Long-Term Clients Who Access Commercial Sexual Services in Australia

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Abstract

Until the last 20 years research into the people who buy sexual services has represented less than one per cent of all sex industry research (Perkins, 1999). In recent years, publications from diverse disciplines, including health sciences, medicine, psychology, theology and sociology have added knowledge about people who buy sex, in part because of the criminalisation in some countries of buying sex. Much of this available literature has established that ‘normal’ men buy sex, and provides information about the prevalence of buying sex, motivations to buy sex, and the risks of buying sex. Some recent qualitative research reveals that buying sex can be a deeply emotional experience with accompanying positive benefits to health and well-being (Earle & Sharp, 2007; Sanders, 2008a). However, much of the research that has been conducted about people who buy sex has not directly accessed the clients themselves or has not used methods that offer a holistic understanding of their experiences.

This empirical study, conducted in Australia during 2010, exposes gaps in current knowledge about men who buy sex, their feelings about buying sex in the context of their other relationships, their feelings about sex workers and money and, the effects of stigma. It is an exploratory qualitative study that represents clients of sex workers in their own words and identifies experiences and issues that are of importance to them. Through interpretive phenomenological analysis, the research project aims to answer the question of how being a client of the sex industry affects how men feel about themselves and their sexuality.

An on-line approach to recruitment and data collection ensured safety and encouraged honesty by keeping participants anonymous and was successful in recruiting 137 possible research participants. These self-selecting, volunteer participants were invited to answer a short questionnaire and write a narrative about their experiences, which was guided by asking about key areas of research interest such as: motivations, perceived risks and benefits, and stigma and discrimination. Fifty-three narratives were examined for their suitability and for their depth in addressing the research questions; 27 of these were selected for further analysis based on the comprehensiveness of the narrative and their eligibility for the study. Men who had purchased sex about monthly for at least one year or more were eligible to participate in the study. Data achieved theoretical saturation at which point no new concepts emerged through further analysis.
The final sample consisted of 27 men with an average age of 44 who had been buying sex for an average of 18 years. Participants differed in their sexual orientations and the genders of sex workers from whom they bought sex; some men also bought sex from genders other than their identified sexual orientation would suggest. All participants discussed aspects of their relationship status as a justification for buying sex; those who were partnered described why their primary relationships did not satisfy their sexual needs, and those who were single defended their right to buy sex as conferred by their single status. Motivations to buy sex were multifactorial for each participant, which occasionally conflicted within a single account, and mainly related to seeking sexual variety, seeking emotional intimacy, and convenience. Participants considered that the financial part of the commercial sex transaction was more important than the sex, and that emotional benefits of buying sex outweighed both physical benefits and the burdens of guilt, fear of STIs, discrimination and stigma. They demonstrate that their decisions to buy sex are complex and that men are silenced by internal and external stigma, and by not feeling empowered to disclose their status as a client of the sex industry. Participants wrote about their feelings about sex workers, describing feelings of integrity, gratitude and respect towards them. They spoke politically about the sex industry as a whole and also about other clients of sex workers. They rejected stereotypes for themselves while projecting deviant client beliefs onto imaginary others.

In addition to identified areas for further research, the findings about sex industry clients’ diversity in buying sex, their fear of STIs, and assertions of condom use, will enable health care providers to offer appropriate sexual health care and education. The stress that participants placed on finances, primary relationships and rejection of stereotypes will assist counsellors and practitioners to better understand men who buy sex and, more generally, sexuality and the human condition. The findings will contribute to dissolution of deviant stereotypes and will allow policy and law makers to consider consumer representatives in debates about the sex industry.
Declaration

I certify that the work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original, except as acknowledged in the text, and that the material has not been submitted previously, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university.

I acknowledge that I have read and understood the University's rules, requirements, procedures and policy relating to my higher degree research award and to my thesis. I certify that I have complied with the rules, requirements, procedures and policy of the University of Sydney.

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09 November 2011
Supervisor’s Certificate

This is to certify that the thesis entitled ‘Long-Term Clients who Access Commercial Sexual Services in Australia’, prepared by Hilary Caldwell has been approved by the examination committee for the dissertation requirement of the degree of Masters of Health Science.

Dr Syeda Zakia Hossain
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The prevalence of men buying sex in Western countries is difficult to establish due to stigma, secret-keeping and, in some jurisdictions, the illegal nature of commercial sex. The most reliable figures from the last decade would suggest that 18 per cent of men have bought sexual services in the United States of America and 16 per cent in Australia (Rissel, Richters, Grulich, de Visser, & Smith, 2007; Weitzer, 2000). It is estimated that over 6,000 businesses offer sexual services in Australia with more than 25 different types of services, and that the Australian sex industry was worth over $1.1 billion in 2009/10 (Harcourt & Donovan, 2005; IBISWorld\textsuperscript{1}, 2010). The financial value of the sex industry, coupled with the frequency of patronage, suggest these activities are fairly commonplace. Despite this, the reluctance of most consumers of sexual services to disclose their pursuits allows for the flourishing of skewed stereotypes and conjectures about men who buy sex. This thesis therefore attempts to counter such misrepresentations by examining the practice of buying sex in Australia from the perspective of the client.

Background

In the last few decades, men who buy sex, and who thereby create a market for commercial sex, have been considered deviant, and several jurisdictions such as Sweden and the United States of America, have enacted laws to criminalise this practice. Various models of regulation and containment of the sex industry as ratified by different countries and regions demonstrate the various efforts to address what is now considered by authorities to be a complex moral dilemma. Some countries, including New Zealand, Germany and Australia, have largely authorised a harm minimisation approach that legalises or decriminalises the sex

\textsuperscript{1} IBIS World is an Australian company that provides industry-based research for marketing purposes. The sex industry report 2010 is unreferenced and personal contact with the company failed to yield the source of their data. Therefore, estimates from the report are used with caution and in conjunction with peer-reviewed literature when available.
trade in most settings, as opposed to countries such as the USA and Sweden which have increasingly criminalised clients of the sex industry. Yet, in contrast to a plethora of research about women who sell sex (Crofts & Summerfield, 2008; David, 2008; Dolemeyer, Pates, & Schmidt, 2010; Farley, 2005), there is scant empirical, peer reviewed research that focuses on the clients of the sex industry.

Previous research has focused mainly on women who sell sex or has concentrated on one aspect of buying sex such as prevalence, client characteristics and motivations, or risks of buying sex. Few studies have asked people who buy sex about what is important to them. Little is known about the differences among clients who are casual, regular or long term consumers, or those who seek or use support systems such as online client forums. This research is an attempt to fill this gap in our limited knowledge of clients of the sex industry.

**Aims of the study**

The main aim of the study is to present the long term client’s perception of and motivations for buying sex. The study further investigates the risks and benefits of purchasing sex, the effects on participants families and friends, and how men feel about sex workers.

**Methods**

On account of the limited information about clients’ perspectives, a qualitative design was chosen to allow clients to identify what they considered to be the important issues within a guided framework. Online advertising for recruitment prefaced participants answering a semi-structured questionnaire and writing a narrative within a guided framework, using an online survey site that offered participants anonymity. Data was analysed using an
interpretive phenomenological approach which revealed several key themes about men who pay for sex.

Study rationale

This research is necessary due to changing moral discourses about men who buy sex presenting them as deviant, perpetrators of violence against women, on the one hand, or as lonely and desperate men, on the other. Due to stigma and discrimination, sex industry clients are reluctant to present themselves to challenge current stereotypes, which are fuelled by moral philosophies without evidence, and certainly not supported by peer reviewed published research to verify their beliefs. The image of selfish men paying for the use of female bodies continues to be used politically to affect sex industry laws and regulations.

Significance of the study

By presenting sex industry clients’ own ideas on what is important to them about buying sex, this study breaks through the dilemma of needing to know which questions to ask. The results will confirm or add to some previous research findings, and expose several unexplored areas surrounding the lived experiences of men who buy sex. Creating further understanding about men who access commercial sex, will assist health and community workers who work with this population to offer more directed healthcare, allow policy and law makers to be better informed when making decisions, and to enable researchers and academics to be aware of pertinent avenues for further research.

Scope of the study

Chapter 2 presents an overview of historical changes in the perceptions of commercial sex and explores discourses about gender differences, and how these have affected social
perceptions of male clients of the sex industry. Several current regulatory practices are then described, and the legal situations in each Australian State, is examined.

In an effort to understand men who buy sex, Chapter 3 examines the available literature regarding the prevalence of buying sex, client demographics and other characteristics, motivations to buy sex, and the perceived risks or benefits of buying sex. Researching a stigmatized topic can offer its own challenges, so an exploration of different research methodologies is also presented with a view to assessing the gaps in current knowledge and to determine the most effective methods for the current research.

The research methods are outlined in detail in Chapter 4, including participant recruitment, data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 also includes a careful consideration of the methodological choices that were made. The rationale for collecting data online is also presented.

The sample of participants and the results of data analysis are reported in Chapter 5. The results are illustrated with quotations from the participants to demonstrate the findings and address participants’ motivations for buying sex and their perceptions of the positives and negatives of buying sex. Information is also presented about how clients feel about sex workers and the commercial sexual contract, their social and political ideals, and how they feel about other sex industry clients.

The final sixth chapter presents the main conclusions, discusses the study methodology and limitations, and compares and contrasts the findings against research previously conducted. The significance and implications of the results are also addressed.
Chapter 2: Sex Industry Regulatory Controls and Australian Settings

This chapter provides an overview of state regulations and control of commercial sex which gives a snapshot of current practices among several Western countries of the world. The chapter also examines the Australian regulatory controls, state by state. Descriptions of the type of sexual services available are given to provide an understanding of the settings in which sex is bought and sold in Australia.

Consumer economies in the last twenty years have created a culture of increasing commercialisation of intimacy, pleasure and sexuality in the capitalist leisure society (Monto, 2000), effectively mainstreaming the sex industry. For example, the financial, legal and ethical significance of sex industry businesses advertising in the yellow pages, on commercial television and radio, and in local newspapers indicates a level of community acceptance. IBISWorld, a private company providing industry-based research, reported that the Australian sex industry revenue for 2009-2010 was estimated to be AUD$1 billion, employing 21,634 people in 13,695 establishments (IBISWorld, 2010). This was comprised of 60% brothel prostitution, 17% dancers and strippers, 15% street prostitution, and 8% escort services. IBIS World figures are estimated and unsubstantiated although appear to correlate with peer reviewed empirical research conducted on more narrow parameters such as by Harcourt and Donovan (2005) and Rissel et al. (2007).

