation to take place; it should be relaxed, unthreatening allowing the practitioner to talk freely, uninterrupted allowing them to reflect, formulate and verbalise their opinion; I'd like to know their opinion on this aesthetic point of team image and aesthetic expectation.

Appendix three – Service-Provider information sheet for observations

Information sheet for staff/volunteer participants

The role of support services in sex work; an ethnographic study

Purpose of the research: To better understand the role of a support service for sex workers.



My name is Bethan Taylor and I'm a second year PhD student with the University of Huddersfield. I have been given the opportunity to volunteer with you at [REDACTED] and also the chance to carry out my research project within your organisation. I appreciate being welcomed as part of the volunteer team and want to make clear that you welcoming me as a volunteer does not mean you have to participate in this study.

What I will ask you to do: Because my aim is to better understand how a support service works, what it does, it's challenges etc. I am not asking you to do anything additional to your normal work at [REDACTED]. My request is that you would allow me to include you in my observations. What this means is that, for example, if I am volunteering for a drop-in session, whilst I am carrying out my responsibilities as a volunteer, I will be paying attention to everything else that is going on. What it doesn't mean is me hovering over your shoulder and making notes on everything you do. My aim is to observe the service in as natural a

way as possible, and then to write up my observations in private later on, so hopefully you won't even feel aware of being observed.

Agreeing to be included in my observations does not mean that you forfeit the right to ask for privacy at any time; should you wish for something to be not included (or off the record), then you simply need to say so.

It may be the case that at some point during my research I ask whether you would be happy to take part in an interview. This will be separate to the observations and therefore you are free to say 'yes' to being observed and 'no' to taking part in an interview (or vice versa).

Your rights as a participant: As I have already mentioned, you have the right at any point to ask for something to be off the record. You also have the right to ask that any observations including yourself be removed and not used in the report of my research project. There are no penalties for choosing to withdraw in this way, and you can do so at any time during the observation period. As the end date of my research is flexible, I will make you aware of the last date you can withdraw from observations nearer the time.

Your right to anonymity will be observed at all times and therefore there will be no information included in my research report which may give away your identity, or the identity of [REDACTED]

Benefits and Risks: I believe that this research will be of benefit to [REDACTED] and other support services for sex workers. At the moment there is little research on such services and therefore they get little recognition from governing bodies who have a large impact on the distribution of funding, and could make an important difference to perceptions of the sex industry and the support industry for it. I also hope that it will be of benefit to those who

work in the sex industry, in that, the more we understand sex work, the less it will be stigmatised.

My findings will be presented in a thesis and other research reports, and a summary of these findings will be made available to [REDACTED], should you wish to read them.

Questions: Please feel free to ask me questions now, or at any point in my research. You may ask me face-to-face, or I am happy to have questions emailed to me on u1152873@hud.ac.uk. You may also contact my main supervisor on d.leeming@hud.ac.uk.

Appendix four – Service-Provider consent form for observations

Participant Consent Form

Title of Assignment/Research Study: An exploration of the role of support services for sex workers; an ethnographic study

Name of Student/Researcher: Bethan Taylor

Participant Identifier Number:

I confirm that I have read and understood the participant Information sheet related to this research, and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.

I understand that all observations including myself will be anonymised.

I give permission for members of the module/research team to have access to my anonymised observation data

I give permission for things that I say to be quoted, anonymously, in this thesis

I understand that I can ask at any point for something to be omitted from observations and that this will be done each time

I understand that I can ask at any point before date x, for all observational data including myself to be removed

I agree to take part in the above study

(Please feel free to use your initials, rather than a full name, if you feel more comfortable)

Name of Participant:

Signature of Participant:

Date:

Name of Student/Researcher:

Signature of Student/Researcher:

Date:

Appendix five – Service-User oral consent card

Oral Consent Card

Make sure that:

Ppts understand that this is an observation:

- No different to normal
- Making observation notes

Ppts understand their rights:

- Can withdraw themselves/observations including them, at any time
- Can ask for anything to go 'off-record'
- Can ask any questions at any time
- Anonymity

Ppts understand what will happen with the data:

- Observation notes made
- These notes analysed
- Analysis printed in mv thesis

Appendix six – Oral Consent Card Template



UVa IRB-SBS Oral Consent Card *Sample Text*

PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT:

People understand they are taking part in a research project. They understand what you are asking of them, and they freely consent to participate. You have their permission to use the information you gather about them in the ways you intend.

People understand what kinds of information you are collecting and what materials you will be carrying away from your interactions with them.

People know when you are collecting personal identifying information about them and that you will respect their wishes to have their identity acknowledged or kept confidential.

People understand the risks they incur in participating in your research and what you are doing to minimize them.

People know whether their involvement in your research brings them any **benefits**.

People know they can opt out of your study at any time, and that they can request that any materials implicating them be destroyed. They know they are free to remain silent any topic.

People know that there is someone they can ask if they have any questions or concerns about your research. You should provide them with your contact information, your local advisor's contact information (where applicable), and the IRB-SBS contact information (where applicable).