Since the 1990s a mixture of criminalisation, decriminalisation and legalised models have been adopted by various countries and by each of Australia’s States and Territories. These are examined in the next section of this chapter.
Sex industry regulatory policies

ProCon.org is an independent, nonpartisan public charity which examines controversial social issues and publishes their results on a website (http://www.procon.org/). In an examination of the laws of 100 countries regarding the sex industry, it was found that 50% of countries apply a legalised approach, 40% criminalise all sex industry-related activities, and 10% of the countries examined have limited legal positions for sex industry-related activities (ProCon.org 2009). Recently, many nations have created sanctions and penalties for sex industry-related activities, which can be analysed within moral frameworks and feminist theories, while others have moved away from criminalisation using a harm minimisation approach (Weitzer, 2009). Despite differences in regulations, men continue to procure sex at similar rates and for similar reasons throughout the world (Weitzer, 2000). Sanders (2008b) reports that many of the men she interviewed in the UK were not even sure what aspects of prostitution or operating a brothel were illegal. A summary of the three major models of containment of the sex industry, with examples from selected countries, follows.

Unregulated models - Illegal

The criminalisation of buying and selling sex is promoted by social activists who believe that legalizing prostitution leads to increases in STIs and global human trafficking, and that buying sex is immoral and exploitative (Farley, 2005; Malarek, 2009). Countries that employ an abolition approach to all sex industry activities make buying and selling sex illegal. The criminalisation of buying and selling sex has been shown in a wide range of literature to cause harm to both workers and the community through increased risks of stigma and arrest (Crofts & Summerfield, 2008) and does not have the desired effect of reducing demand, trafficking or violence. Coy, Horvath, and Kelly (2007) asked an open ended question of 175 sex worker clients about the influence of criminalisation; only a minority asserted that
criminal sanctions were a deterrent. In Scotland, Macleod, Farley, Anderson, and Golding (2008) asked 110 men to give multiple choice answers to the question of what repercussions would be a deterrent to buying sex, giving them no avenue to express themselves beyond the four choices: 89% feared being added to a sex offender register, 79% feared a custodial penalty, 72% would be deterred by greater criminal penalties, and 69% by high fines. The USA is an example of a developed country that uses a criminalisation model for regulating the sex industry in all States except in some counties in Nevada. American rates of men ever accessing the sex industry are estimated at 16-18% (Weitzer, 2000) and similar to Australian rates of 16% (Rissel et al. 2007).

**Partially legal models**

Some countries have made regulations that criminalise some aspects of the sex industry and not others, such as in the United Kingdom where it is legal to sell sex except on the street (Brooks-Gordon, 2006). It is also illegal to own a brothel, to pimp, or to attempt to buy street-based sex. However, it is legal to work in a brothel or buy sex within one, which is an attempt to shift blame to those appearing to profit from the sexuality and sexual needs of others. It is also illegal to buy sex from a person who does not choose to work as a sex worker, placing an onus of responsibility onto the consumer for something over which he may have no capacity (Brooks-Gordon & Gelsthorpe, 2003). Canada has a similar model: street-based solicitation is illegal, while most other prostitution is not essentially illegal, but it is nearly impossible to operate any sex industry business without breaching the law (Jeffrey & Sullivan, 2009). ‘Communicating for the purpose of prostitution’ was criminalised in Canada in 1985, which allows for the arrest of clients as well as sex workers (Jeffrey & Sullivan, 2009). Since the criminalising of clients of the sex industry in Canada, street level violence against sex workers has risen and sites for solicitation have become more mobile without affecting
demand or numbers of workers (Jeffrey & Sullivan, 2009). A review of the Canadian Sex Work Policy suggested that even after a parliamentary inquiry it could not be determined if the sex trade was a moral quandary or a practical problem (Jeffrey & Sullivan, 2009).

‘The Swedish model’, where selling sex is legal but buying sex in any form is illegal, is an effort to end the oppression of women and children through prostitution which has been touted as a symbolic expression of morality (Sanders, 2008b). It is a morality that places blame on the client of sexual services for creating demand, but ultimately prevents sex workers from openly operating their businesses and thereby oppresses them. The impact of the law on the size of the sex industry has been minimal, with Swedish police reporting in 2006 that street sex work had in fact increased (Sanders, 2008b). In addition, accounts from sex workers describe how their work has become more unsafe, as the clients are fearful of arrest (Ostergren, 2010).

*Legal/decriminalised models*

There are no official definitions of the differences between legal and decriminalised models of regulation of the sex industry. Broadly, to legalise is to have laws, which are upheld by police, to allow certain sex industry activities, while decriminalisation refers to regulatory practices that are controlled by an administrative department. In Germany sex work is legal and considered work under the 2002 German prostitution law (Dolemeyer et al., 2010). Sex workers are employed under legal contracts and have the same working conditions as other workers, such as occupational health and safety standards, and legal rights (Brooks-Gordon, 2006). Sex workers argue that although working conditions have improved, stigmatization still occurs as a result of discrimination about the ‘nature’ of their work from the regulatory administrators (Dolemeyer et al., 2010). The size and performance of the sex industry has not
changed with the legislation, although no recent studies in Germany have been found to examine the effects of decriminalisation on the male client.

The Australian legal approach to regulating the sex industry

In Australia, there has been a growing trend towards legalisation or decriminalisation of the sex industry, which reflects changing moral attitudes to sex work, recognition of the need to provide sex workers with access to services, and growing support for harm minimisation approaches (David, 2008). Law reform initiatives have not been based on a philosophy or particular political viewpoint, but on attempts to find rational and pragmatic solutions to actual problems (Jeffrey & Sullivan, 2009). South Australia is the only state that employs an illegal approach to regulation, whereby it is illegal to buy or sell sex, or for clients to ‘loiter in a public place for the purpose of prostitution’ or to be on premises that are frequented by prostitutes (Scarlet Alliance, 2011). New South Wales has decriminalised most sex industry regulation, with street-based sex being assigned to particular areas; NSW is the only State to not criminalise street-based sex work (Scarlet Alliance, 2011). The other States and Territories have partially legalised sex industry activities in which brothels, strip clubs, massage services and escorts can work under a licencing system regulated by the police, such as in the Northern Territory, or by administration, such as in the Australian Capital Territory (Scarlet Alliance, 2001). Licencing systems have the potential to create a two-tiered system whereby businesses that fail to have planning approval or licences become illegal services (Scarlet Alliance, 2011). There are over 5,000 legal brothels, escort agencies and sexual massage services in Australia, with another 1,000-2,000 operating illegally (IBISWorld, 2010; Harcourt & Donovan, 2005).
Despite differing models of regulation, sex industry practices are largely similar throughout Australia. The following paragraphs describe the settings in which sex is bought in order to understand how clients might experience the process of procuring sex.

**Settings for buying sex in Australia**

The diversity of the Australian sex industry has been described by Harcourt and Donovan (2005) who have identified 25 different types of services. Generally, sex industry markets are described as strip clubs and massage services, which may include penetrative sex, and brothel and escort services, also known as ‘full service’ services.

Strip clubs are generally well established businesses within larger cities and are most often fully licenced and legal. They advertise in newspapers, magazines, on the internet, billboards and radio. Patrons do not need to think ahead to book an appointment and can simply walk in and stay as long as they like, within the boundaries of the club. Patrons usually pay an admission fee, which includes viewing dancers in bar rooms. Individual attention from the dancers requires tipping, and services such as private lap dances incur more fees. Mobile strip services are also available for private functions such as bucks parties. Full service (intercourse) is not usually available on strip club premises, due to licencing and zoning laws.

Massage parlours that include sexual services, with or without full service, may be in a fixed location or may be small operations based in private homes, hotels or through outcalls (the worker visits the client). Fixed location parlours may cater for walk-ins without an appointment, but single operator businesses typically need to be booked ahead of time by internet or phone. Services are customarily at a fixed price, although patrons can often purchase ‘extras’ at any time during the service.
Services offering intercourse operate under a hierarchical structure based on escalating prices, starting with street-based services, which may utilise safe house venues where hotel-like rooms are available by the hour. Brothel services are in fixed locations and cater for both appointments and walk-ins. Upon entry, a client will have the system, the "menu" and the prices explained; he then views each available worker in turn. The client does not have to choose a worker and may leave, or he may make a booking at a fixed price which could later be extended and/or he may choose to pay for 'extras'. Prices of brothel services escalate due to apparent luxury, location and 'quality' of the workers. Some fixed location brothels offer 'outcalls', which are similar to private escorts in that the worker will visit the client in a home or hotel room. Private escorts provide the most expensive services, with prices ranging from those similar to brothels to several thousand dollars per hour. Their services can include sex in a hotel or on private premises or companionship on 'dates'.

Prices vary from place to place and according to services bought, generally a basic price is between $75 to $150 for 30 minutes, which includes a short "massage" and straight sex (in Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne), and double that for 1 hour. Private sex workers, who work from their own homes, often charge as much as $200-$300 per hour. Street workers may charge a little less than brothel workers; for those who use a safe house (as in Sydney), there is often an additional fee of $10-15 for the room rental; out-calls (ie. brothel workers who visit a client's home) may also charge more, in addition to any transport costs. For additional services, such as cosplay (role-playing) or fetishes, further charges are made.

The above overview has examined various methods of regulation and containment of the sex industry with examples provided to demonstrate how authorities and governments have
approached this issue. The settings where sex is sold in Australia have been described to provide an understanding of the context in which Australian clients buy sex. The following chapter presents some historical control of the sex industry and sex workers and a socio-cultural reflection of the research that has been conducted about men who purchase sex.
Chapter 3: Literature Review

There is increasing impetus to inquire into the behaviour and motivations of clients of the sex industry, which may be due to changing public attitudes, political and legal changes regarding sex in general, and more specifically regarding the sex industry and its clients. Perkins (1999) indicates that studies conducted with clients of the sex industry prior to her research represented less than one per cent of the research available about the sex industry. This chapter begins with an overview of the control of the sex industry and sex workers and the social perceptions of clients of the sex industry. It then reviews research conducted in the last 20 years and presents them under the following headings:

- The prevalence of buying sex;
- Sex industry client demographics and characteristics;
- Motivations to buy sex;
- Identified and perceived risks of buying sex; and
- Perceived benefits of buying sex.

The final section of the chapter includes a discussion concerning different methods used to research sex industry client characteristics and behaviour, including the inherent difficulties in the recruitment of participants in a stigmatised environment. Disparities in available research are examined with a view to indicating areas that require further research regarding sex industry clients, hence the present research.

Regulation and control of sexuality and sex workers - an overview

During the middle ages, brothels became regulated in some town centres in Europe mainly to protect the customers (Harras, 1996), but other towns began to regulate or outlaw commercial prostitution, which represented a shift in tolerance toward commercial sex. Following the great pandemic of syphilis throughout Europe in the 16th century, the ‘prostitute’ was
reconceptualised as a public health problem and was segregated into separate areas which later came to be known as ‘red-light’ districts (Brooks-Gordon & Gelsthorpe, 2003). An attempt to eradicate the sex trade occurred in Vienna in 1751 when Empress Maria Theresa imposed fines, imprisonment, whipping and torture for violations of laws prohibiting the selling of sex but not buying it, which did little to reduce commercial sex (Sullivan, 1997). Sanctions against selling sex continued throughout Europe into Victorian times when, at the time of European settlement in Australia, British laws and attitudes affected Australia’s management of sexual commerce (Sullivan, 1997).

Frances (1994) points out that there is no evidence of sex as a commodity in pre-colonial Aboriginal Australia, although women from Indigenous tribes may have been procured in exchange for goods or services after European settlement. There are claims that as many as one in five women transported to Australia on the first fleet as convicts had worked as prostitutes (Perkins & Lovejoy, 2007), although it is not certain they continued in this work. Men who accessed sexual services have been mainly invisible to historians, although the European males arriving in Australia were largely convicts or soldiers who were likely to be accustomed to procuring sex (Sullivan, 1997). There was also a sex imbalance; 80% of the white population of Australia were male in 1800, and in 1861 there were still 38% more males than females, creating a context for prostitution being considered inevitable and desirable by authorities (Sullivan, 1997).

At the turn of the 19th century, laws regulating prostitution were introduced in each colony or State, encouraging police corruption and organised crime by criminalising activity that had previously been tolerated (Perkins, 1991). During the late 1970s, Australian prostitution reform disaffiliated British influences for the first time and favoured decimalisation as a harm
minimisation approach; this was a result of an increase in the number of women in politics, and the adoption of feminist discourses (Sullivan, 1997). Feminist perspectives of the sex industry emerged from Rioph's (1955) study, which reframed sex workers as victims; a notion which progressed during the 1970s. The international sex workers' rights movement saw attempts to abolish prostitution as leading to further victimisation of sex workers (Scarlet Alliance, 2011). Monitoring social mores regarding the sex industry can be considered through the lens of society and law, and also through financial markets.

Social perceptions of clients of the sex industry

Sullivan (1997) reports that sex workers were seen as deviant, pathological individuals until after World War II, but their clients were simply succumbing to normal and inevitable male sexual needs that were beyond the control of the individual. Since then, inquiries into ‘normal’ sexual behaviour from Kinsey and his colleagues, beginning in 1948, were conducted with over 10,000 interviews in America regarding sexual practices (Rathus, Nevid, & Fichner-Rathus, 2008). Kinsey did not try to obtain a random sample of the general population for his interviews because he expected a high refusal rate, meaning that the sample is not universally recognised as being representative of the general American population (Rathus et al., 2008). Kinsey found that over 60% of men had purchased sex and 15–20% of men did so regularly. He also found differences according to education and age, with the practice of buying sex decreasing as men matured and became better educated. This resulted in the assumption that men found other, more socially acceptable outlets in time and that clients of sex workers were from lower socio-economic and poorly educated backgrounds (Brooks-Gordon, 2006; Rathus et al., 2008).
An early study of 150 sex workers by Roiph (1955) portrayed sex workers as honest and hardworking, and found that their clients were dishonest and cheating on their wives (Brooks-Gordon, 2006). Reframing the sex worker as non-deviant sparked a plethora of research and public debate (Sullivan, 1997) which, combined with the effects of the Kinsey and Roiph studies, increased social disapproval of men who paid for sex (Brooks-Gordon, 2006). Paying for sex came to be seen as a deviant sexual practice during the sexual revolution of the 1960s; with better contraception and more sexual freedom outside marriage, ‘normal men’ had no need to visit sex workers (Brooks-Gordon, 2006). Increased social disapproval of paying for sex, in conjunction with social acceptance of sex before marriage, reduced rates of men ever accessing commercial sex in the United States from a perceived 60% in the 1940s (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948) to approximately 16 - 18% today (Weitzer, 2000). When these and other social scientists began to research what kind of man would consider buying sex, men who bought sex were differentiated from men who did not. Research outcomes about men who bought sex could only explain mens’ actions in terms of deviance (Brooks-Gordon, 2006).

Some feminist inquiries into the sex industry have reframed sex workers as victims of exploitation and male dominance, effectively labelling men who pay for sex as perpetrators of violence against women (Farley, 2005; Jeffreys, 1997). The male not only creates demand for sexual services as client, but also is seen as the controller of women through organised crime, pimping and illicit drug peddling (Malarek, 2009). Weitzer (2000) describes research into the sex industry as a ‘sex war’, polarising debate between those that condemn the sex industry and those who wish to romanticise or normalise it. For example, in contrast to feminist inquiries, Brooks-Gordon (2006: 147) summarises the commercial sex encounter thus:- “Sex work is the exchange of money for sex, and because there is nothing wrong with
spending money, and there is nothing wrong with having sex, there is nothing wrong with paying for sex. In a modern context, between consenting adults there is no philosophical difference between paid-for sex and any other sex between adults”. The phenomenon of buying sex, considered a normal practice 100 years ago, has been systematically demonised, which is also evident in the changing regulatory controls of the sex industry (Sullivan, 1997). The current literature on clients of sex workers is examined in the following sections.

Prevalence of buying sex

Estimations of the prevalence of buying sex have been reported in many studies and for a range of countries over time, indicating both the vested interest of governments and the moral concern of the community (Weitzer, 2000). However, the prevalence of buying sex, either the proportion of the population that have ever done so, do so regularly or have done so recently such as in the previous year, is difficult to ascertain because, as Weitzer (2005) asserts, early studies on the rates of engagement with the sex industry are flawed mainly through researcher bias (Weitzer, 2000). Added to the difficulty of ascertaining the prevalence of men who buy sex, studies use different methods that cannot easily be compared. For example, of all regions studied by Caraël, Slaymaker, Lyerla, and Sarkar (2006) in Africa, Asia and Latin America, a median of 9-10 per cent of men had exchanged sex for money in the previous year. In the United States of America, Monto (2000) studied men who had been arrested for buying sex and reported that 14 per cent of men had ever paid for sex, and Weitzer (2000), examined current literature and estimates between 14-16 per cent of men had ever paid for sex. Brewer, Roberts, Muth, and Potterat (2008) conducted a capture-recapture analysis of prostitution arrest records in several United States metropolitan areas and considered these data against the prevalence estimates in a quantitative General Social Survey and found that survey estimates are biased downward because men underreport (Brower et al., 2000). The client
patronage for street-based sex was 3.5 per cent for a one-year period (Brewer et al., 2008). The General Social Survey data reports that in 2006, 7.6 per cent of men have ever bought sex and 2.3 per cent of men had paid for sex in the last year in the USA (National Opinion Research Centre, 2012). Even allowing for underreporting and the differences in street-based markets or indoors markets, it is difficult to determine a figure of between 7.6 per cent and 16 per cent of men in the United States of America have ever bought sex.

In the United Kingdom Brooks-Gordon (2006) examined the literature and found 4.3 per cent to 25 per cent of men had ever paid for sex, depending on the research methods used in the studies. The National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles (Natsal, 2000) found 4.3 per cent of men had paid for sex in the past year, but the sample consisted only of men aged between 16-44 years (Johnson et al., 2001).

A quantitative approach was taken in the Australian Study of Health and Relationships (ASHR) which found 16 per cent of men had paid for sex, but only two per cent had paid for sex in the year of study (Rissel et.al., 2007). IBISWorld, a private company providing industry-based research, estimates between 12 and 16 million visits to sex workers occur each year in Australia (IBISWorld, 2010). In a study undertaken at ‘Sexpo’, an adult industry trade fair in Victoria, Australia, in 2002, Pitts, Smith, Grierson, O’Brien and Misson (2004) found that 143 men had paid for sex from a total of 612 men completing the survey, which represented 23.4 per cent of respondents. A possible limitation of this study may have been that the target audience was likely to include only people who regarded themselves as sexually liberated. Given these variations, it appears that it is difficult to obtain accurate statistics about an activity that is often stigmatised and even illegal in some countries.
Although, all of these studies demonstrate that men do buy sex and that estimations of the prevalence can be useful to demonstrate trends and cultural differences.

Richters and Rissel (2005) found significant variation in the prevalence of buying sex in different Australian States. They surmised that the different legal frameworks were partly responsible despite evidence from other countries that conclude that criminalising aspects of the sex industry does not affect prevalence but may affect reporting. Seven per cent of male respondents reported having bought sex in South Australia, the only Australian State that criminalises buying sex; and 1.8 per cent of Australian sex industry establishments are based there, indicating that businesses that sell sex and men who buy sex may be less likely to admit to engaging in illegal practices (IBISWorld, 2010; Richters & Rissel, 2005). Other differences between the States of Australia include:

- In the Northern Territory there is a high male to female ratio and 27% of men have paid for sex;
- Mining communities and popular tourist destinations in Queensland and Western Australia host 34.4% of sex industry businesses in Australia, yet only account for 28.4% of the national population;
- The ACT has 4.5% of the Australian sex industry establishments compared to only 1.6% of the national population, representing three times as many services per capita than other States. The ACT has a mobile population with high average incomes and eleven per cent of men have paid for sex, indicating that the ACT may have more ‘regular’ or repeat clients and that some clients do not reside in the ACT. (IBISWorld, 2010; Richters & Rissel, 2005).

A graph representing the differences in Australian states is presented below.
Australian Sex Industry Prevalence by State

![Australian Sex Industry Prevalence by State](image)

Figure 3.1. Australian Sex Industry Prevalence by State.

The prevalence of males who ever buy sex is estimated to be about 16 per cent in Australia, which, coupled with the evidence of the sex industry financial figures, makes buying sex a fairly commonplace activity (IBISWorld, 2010; Richters & Rissel, 2005; Weitzer, 2000).