IRB-SBS Contact Info:

Tonya R. Moon, Ph.D., Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Social and Behavioral Sciences
One Morton Dr Suite 500
University of Virginia, P.O. Box 800392
Charlottesville, VA 22908-0392
Telephone: (434) 924-5999
Email: irbsbshelp@virginia.edu
Website: www.virginia.edu/vpr/irb

For more information about this card, our ethnography protocol form, and/or additional documentation for reviewing ethnographic research in an IRB setting, contact **Lise Dobrin**, Assistant Professor of Anthropology and IRB-SBS Board Member (dobrin@virginia.edu) or **Katie Rees**, IRB-SBS

Appendix seven – Information sheet for Interviews

Information sheet for interview participants

I would like to invite you to take part in an interview for my research project. Before you decide whether or not to be involved, the following information should help you to understand why this research is being done, and what it would involve for you.

Purpose of the research: To better understand what a support services for sex workers does, and to explore the experience of participating in such a service



My name is Bethan Taylor and I'm a second year PhD student with the University of Huddersfield. I have been given the opportunity to volunteer with you at [REDACTED] and also the chance to carry out my research project within your organisation. I appreciate being welcomed as part of the volunteer team and want to make clear that you welcoming me as a volunteer does not mean you have to participate in this study.

What I will ask you to do: This part of my research involves carrying out interviews with a number of service-providers and service-users. Should you agree to take part, you will be

asked to take part in an interview lasting between 30 minutes and an hour. This interview will be carried out by myself and will ask about your experience of participating in this support service; therefore I will not be asking you to reveal any personal information, unless you wish to do so. These interviews will be taped and then transcribed (this means me writing up what is said in the recording). If you choose not to take part in the study, that's fine and this will have no effect on your experience as a service-provider or service-user.

Your rights as a participant:

The right to withdraw

- You can change your mind at any point about taking part
- You can stop the interview if you want
- You may ask me anytime before September 2016 not to use your interview in the research

Confidentiality/anonymity

- All data will be anonymous, no real names will be used or information that might give away who you are, or the identity of [REDACTED]
- Everything you say will be kept confidential and will not be discussed after the interview
- Confidentiality will only be broken in the case of information that has the potential to cause significant harm to yourself or others. This will then be shared with your caseworker (if you are a service-user), or with a senior member of staff (if you are a service-provider)

The right to request breaks

- You can request a break at any point and there is no limit to how many

Benefits and Risks:

- I believe this research will benefit services like [REDACTED] by building an understanding of what they do
- I believe it will be of benefit to sex workers by changing perceptions and working to reduce stigmatisation

What will I do with your data?

- Anonymously write-up the interview recording
- Use anonymous quotes in my thesis and possibly other research reports

Questions: Please feel free to ask me questions now, or at any point in my research. You may ask me face-to-face, or I am happy to have questions emailed to me on u1152873@hud.ac.uk. You may also contact my main supervisor on d.leeming@hud.ac.uk or via telephone on 01484 473545

Appendix eight – Consent form for interviews

Participant Consent Form

Title of Research Study: An ethnographic exploration of support services for sex workers

Name of Student/Researcher: Bethan Taylor

Participant Identifier Number:

I confirm that I have read and understood the participant Information sheet related to this research, and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. This includes withdrawing drawing the interviews and any time prior to the submission of my research.

I understand that all interview data will be anonymised.

I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised interview data

I give permission for things that I say to be quoted, anonymously, in this research report

I understand that I can ask at any point for something to be omitted from the record of my interview, and that this will be done each time

I understand that I can ask at any point before October 2016, for all of my interview data to be removed

I understand that my interview data is confidential unless it has the potential to cause significant harm to myself or another

I understand that my data may be used anonymously in research reports and published journals

I agree to take part in the above study

(Please feel free to use your initials, rather than a full name, if you feel more comfortable. If you would feel more comfortable not signing at all, then you can signal your consent with an 'X')

Name of Participant:

Signature of Participant:

Date:

Name of Researcher:

Signature of Researcher:

Date:

Appendix nine – Example of coding in Nvivo

Monday 24th – Fieldnotes

We opened up slightly late today, Samantha was in a meeting that ran long and so there was no briefing. I was in the kitchen when Becky bounded in and I realised that one of the other volunteers must have unlocked the door. Becky ran straight over to Emma and gave her a big hug; she said hi to the rest of us and sat down to wait for the coffee I was making for her. She, Emma and myself quickly engaged in conversation, though it was mainly the two of them. At one point Emma asked about the scars on the backs of Becky's hands and Becky told her that a girl had burnt them with a lighter when she was 11 and the doctors had had to cut the burns out.

Debs then arrived, but after using the phone, went straight over to the computers, where she remained for the duration of the session.

It seemed that it was going to be a long, quiet session. Then a sex worker I hadn't met before arrived. She was young and well presented with immaculate teeth; something that was quite a rarity among the street workers. I will call her Mindy. Mindy joined in our conversation but the two of us quickly got talking and barely noticed when Becky left to go over to the computers, calling Emma to join her. We talked about various things and I found her similar to myself and very easy to talk to. She told me that she had moved to Manchester about 6-8 months ago when fleeing DA, initially she moved in with a man, but that quickly went sour. On the day she left him she brought he bags to the support service and they were able to set her up with emergency accommodation for victims of DA. Since then she'd been in a DA hostel. She told me she had two months left there and then they would put her in a house, at that point she said, she would be able to have her kids back with her. She had a 14-year-old boy and a 5-year-old girl. The boy was staying with his Dad and would just move in with her when she was sorted, but the girl was with her gran who had tricked her into signing a residency agreement. She talked about how she was using heroin, and then crack to come down from the heroin. She mentioned needing to get on methadone and I suggested she talk to the drugs worker about getting on a scrip. She was fairly