**Sex industry client demographics and characteristics**

Perkins (1999) notes that many earlier studies typically depicted clients as psychologically disturbed, sexually perverted or socially isolated men, as previous research focused on the differences between sex industry clients and 'normal' men (Sullivan, 1997). For example, Schumann and Giesen (1980), writing about the psychology of prostitution, state that "ordinary" men buy sex to deal with their psychological insecurities as well as their sexual needs, as sex workers offer men emotional involvement, psychic stability and empathy.
Wilcox et al (2008) reviewed 220 published studies on clients of the sex industry, with a view to providing agencies including the Government with strategies to reduce the demand for sexual services. They examined empirical research on the prevalence of buying sex, the characteristics of those who procure sex, the contexts for buying sex and motivations and deterrents to buy sex in several countries over time. The results showed that men who are less happy in their marital relationship have an increased likelihood of participation as clients in the sex industry but overall differences were modest (Wilcox, Christmann, Rogerson, & Birch, 2008). Additional results from Wilcox et al. (2008) are presented in subsequent sections. Personality characteristics of clients were examined by Xantidis and McCabe (2000); who found that clients were less feminine in sex-role orientation, had lower scores in social-sexual effectiveness, and were more sensation-seeking than the general male population in Australia.

More recent research, however, has found only modest differences between men who buy sex and men who do not, providing strong evidence to suggest that clients of the sex industry fit a broad cross-section of the community; in particular, such men do not differ from others on demographic variables such as age, education, marital status or occupation (Grenz, 2005; Perkins, 1999; Pitts et al., 2004; Xantidis & McCabe, 2000).

Perkins (1999) examined the social categories of clients and their access to different types of sex work (street, brothel, private or escort) and found no significant difference in the services that middle or working class men sought, contradicting Kinsey’s earlier reports that as men become older and better educated, they are less likely to engage with sex workers (Perkins, 1999; Rathus et al, 2008).
Similarly, in the United Kingdom, Sanders (2008b) conducted face-to-face interviews with sex workers and their clients and collected data from online communities and blogs of sex work clients. She categorised five different types of service users based on characteristics and motivations to buy sex:

- Explorers, who are acting on curiosity, acting out fantasies or being experimental;
- Yo-yoers, who pay for sex intermittently between more conventional relationships;
- Compulsives, who have uncontrollable urges to buy sex, often with unpleasant financial or social consequences;
- Bookends, who have initial sexual experiences with commercial sex workers followed by a long-term conventional relationship and who then revisit their commercial sexual behaviour in later life due to relationship dissatisfaction, divorce, or death of their partner; and
- Permanent purchasers, who are often not regular clients of one particular sex worker but are driven by sexual needs, and feel that their decisions are warranted and reasonable (Sanders, 2008b: 48).

The categories that Sanders (2008b) list describes are mostly ordinary life circumstances and portray a range of motivations to seek commercial sex. These are discussed in the following section.

Motivations to buy sex

Inquiries into why men buy sex have been undertaken by many researchers seeking to understand the phenomenon. Wilcox et al. (2008) in the UK conducted a review of 220 published research papers on clients worldwide, and summarized the motivations for procuring sex as:
• Desiring sexual variety;
• Dissatisfaction with existing relationships;
• Sexual gratification;
• Loneliness, shyness or incapacities (mental and physical);
• Having no other sexual outlet;
• Being separated from a partner by travel;
• Curiosity, risk or excitement;
• To exercise control over their own sexual experiences.

Further details of these motivations to buy sex, including other study outcomes about particular motivations, follow.

Some studies have revealed that some men buy sex to enjoy a variety of partners (Monto, 2000; Wilcox et al., 2008), or to avoid intimacy (Monto, 2000), while other studies have found that some men buy sex to seek intimacy (Brooks-Gordon & Gelsthorpe, 2003; Grenz, 2005; Perkins, 1999; Sanders, 2008b). In general, quantitative studies have favoured ‘variety of partners’ and ‘intimacy avoidance’, while qualitative in-depth emotional analyses gave more emphasis to ‘seeking intimacy’ as a motivation to purchase sex. Earle and Sharp (2007) found that some men develop romantic and loyal relationships with sex workers and that the courtship scripts of commercial sex are similar to that of non-commercial sex. The authors conceptualized through qualitative analysis that the commodification of emotion was an important measurement of value for money in clients’ evaluation of sexual services, with men referring to being loved and cared for.

Sexual satisfaction is associated with a sense of well-being and physical health (Menard & Offman, 2009), which is rarely linked to the benefits of commercial sex, although many
studies have shown that sexual pleasure and sexual relief are highly motivating factors to buy sex (Pitts et al., 2004; Wilcox et al., 2008) also found motivations to buy sex to be the ease of the commercial sex encounter and the need for engagement with another person. Similarly, the motivations for men in China were found to be for stress reduction and a need for intimate and emotional support, but they were also driven by peer pressure; this was the only study that found cultural tolerance as a motivating factor (Yang et al., 2010).

Motivations to buy sex are similar globally with only slight cultural differences (Wilcox et al., 2008). There is great variation in motivating factors to buy sex, and no single factor is ubiquitous; but many common motivating factors are ambiguous such as a desire for sexual variety and a desire for emotional intimacy. The consideration to buy sex also involves a risk-benefit analysis in which a consumer weighs up perceived benefits against any perceived risks. Some research outcomes about the risks and benefits of buying sex follow.

Risks of buying sex

This section presents a general description of clients' perceptions of risk and a specific discussion about risks of exposure or arrest, STIs, compulsive sexual behaviour, negative experiences and challenged self-esteem as identified in the available literature. Some qualitative studies have drawn conclusions illustrating client perceptions of risk (Blevins & Holt, 2009; Earle & Sharp, 2007; Sanders, 2008b) but most studies have been quantitative surveys targeting client behaviour in relation to particular risks (Perkins, 1999; Sawyer, Metz, hinds, & Brucker, 2001). Wilcox et al., (2008) found most studies identified that clients were fearful of ‘getting caught’, fearful of arrest (in situations and in countries where this applied), and fearful of contagion with a sexually transmitted infection (STI). Some examples of
published research findings about these and other fears are further examined in the following sections.

Safety and cleanliness

Earle and Sharp (2007) found that the word ‘safety’ in men’s cyber accounts of commercial sexual experiences can mean safe sexual practices, or locations of procuring sex that are more discrete and are likely to avoid attention from the general public or from law enforcement. Occasionally, ‘safety’ might mean that a particular context of buying sex was free from violence. Earle and Sharp (2007) found no accounts of clients experiencing actual violence or abuse on the escort review website that they analysed (www.punternet.com), but clients did express concern about being vulnerable to theft, robbery and physical violence. Clients who objected to buying sex on the street displayed attitudes that differentiated their behaviour from men who bought street-based sex, and also considered that street based sex was risky and morally reprehensible, therefore subscribing to popular discourse that the street-based sex industry is inherently evil (Sanders, 2008b).

Other issues of ‘safety’ in the commercial sex act that clients posted on www.punternet.com were aligned with conceptions of ‘cleanliness’ (Earle & Sharp 2007). It seems important to clients that a particular sex worker is ‘clean’, which could mean that the worker appeared to have good personal hygiene, that the commercial sex dwelling was neat and tidy, or that the sex worker appeared to not be a drug user or have a STI (Earle & Sharp 2007). This indicates that men are discerning in their purchases of commercial sex and not just concerned with variables such as the worker's appearance or bodily features.
Risk of exposure

The risk of exposure when seeking commercial sex is widely discussed on client internet forums as identified by Earle and Sharp (2007). Clients discussed strategies to avoid ‘getting caught’, either by arrest (in the UK and the USA) or by known social contacts, either of which could negatively affect their social situations (Blevins & Holt, 2009; Earle & Sharp, 2007; Sanders, 2008b; Monto, 2000).

STI contagion

Perkins (1999) found that Australian clients tended to engage in safe sexual practices while procuring sex, but not so in other casual or committed sexual relations. Mandatory STI testing for sex workers shows very low rates of STIs among sex workers and almost universal condom use, indicating the actual risk of STI contagion during commercial sex in Australia to be very low (Wilson et al., 2010). Nevertheless, many clients perceive STI contagion as a potential risk factor in their choice to buy sex (Wilcox et al., 2008).

In terms of HIV infection, clients' perception of risk seems to be higher than actual risk, as reported by Wilcox et al. (2008). For instance, when 90 male clients were asked to estimate the proportion of sex workers who were positive for HIV they thought that one in three were HIV positive, whereas actual levels (in Europe) were estimated by health authorities at 5 per cent or lower. Clients also believed that they could assess a female worker as being more likely to be HIV positive if she looked ‘scruffy’ or like a drug user. These and other misconceptions about HIV infection may contribute to men requesting unsafe sexual practices from paid workers who they perceive as ‘clean’ (Wilcox et al., 2008). In regard to HIV infection in Australia, there has been no recorded cross infection of HIV between sex worker and client (Scarlet Alliance, 2011).
Compulsive sexual behaviour

Some scholars align all paid sex activity with paraphilic behaviour regardless of frequency, elements of control or absence of adverse effects (Farley, Bindel & Golding, 2009; Malarek, 2009). Discourses about paraphilia (also termed sexual compulsivity, sexual addiction and hypersexuality) are argued in the media and amongst sexuality educators, researchers and trainers (Kafka, 2007). The aetiology, the characteristics of, and the validity of the condition are widely debated. The American Psychiatric Association (2000) publishes the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), which includes sexual disorders. In the DSM-IV there are no specific paraphilia-related disorders, that relate to “sex addiction” but the DSM-IV does include a ‘not otherwise specified’ condition of ‘distress about a pattern of repeated sexual relationships involving a succession of lovers who are experienced by the individual only as things to be used’ (Kafka, 2007). It is unclear as to how paraphilias will be classified in the DSM-V, as no consensus has been reached amongst sexologists. The World Health Organization (1992) classified “excessive sexual drive” as satyriasis (for males) in the International Classification of Diseases - 10 (ICD-10).

Although definitions of sexual “addiction” differ, most professionals agree that inability to control sexual behaviour and continuing a sexual behaviour despite harmful consequences are essential elements of a condition of paraphilia (Kafka, 2007). Men who feel uncontrollable urges to access sex workers and who suffer from emotional or financial hardship because of their behaviour may be identified as having a paraphilia. While addressing attachment styles of men with sex addictions, Zapf, Greiner, and Carroll (2008) found that between 5 and 18 per cent of the general population suffers from some form of sexual addiction, as having uncontrolled sexual urges. Men with sexual addiction were found to be more insecure in
relationships (Zapt et al., 2008). Given the many and varied motivations to buy sex it may be concluded that sexual addiction is a possible but not an absolute motivation for the purchase of sexual services. The portrayal of the client as a sexual deviant implies that buying sex is itself an indication of sexual compulsivity (Malarek, 2009), yet Perkins (1999) found that the frequency of sexual activity among clients with regular sex partners was not excessively high, suggesting that these men were not acting out of compulsive sexual behaviour.

*Negative experiences*

Commercial sex may not always be pleasurable. In a study by Sawyer et al. (2001), one third of the sample of clients expressed sexual dissatisfaction after purchasing sex. Clients may experience guilt or anxiety and may have expectations of their own performance or that of the worker that are not met, and strong emotions associated with intimacy may leave some men feeling more vulnerable (Earle & Sharp, 2007; Sanders, 2008a; Sawyer et al., 2001). A deeper desire for emotional intimacy in sex for which the client pays, demands emotional risks which expose vulnerabilities in the client (Sanders, 2008a). The boundaries of commercial sex that uphold a sense of emotional safety can be skewed by clients who form over-attachments, which can lead to feelings of unrequited love or of being misled, deceived or cheated (Earle & Sharp, 2007).

*Risk to self-esteem*

Earle and Sharp (2007) hypothesize that paying for sex may threaten a man's self-identity, especially the maintenance of an hegemonic heterosexual masculinity, as their research revealed that in the commercial context, the sex worker is in control. Perkins (1999: 47) also remarks:
“it comes as a shock to many men on their first visit to a sex worker to discover that rather than being compliant and passive, as expected of women in general, she is in command, telling them what they can and cannot do, how much they will have to pay for this or for that, and, above all, that they must wear a condom. Such attitudes are deeply disturbing for many men, especially when they already possess a deep resentment for having to pay…”

Benefits of buying sex

The consequences of buying sex, as being either positive or negative, have not been well considered by researchers of the sex industry. Many studies consider only the risks, for instance, when examining STI prevalence and preventative behaviours among clients of sex workers (Remple, Patrick, Johnston, Tyndall, & Jolly, 2007). Possible benefits of buying sex have been identified mainly by qualitative research and are discussed here in terms of physical, emotional and social health and well-being.

In the United Kingdom, Earle and Sharp (2007) examined the virtual social world of men who purchase sex, who participated in an online forum for clients of the sex industry. Their study indicated a range of positive effects on clients’ physical, emotional and social well-being, and linked commercial sex with intimacy and romance. Impotence and poor body image are threats to masculinity and self-esteem, but some men reported that commercial sex relieved the pressure of performance and provided a safe environment (Campbell, 1998). Clients posting on the internet escort review site www.punternet.com generally described positive commercial sexual experiences (Earle & Sharp, 2007). Occasionally they narrated experiences that described less than ideal sexual prowess with respect to their own performances, but they tended to blame an ‘other’, drugs, alcohol, lack of sleep, or a lack of
skill in the worker, or in the case of premature ejaculation, that the worker was simply too sexy.

Perkins (1999) found that 46% of her sample of 667 Australian clients said that they would marry a sex worker given the opportunity, which indicates a level of emotional involvement and lack of stigma that clients may feel towards the person they pay for sex. The act of kissing featured highly on scales of intimacy that were described by men who paid for sex on www.punternet.com (Earle & Sharp, 2007). Men believed that workers would selectively kiss clients, which created a feeling of being special, and while in a climate of knowing that workers had sex with many men, the act of kissing reinforced the male's self-identity. Using a concept of romance similar to non-commercial relationships might be one method that men who pay for sex assert their masculinity, reinforcing their self-identity, as opposed to the deviant or desperate character portrayed by media (Earle & sharp, 2007).

In Sanders' research on commercial sex and disability she notes:

“...The shame, guilt or embarrassment in seeking out commercial sex is rebuffed by the positive influences on quality of life, self-esteem and confidence that result from fulfilment of a range of emotional, psychological, sexual and social needs.” (Sanders, 2007: 446-447).

She describes how growth in self-esteem can be directly related to a disabled man’s access to commercial sex, which highlighted his sexual options, rights and sexual pleasure. The view that sexual rights are considered as inherently natural and therefore basic human entitlement is becoming widely promoted, and the World Health Organisation makes clear links between sexual fulfilment and mental and general well-being (Sanders, 2007; WHO, 2010).
Sexual assertiveness leading to sexual self-esteem, leading to overall self-esteem, has been found by Menard and Offman (2009) in studies of people in romantic and committed relationships. Sexual assertiveness is exercised by communication skills which feature for both the procurer and provider of commercial sexual services (Menard & Offman, 2009). Furthermore, clients who considered themselves ‘regulars’ to a single sex worker felt a deeper sense of self through the feeling of belonging, which enhanced their self-esteem, self-worth and construction of identity (Sanders, 2008b).

As many men who pay for sex do so more than once, their assessment of the benefits must outweigh the risks. Their possible fear of being exposed, of sexually transmitted infections, the risk of a bad experience or of having uncontrolled sexual behaviour is compensated by benefits to their physical, emotional and social well-being.

More research is needed that addresses the feelings and lived experiences of clients of the sex industry to obtain a more comprehensive view of both the risks and the benefits experienced or perceived from buying sex, but information is often difficult to obtain. A discussion of the inherent difficulties with research methods follows.

**Research challenges when studying clients of the sex industry**

Sex industry research that has been conducted with a view that sex work is an inherently harmful occupation often fails to offer a balanced view of the male client (Weitzer, 2000). Methodological flaws include sweeping generalisations, presenting only the worst examples for analysis, using ‘victims of prostitution’ to conduct interviews with clients, and framing questions that can only result in negative answers (Weitzer, 2005). For example, Farley et al., (2009) found that 27 per cent of their sample of 103 men who paid for sex in the UK
explained that once they pay, clients are entitled to engage in any act they choose with the woman they buy. The results of the study suggest that at various times during a commercial sex service, many of the men who buy women for sex think that the women they buy have no rights in the interaction. The study infers that men buy a person, and not a specific service for a specified time. The exact wording of the question was not given in the report. If language of ‘buying a person’ was used to research participants, their responses may have been influenced by that. The results generalise that ‘many’ men who buy sex disregard a women’s consent for various acts when 73 per cent of men did not say that. Without evidence of the question and the way it was asked, it is unclear as to which sex acts the 27 per cent of men felt entitled to. Research that conflates buying sex with violence fails to address any other experience for sex workers or clients of the sex industry. Niemi (2010, p 160) makes no secret of her bias when she writes “When and how did we start to speak about “the purchase of sexual services” when we really mean the sexual abuse of someone who has been forced or pressured into prostitution by economic or other problems?” Some sex industry research uses emotive language such as describing sex workers as ‘prostituted women’ when more rigorous research has shown that most women who are sex workers freely choose their occupations and prefer the use of the term ‘sex worker’ (Scarlet Alliance, 2010).

In view of the problematic research about the sex industry, the literature reviewed in this chapter has been critically examined for, non-biased language and methodological rigor. Most studies have used quantitative methods which have elicited specific information about clients (Brooks-Gordon & Gelsthorpe, 2003; Farley et al., 2009; Perkins, 1999; Pitts et al., 2004; Plumridge, Chetwynd, Reed, & Gifford, 1996; Remple et al., 2007; Richters & Rissel, 2005; Sawyer et al., 2001; Seib, Dunne, Fischer, & Najman, 2010; Xantidis & McCabe, 2000; Zapf et al., 2008) but were unable to examine what the research participants thought
concerning the pertinent issues, meaning that matters of import to clients may have been missed. For instance, the value placed by the client on emotional intimacy in a commercial setting was largely unrecognised until the qualitative research by Sanders (2008b) and Earle and Sharp (2007) was published. Recruitment of a sample of clients who access the sex industry is challenging because sex is generally a private subject and the stigmatised nature of buying sex means that good researcher-participant relationships are important to extract frank and reliable information. The various methods used by researchers for recruitment of participants are examined in the rest of this section.

Several researchers acknowledge the difficulty of sourcing a sample of men who buy sex (Earle & Sharp 2007; Perkins 1999; Sanders 2008b; Wilcox et al., 2008). Sanders (2008b) evaluated the methods of finding research participants in a number of studies and found some recruitment techniques to be potentially dangerous for researchers, such as approaching men on the street, and that using sex workers as research partners for recruitment can interrupt their core business. Furthermore, non-consensual observation through peepholes and wardrobes, as described by Brooks-Gordon (2006), is unethical by today’s standards. The limitations of a self-selecting body of research participants must be recognised and accepted as the only ethical way to elicit information directly from the source.

Many studies about clients of the sex industry use information gained from sex workers, giving some insight into client activity (Minichiello, Sullivan, Greenwood, & Axford, 2000; Remple et al., 2007). Forty-nine sex workers in Canada were interviewed to give information about client behaviours to assess the client risk of HIV and STI propagation, and demonstrated that it is possible to identify risk in this way (Remple et al., 2007), which
validates information gained about clients through sex workers. Knowledge from third parties cannot, however, validate a client’s perceptions, thoughts and attitudes.

Several researchers have recruited men who have been arrested for ‘kerb crawling’ or related offences (Brooks-Gordon, 2006; Sawyer & Metz, 2009; Monto, 2000). Most clients in these studies had been arrested for attempting to seek services in the street-based market and, aside from potentially feeling resentment or embarrassment at being arrested, most men in these samples had attended ‘John schools’ which attempt to humiliate and shame clients (Brooks-Gordon, 2006), both of which may affect participant responses.

Online forums such as www.punternet.com, analysed by Earle and Sharp (2007) and Blevins and Holt (2009), provide an information and support network specifically for men who purchase sex. The data analysed is extant text, not written for research purposes, and provides insight into a virtual subculture of peer support networks that clients of the sex industry seek. Researching online forums can indicate the ways that clients perceive sex workers, the social climates in which they purchase sex and how they identify and represent themselves. However, the influences of a support network that both mentors and encourages clients, and which monitors and regulates behaviour by clarifying commercial sex etiquette, has not been measured or compared to the behaviour of clients who do not enter online support communities (Earle & Sharp, 2007; Sanders, 2007). Blevins and Holt (2009) found that online forums provide a place where paying for sex is perceived as normal and non-deviant and is considered simply a pastime or an interest; this may facilitate a client’s normalisation of his behaviour, which is otherwise usually considered a stigmatising activity. It is not known how many clients of the sex industry access online forums or whether men access other avenues for information or support. Brooks-Gordon (2006) found that some men,
usually younger, solicit together, reasoning that teams help to them disassociate from deviant stereotypes.

Other methods of recruitment for research participants have included placing advertisements for volunteers in adult sections of newspapers and magazines, using medical and legal records, and enlisting the help of sex workers to ‘introduce’ clients. As important themes surrounding client emotions and cognitions, such as a need for intimacy and romance, emerge from research, new questions for client focused research transpire.

**Further research is crucial to understanding men who buy sex**

As clients likely outnumber sex workers 20:1 to 100:1, a gender disparity is apparent in the research of the sex industry (Perkins, 1999). In addition, there is limited research conducted on male sex workers and female clients of sex workers. In contrast, there is an abundance of research and inquiry into female workers in the sex industry. The comparative lack of study of men who buy sex creates a limited view of prostitution and a one-sided debate (Sanders, 2008b). Sanders (2008b: 8) notes, ‘Not studying men who buy sex is detrimental to wider sociological understandings of human sexuality, gender, personal relationships and, of course, commercial sex industries’. Also, men’s experiences of buying sex are not typically understood in the context of their daily lives because buying sex is potentially a deeply discrediting activity for some men, in terms of the risks to their social, sexual and self-identities (Earle & Sharp, 2007). Due to the gender disparity, there is a need for more empirical research on how the male client conceptualises his experiences and choices.

Men reporting on www.punternet.com felt that giving pleasure was an affirmation of their own sexual expertise and therefore their masculinity; in fact, they wrote much more about the
sex worker's orgasmic experience than of their own (Earle & Sharp, 2007). Men reveal their own self-perceptions and feelings when they report their experiences and feelings about sex workers. Evaluating components of self-reports can reveal important cognitions regarding motivation, risks and benefits of buying sex and overall self-esteem, and is an area of research that is lacking. In addition to a lack of knowledge about sex industry client emotions and feelings, the following list identifies other research gaps that are addressed within this study:

- The differences between casual, regular and long term consumers;
- The effect of feeling stigma or fear of getting caught when accessing sexual services and the influence this might have on the client’s other relationships;
- Indicators of health effects of buying sex other than the risk of STI contagion, such as physical health and well-being, how attitudes, beliefs and knowledge affect health behaviours, and community and socioeconomic health;
- Client self-identification with sexual compulsivity in the context of commercial sex procurement or examination of the issues surrounding financial hardship for people who have compulsive commercial sex behaviour; and
- Support mechanisms that men who pay for sex seek and how these affect behaviour.

Due to large gaps and conflicts in available knowledge regarding male sex industry clients, and their perceived deviant status, more research is needed to gain insight into the feelings, beliefs and cognitions of these men. Therefore, the aim of this current research is to investigate the physical, emotional and social consequences of accessing commercial sexual services for male clients in Australia, and most specifically, from the client's point of view. The study will examine issues concerning:
• The client’s perception of the risks and benefits of purchasing sexual services;

• The perceived effect of procuring sex on the client’s self-confidence, worth and esteem;

• The client’s use of support systems including online forums, groups of like-minded companions, counselling and/or psychotherapy services; and

• The client’s feelings about sex workers and the commercial sexual contract.

The method of completing this project is set out in the following chapter.
Chapter 4: Methods

This empirical research is an exploratory, qualitative study using narratives and a semi-structured questionnaire that allowed participants to express themselves. Using an interpretive phenomenological approach to examine clients' experiential narratives, this study gives voice to the client population through meaningful reflective interpretation. This chapter outlines the design of the study, covering the methods of recruiting participants, the materials used to collect data, the research procedures, and data analysis.

The steps undertaken in implementing this project were:

1. devise a questionnaire as a guided framework for participants,

2. test the questionnaire,

3. amend and post the questionnaire on-line using SurveyMonkey™,

4. advertise the project and request for participants through targeted organisations,

5. collect and analyse the data that met prescribed selection criteria.

Research design

On account of the limited information about clients' perspectives, a qualitative design was chosen to allow clients to identify what they considered to be the important issues within a guided framework. The project was advertised through various organizations prompting participants to use SurveyMonkey™, an online data collection tool that provides anonymity, and to answer a short semi-structured questionnaire and write narratives of their self-perceptions about paying for sex. The questionnaire consisted of closed questions and open text boxes that provided alternative responses when needed (see Appendix 1).
Online research has been criticised for not being able to establish relationships or truthfulness, and for a lack of depth in the written word (Mann & Stewart, 2000). However, studies into the effectiveness of online research have found that some people find it easier to articulate their thoughts "to a screen" because they can do so at a time and place to suit themselves and on their own terms, demonstrating that establishing relationships in order to receive depth and truthfulness may not always be necessary (Mann & Stewart, 2000). Furthermore, the internet is capable of reaching hard-to-access populations such as people who may experience similar phenomena but who do not form into accessible or support groups, people affected by stigma, or people over a wide geographical area (Mann & Stewart, 2000). In addition, studies in which the participant remains anonymous, without meeting a researcher face-to-face, may induce frankness and sincerity, therefore online data collection may offer participants a safe and convenient method of sharing information without revealing identifying information.

Face-to-face interviews were not considered appropriate for this project as the student researcher is female. Both Perkins (1999) and Charmaz (2006) agree that women conducting face-to-face interviews with men about sex can be problematic due to gender differences and a perceived threat to an interviewee’s masculinity, leading to censored responses. Similar issues may arise with male researchers to male participants.

Various on-line data collection tools were examined for their scope of data management, security of data, ease of use for the researcher and research participant and cost. Data were collected using SurveyMonkey™ which is an inexpensive intuitive web-based data collection
tool offering the possibility to ask an unlimited number of questions on predesigned templates, allowing 1,000 responses per month, and real-time SSL encoded results which are downloadable to excel and PDF. (For details see: www.surveymonkey.com). Once uploaded, the survey was tested several times by the researcher and supervisors to ensure that participants could enter as much text as they chose, and could spend an unlimited amount of time to complete the study. When this was achieved, the survey was made available on 1 October 2010 until 1 January 2011.

Testing the data collection tool

Prior to posting the data collection tool online, a draft was discussed with two clients of the sex industry who were known to the researcher. The purpose of the discussion was to ascertain the appropriateness of the tool to answer the research questions and to ensure that the language used was appropriate and industry specific. The two clients who examined the draft data collection tool were briefed on the research aims, and gave their verbal consent to assist in this endeavour.

One client, who has not had any contact with other clients, commented that some of the language about ‘using’ services was too academic and not congruent with his own conceptions of buying sex. The other client, who has had contact with many other clients through online client forums, suggested that the questionnaire was too structured in that it provided limited options for expressing one's gender and sexual orientation and that the narrative guide did not encourage clients to answer questions about financial impacts of buying sex or give opportunity to participants to write about their feelings for sex workers. In response to these discussions, small changes were made, including softening the language to
describe ‘buying sex’ instead of ‘using services’, being more open by providing open text boxes for answers to closed questions about sexuality and gender, and adding more specific suggestions to the narrative guide. The term ‘buying sex’ is used extensively throughout this project, as it is considered to be industry accepted, although it is acknowledged that men are not purchasing a sexual act per se but a sexual experience.

The narrative guide as a guided framework

Obtaining narratives regarding participant self-perceptions of specific experiences through a completely unguided process is challenging for participants and resulting narratives may not address core research questions. Therefore, narratives were guided by asking questions that were intended to be broad enough to allow participants to decide what was important to them in their experiences and to encourage rich descriptions. Moustakas (1994) suggests that phenomenological research asks two broad, general questions which will lead to a textural and structural description of the experiences and other open-ended questions may be asked.

The major questions in the narrative guide were:

- ‘How does being a client affect how you feel about yourself and your sexuality?’ This question encouraged participants to write whatever they thought important about their feelings;

- ‘How you feel about paying for sex – before, during and after?’ This question encouraged participants to think about their original motivations to buy sex and assess if clients' original motivations were fulfilled or whether an unforeseen outcome further influenced consumer choice.
Additional open-ended questions were asked to both reinforce the broad questions and to provide more specific information. In particular, participants were asked why they paid for sex and how this affected them financially, emotionally, physically, and socially. Also, questions were asked about how the participants felt about sex workers to further explore the clients’ attitudes and feelings toward the workers. Lastly, a question was asked about access to support mechanisms to determine the extent of disclosure and to evaluate each client's identification within a client community and if contact with other clients of the sex industry affected his perceptions and choices in any way. The narrative guide is presented in Appendix 2.

Participants were not expected to adequately describe their own contextual settings in the body of their narratives, without interrupting the flow of their narratives (Dey, 1993). The semi-structured questionnaire was used to place each narrative in its own context, giving background information about each participant’s gender, age, sexual orientation, and the settings in which he had purchased sex, to create a better understanding. Narratives were selected as the best method of collecting data that reflected participants' priorities and self-perceptions with less chance of researcher questioning bias (Dey, 1993). In addition, when verbatim data are received digitally, transcription bias is eliminated and data management is significantly easier and less costly; data remains in its original form to be explored through analysis. When writing narratives the participants chose what was important to include and what to leave out (Charmaz, 2006), and allowed participants to be the expert of their own experiences.

Study participants & their recruitment
Eligible study participants were men who had paid for sex in Australia, at least once a month, for more than one year. Potential participants could only progress to the study questionnaire after they had given informed consent. The participant information is presented in Appendix 3. Participants who gave consent then accessed the study questionnaire and responded to the narrative guide.

Minichiello, Sullivan, Greenwood and Axford, (2004) discusses relationship building with potential ‘gate keepers’ of populations to be studied and acknowledge that access is not guaranteed. Relationships with potential advertising sources were developed to facilitate contact with potential participants as soon as the survey tool was available. I was unable to make contact with either the owners or the marketing directors of two online escort review sites, despite several emails and phone calls. Therefore, direct access to a base of clients of the sex industry was not achieved and alternatives such as more general advertising were considered. The eventual advertising plan consisted of online advertising in newsletters, URL sharing and direct contact with clients through sex workers.

The advertising plan used two stages of advertising to model Strauss and Corbin (1990) who suggest that the first stage is open advertising to allow for all possibilities, and the second stage of snow-balling. Open advertising was achieved by promotion of the study to the members of EROS and the Australian Sex Party, who are people with a likely interest in sex related matters (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The individuals reached via these e-newsletters are people who have a political interest in sex related matters and may not be representative of the entire population. However, URL sharing was encouraged and several study participants said that they were not involved in EROS or the Australian Sex Party.
The second stage of advertising was greatly enhanced by a snow-balling technique (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Snow-balling, as described by Bryman (1998), is the influence of suitable participants contacting other potential participants, thereby widening the initial sample and directly targeting the required population. An advantage of on-line advertising is that snow-balling has the potential to ‘go viral’, which is when an object (advertisement, blog, tweet) is copied by others and spread to obtain attention via the internet (Ferguson, 2008). An indication of this possibility indeed occurred during the study as the first research participant reported that he had obtained the URL from Twitter\textsuperscript{2}, when the researcher had placed the first online advertisement in an e-newsletter just minutes before, but the research is unable to ascertain to what extent this "virality" occurred.

The first advertisement was published in the EROS e-newsletter on 8 October 2010 and went to 300 people nationally. The first recipient submitted his response within 40 minutes, and 17 people in total responded to the first advertisement. The second advertisement was published in the Australian Sex Party e-newsletter circulated to 2000 people nationally, and netted 67 respondents within 24 hours. Both of these newsletters continued to publish the advertisements each month during the survey period and continued to attract suitable research participants. The final sample of 27 narratives included 22 people who had responded to the Australian Sex Party newsletter and 5 from URL sharing, indicating that the first stage of advertising was successful and that URL sharing did occur as per the second stage of advertising.

\textsuperscript{2} Twitter is a real-time information network, using computers and mobile phones to transmit small bursts of information, and can include links to internet sites. http://twitter.com/about
The other avenue for recruitment of participants through sex workers was presented when the researcher was networking with sex workers. Scarlet Alliance, the Australian sex worker association, has a private email list for sex workers and one of the workers agreed to advertise the research through the sex workers. This advertisement went out on 4 December 2010 and may have resulted in several research participants throughout December 2010.

Attempting to recruit a randomised sample of possible sex industry clients from the general community was not considered cost or time effective. Although 16% of men in Australia may have bought sex in their lives, stigma and the secretive nature of buying sex may mean that many who do so would be unwilling to admit it, or to describe their experiences thoroughly or truthfully, unless highly motivated. Therefore, a sample of self-selecting volunteers who responded to the advertisements was recruited into this study.

Earle and Sharp (2007) conclude that self-selecting participants for research about clients of the sex industry can be problematic in that only participants with strong feelings, motivation to be heard, time and energy will engage in the study, which will not represent the entire client community. Whilst this may be true, eliciting honest responses from reluctant study participants is unlikely and unethical, therefore the limitations of using only participants who volunteer is acknowledged, and was addressed by checking the final results for the 27 narratives that were analysed against the 53 narratives received to look for any invariant characteristics. No new themes or contradictions to existing themes were found, which verified theoretical saturation against a larger number of participants.

Sample
A sample was selected from the data received, based on eligibility criteria and narratives that addressed the research questions. These criteria were: men, who had bought sex in Australia about once a month, and for more than a year. A total of 137 participants responded to the survey, 53 of whom wrote narratives. Four of these were female, and two were males who had not bought sex for a year, leaving a possible 47 participants.

Only long-term male clients of the sex industry were included to ensure that information was obtained from people who had a baseline level of repeat behaviour, and who had had time to develop their own perceptions and to assess the impact on themselves, their other relationships and the wider community. There have been limited published enquiries that have demonstrated the length of time over which the average client accesses sexual services; for the purposes of this research, a long-term client is defined as someone who has paid for sex approximately once per month for a period of more than one year. The term ‘regular’ client has been avoided because some researchers found that many clients who frequently purchased sex did not consider themselves ‘regulars’ because they did not use one single provider, or did not buy sex from the same market, every time (Perkins, 1999). Even though the study consent form specified that participants needed to be male and to have bought sex about once a month for more than a year, several people who did not fit the criteria did fill out the survey and write narratives. These data were excluded from analysis.

After eliminating ineligible narratives, the remaining narratives were examined for a selective sampling process that involved directed and deliberate ‘testing out’ of the research propositions in order to select the narratives with the richest and thickest descriptions. An Excel spreadsheet was drawn up of participants who wrote narratives indicating whether
each narrative addressed the five themes: motivations to buy sex, any perceived risks and benefits of buying sex, the effects of internalised or external stigma and discrimination, their level of disclosure, and their access to any support systems. Of the 47 suitable narratives, 20 were subsequently excluded because they addressed fewer than four of the five research questions. Thus a total of 27 participants who met all criteria constituted the sample that was initially analysed for the study. The results of the initial analysis were later used as a reference point to check for any further themes in the unselected narratives, thus ensuring that data in all narratives were considered. This process is illustrated in the flow chart below:

![Data analysis flow chart](Image)

Figure 4.1. Data analysis flow chart

Polkinghorne (1989) suggests that saturation may be achieved with accounts from 5-25 individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon. Bryman (1988) suggests between 20 and 150 interviews may be necessary, but cites studies that achieved saturation in 12 interviews. Furthermore, Bryman (1988) describes a method of purposive sampling in which participants are chosen by the researcher to identify those who meet the study criteria. Theoretical saturation for analysis was achieved when repeated data checking against the selected narratives failed to uncover any new themes or inherent characteristics and repeated
evidence for all conceptual categories was found, indicating that the 27 selected narratives were adequate for analysis. After analysis, the findings were compared and contrasted against all unselected narratives to check for any new themes or exceptions to the findings. No further information was found and the selective sampling process was considered to be successful.

Analysis

The sample data were analysed using a phenomenological approach to obtain a detailed description of the perceptions of the clients, while having fidelity to the phenomena of buying sex to capture the way the phenomena appears in everyday life (Giorgi, 1994; Miles & Huberman, 1984). Interpretive phenomenological analysis is an exploratory method developed specifically within psychology, that preserves the unique experiences and perceptions of clients, not just through description of the phenomenon of buying sex, but by exploring participants’ personal perceptions using hermeneutics – the theory of interpretation of the researcher (Smith, 2011). An understanding of the phenomenon of buying sex is achieved through descriptions of the lived experiences of study participants and by exploring how participants themselves make sense of their experiences.

Participants’ narratives and demographic details were examined individually to ‘get to know’ each participant and the settings in which he bought sex. Memoranda were written about each participant, including as much information about the individual’s overall situation and philosophical position as could be gained from the narrative. A sample of a narrative with accompanying memoranda is included at Appendix 4. This idiographic approach,
characterising the distinctiveness of each account, was adopted to hold individual experiences in mind when subsequently performing more general qualitative thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis required a secondary reading and annotation of the data as each account was examined to identify initial substantive categories reflecting the research aims: motivations, risks, benefits, effect on family or others, feelings about workers, stigma, support systems and sex industry politics. Each category was further subcategorised to determine the core themes within each category. For example, the motivations category distinguished a range of subcategories of: ‘can’t have or don’t want a relationship’, ‘convenience’, ‘seeking sexual satisfaction’, ‘seeking intimacy’, ‘in a bad relationship’, ‘in a good relationship, but’, and ‘motivations not otherwise classified’.

Data were compared and contrasted both within and across subcategories to make connections between categories and to identify the most important or higher level conceptual categories and core themes. Both the regularities in the data and the variances and exceptions were analysed to clarify the boundaries of each category and relationships between concepts (Dey, 1993). Comparing and contrasting categories highlighted conceptual issues with the initial categorisation, when, for example, the categories of ‘risks’ and ‘benefits’ became intertwined. In this case, the subcategory of ‘money’ appeared as both a risk and benefit as men spoke about money being both a positive and negative factor in their decisions to buy sex. For this reason the categories of ‘risks’, and ‘benefits’, became a larger category of ‘outcomes’; this also discouraged the researcher from interpreting a particular financial aspect of buying sex using a value judgement on a positive/negative dimension, since participants' narratives did not necessarily specify such evaluations. Another example of
category shifting occurred when the subcategory of ‘stigma’, previously under the ‘risks’ category, became so large that it required a higher level of importance and a separate category called ‘effects of stigma’. Memoranda were written about each of the categories and subcategories which were collated and classified to highlight emerging themes. Together with the memoranda written about individual participants, these were used as a basis to develop and write up the results of the study.

During each stage of analysis and writing, the researcher referred back to the original data to re-examine these within their original context to ensure meanings did not become skewed (Dey, 1993). This is evidenced in the many original data quotations that appear within the results chapter.

**Ethics**

After gaining ethics approval from the University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee on 18 June 2010 (application no: 12637), a participant information sheet and a consent form were uploaded to an online survey site which outlined the study aims, who could participate, what was involved in participating, how to withdraw from the study, how the results would be disseminated, and how to contact the researcher for further information. Recruitment was entirely voluntary as each participant sought out the SurveyMonkey™ webpage in response to an advertisement or media attention with no contact from the researcher. Participants did not receive any remuneration or reimbursement of costs in exchange for their submissions, and a statement to this effect was made in the participant information sheet posted to the SurveyMonkey™ site.
The data analysis process was assisted by NVivo software into which participant accounts were copied using numbers for participants (Gaiser & Schreiner, 2009). All care was taken to protect the privacy of participants. No identifying information was gathered, and the IP addresses of participants were not collected from the SurveyMonkey™ site. Data that travelled between ISPs was encrypted using SSL encryption and the computer of the researcher is password protected. Data will be kept for seven years in a password-protected computer, accessible only to the chief investigators and the student researcher.

**Summary**

This chapter has outlined the qualitative study design, and has explained the methods and tools used to recruit participants and to obtain and analyse the data. The next chapter, which presents the results, shows how participants expressed themselves in a valid and truthful way, and addresses questions about how clients of the sex industry feel about themselves and their choices.
Chapter 5: Results

The first part of this chapter describes the sample of participants – their age, sexual orientation, and the market settings in which they buy sex. The chapter then focuses on information obtained regarding the relationship status of participants. This is of particular note because a question about relationship status was not asked of participants in either the short questionnaire or the narrative guide, yet each participant volunteered information about his relationship status in his written narrative. The remaining part of the chapter is broadly divided into two sections. A first section focuses on motivations of participants for buying sex and the impact buying sex has on them. These results were generated by the narratives received in response to the two major study questions regarding how clients felt about themselves and their sexuality in regard to buying sex, and how they felt about paying for sex – before, during and after. Participants also focused on the minor study questions about why they pay for sex, and how they are affected financially, emotionally, socially, physically and in their relationships as a result of purchasing sex. The subsequent section focuses on how the participants felt about and treated sex workers, other clients, and their thoughts about the politics of the sex industry.

Sample demographics

Of the 27 participants in the selected sample, the average age was 44, ranging from 19 to 74 years old, and this average was close to the 42.9 years for all of the 69 participants who registered their age. Almost 70% of the latter participants were under age 50, while only 55.5% of the 27 in the selected sample were under age 50.

The number of participants who stated their age is shown in Table 5.1 below:
Table 5.1. Age groups of those participants who stated their age.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group (years)</th>
<th>All those participants who stated their age. N = 69</th>
<th>The selected sample participants. N = 27</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-29</td>
<td>16 (23.2%)</td>
<td>5 (18.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>10 (14.5%)</td>
<td>5 (18.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>22 (31.9%)</td>
<td>5 (18.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>14 (20.3%)</td>
<td>6 (22.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>3 (4.3%)</td>
<td>3 (11.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70+</td>
<td>4 (5.8%)</td>
<td>3 (11.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average age:</td>
<td>42.9 years</td>
<td>44 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 27 participants' average duration of accessing commercial sex was 18 years, ranging from 1 year to 59 years (Table 5.2), while the 63 participants who provided this information had been, on average, accessing sexual services for a similar time, 16.1 years. Notable is that of the 63 participants, 54% had been accessing commercial sex services for less than 15 years, and a similar percentage (almost 52%) of the 27 in the selected sample had done so for less than 15 years.
Table 5.2. Number of years that participants had accessed commercial sex.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of years that participants had accessed commercial sex.</th>
<th>All those participants who indicated the period of time over which they had accessed commercial sex. N = 63</th>
<th>The selected sample participants who indicated the period of time over which they had accessed commercial sex. N = 27</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>17 (27%)</td>
<td>7 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>11 (17.5%)</td>
<td>3 (11.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>6 (9.5%)</td>
<td>4 (14.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>9 (14.3%)</td>
<td>4 (14.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>5 (8%)</td>
<td>3 (11.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>8 (12.7%)</td>
<td>2 (7.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>2 (3.2%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>2 (3.2%)</td>
<td>1 (3.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>2 (3.2%)</td>
<td>2 (7.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-55</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56-60</td>
<td>1 (1.6%)</td>
<td>1 (3.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average:</td>
<td>16.1 years</td>
<td>18 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although it would be speculative to suggest any association between age and the period over which any of the participants had accessed commercial sexual services, or between either of these variables and other (unknown) factors, age, and possible commensurate marital status and/or disposable income, may play a role. That not withstanding, these numbers point to the need for further research to tease out any possible correlations; yet, more important for this qualitative study is to document simply a group of people across a range of ages and time with similar experiences who talk about their engagement with the sex industry and inform us of the human sexual condition.

The participants were asked their sexual orientations and also the genders of the sex workers that they saw and include a broad range of sexual orientations. One participant identified as
gay and paid only male sex workers. Two participants identified as bisexual, and 4 described their orientation as ‘mainly straight’, and all 6 of these men paid men, women and transgendered sex workers. The other 20 participants identified as straight or heterosexual. However, one of these men acknowledged that he paid men, women and transgendered workers for sex, and 3 other straight-identifying men paid both women and transgendered persons for sex.

Data from the semi-structured questionnaire indicated that market settings for buying sex were fairly evenly spread, meaning that, on average, private workers and brothels were utilised comparatively equally and only one participant did not use private workers or brothels at all. Three participants indicated that they only paid private workers, 4 participants only visited brothels and 15 participants accessed both brothels and private workers. Nine participants accessed strip clubs as a portion of their sex industry involvement. None of the participants visited strip clubs exclusively and all used physical sexual services. Five participants accessed street or safe house³ markets, but this was less than 10 per cent of their total sex industry involvement. Two participants remarked in their narratives that they also bought sexual massage services. None of the respondents indicated that they had paid for sexual services via telephone or online, including via webcam, which may be because none of them did, because they did not have an opportunity to say so during the survey, or because they did not consider these to be sexual services. This information is summarized in Table 5.3.

³ Safe houses are Sydney Council accredited venues where street workers can take their clients and rooms are rented by the hour.
Table 5.3. Number of participants accessing different market settings (N = 27)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Access Description</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100% brothel use –</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100% private sex worker use –</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used some brothel services –</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used some private sex workers –</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only used brothels or private workers –</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used some strip club –</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used some street or safe house –</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Relationship status of participants**

Despite there being no questions in the questionnaire or narrative guide regarding the relationship status of participants, 21 participants directly disclosed their relationship status. The 6 participants who did not directly disclose their relationship status, did so indirectly with comments such as:

*however if I have had a bit of a dry period and am not having any luck with the ladies and feel like I could use some company I'll pay for it. (participant 116)*

and,

*I usually pay for sex while away from home for work and it was better than picking up in bars. (participant 133).*

Therefore, it could be established that, of the 27 participants in the sample, 17 were single and 10 were married or were in marriage-like relationships. The researcher did not consider relationship status to be an important factor in purchasing sex because it is known that both single and partnered men buy sex. Yet the study participants used discussion of the relationship status as a basis for motivations to buy sex, regardless of what their relationship status was. Partnered participants explained why they behaved outside of traditional monogamous expectations. Single men explained why they were single and hence bought sex.
Single participants

Of the 17 single participants, 6 described ideals of serial monogamy and indicated that they only paid for sex when they were not in a relationship. Another 6 men alluded to the idea that they were not looking for a relationship and were happy with their current arrangements, which included paying for sex. The other single participants did not indicate their relationship goals but did explain the reasons for being single. To separate their selves from assumptions that they may be ‘desperately’ single, or from cultural expectations of pair-bonding, most single participants stated the reasons that they were single. Those participants that did not choose to be single, explained that they lacked social skills for relationships such as: having Asperger’s syndrome\(^4\), being ‘nerdy’, not being a social drinker or footy-fan, being unattractive and overweight, preferring to be a loner, and not ‘doing’ casual conversation. Practical reasons for being single vis-à-vis social reasons noted above included not having time for a relationship or ‘moving around too much’ with work.

Some of the single participants justified not wanting a relationship by indicating that they were commitment-phobic, while others separated sex from a relationship. These latter men reported that they separated sex from the emotional component of relationships not just because they desired sex and rather than a relationship, but because they did not consider that sex and relationships were mutually exclusive. Therefore they considered that paying for sex was an honourable choice in order to not hurt the feelings of another person who might expect emotional intimacy from a sexual relationship. While they viewed sex as an entitlement of being human, they recognised paying for sex as a fair trade exchange which was justified by their single status. For example:

\(^4\) Asperger’s Syndrome is a milder variant of an autistic disorder that affects social skills but does not necessarily preclude relationships. Asperger’s is mentioned here as it was the participant’s perception of the reason for his single relationship status.
I also felt it was justified as an alternative to the practice of lying to women that I loved them when what I wanted was sex without permanent commitment. (participant 60).

Six of the single men in the study valued a serial monogamous lifestyle within the paradigm of romantic love:

I have not paid for sex while in a committed relationship. (participant 116).

Four of these participants described buying sex as a ‘regular’ client of a particular worker and staying "monogamous" to that worker as they might in a romantic relationship. Other participants bought sex from a variety of workers due to freedom-of-choice that they considered to be conferred by their single status.

Participants in relationships

Ten participants were married or in marriage-like relationships. One of these participants was gay but married to a woman:

I still live with my wife and share the bed but not sexually any more.... I don’t do monogamy, however, preferring to gain outside experiences that can be brought back into a relationship and my last boyfriend was in 100% agreement with that. (participant 63).

Another was in an open relationship with a woman; he described it as a committed relationship where both members had agreed to have sex with others:

We are in an open relationship, but don’t go into details with each other. (participant 124).

Another participant described that he and his wife buy sex together due to their physical disabilities:

My wife and I are profoundly disabled and we not able to even masturbate by ourselves. (participant 14).
These participants' descriptions illustrate that not all marriage-type relationships involve love, romance, intimacy, or even sex.

The other partnered participants were in relationships that were not fulfilling their sexual needs but they considered themselves to be monogamous:

*I am not aware of any problems with wife or family. No one knows about it, I keep it isolated.* (participant 86);

Embedded in the commercial sexual contract is an expectation of discretion. So, in paying for sex, clients also buy discretion. Almost all of the married participants explained their motivations to buy sex against the context of their relationships. Four married men said that their wives were sexually unadventurous, causing them to seek sexual variety, and two men described a loving marital relationship with wives who were uninterested in sex. For example:

*I am a professional man in a long term (30 year) happy marriage to a woman I love and respect and whose company I enjoy. I have three lovely daughters, all successful in their careers and all in stable committed relationships. I am fit and in good health with plenty of life interests. My wife is normally uninterested in sex which is what pointed me in the direction of commercial sex.* (participant 68)

The other men described relationships that were unhappy and whose wives were also uninterested in sex; for them, buying sex was not just a sexual outlet but an escape from her controlling insecure behaviour (participant 39), or was described as a consequence of a relationship that was not ideal:

*We (wife and I) have had a very sporadic sex life over the years - never fulfilling. Our normal interests and hobbies are far apart and the same goes for sex and intimacy.* (participant 101).

Two participants had wives who were unable to have sex due to ill health (‘prolapse problems’) or disability.
The participants in this study thought that their relationship status was an important impetus in buying sex, even though these participants' status varied. Single participants felt a need to explain why they were single, whether it was by choice or circumstance; and partnered participants felt obliged to explain why they did not conform to expectations of monogamy. An analysis of their motivations to buy sex shows that these were the same regardless of their relationship status.

**Motivations to buy sex and impact of buying sex**

This section presents the results of analyses that relate to the reason men buy sex and emphasises that each participant had several motivating factors. The impacts of buying sex upon the participants are then presented. It was not appropriate to separate the risks/benefits or positive/negative effects of the impacts, as all participants had complicated and, at times, conflicting outcomes. In a similar way, the impact of buying sex upon participants' family and friends are also discussed.

**Motivations to buy sex**

All narratives analysed contained information about the motivations for men to buy sex. The decision to buy sex did not occur easily for many men in the study and they consequently give several motivating factors to further explain their reasoning. The most commonly mentioned motivations were to seek sexual variety, the convenience of buying sex, and to seek intimacy. It is not possible to draw a line between these motivations as applying to different consumers, as their narratives show a complicated weaving between all three major motivations: seeking sexual variety, convenience and seeking emotional intimacy.
Seeking sexual variety

The participants in this study felt a need for variety in sexual experiences and in sexual partners regardless of sexual orientation or age. They construct this need in several different ways, including: variety in emotional connections, Madonna/whore dichotomy beliefs, variety in seeking sexual services, and using experiences as learning opportunities. For example:

I enjoy the variety of women I get to meet and connect with (& most times they enjoy my company too!) and also appreciate the skill these workers demonstrate with making you feel relaxed and at ease. It is a joy. (participant 71)

I honestly would prefer one woman in my life but being able to "shop around" has its benefits and is exciting. (participant 67).

The most obvious reason for buying sex might be that men simply want sex – and possibly, that humans are biologically driven to want sex. But in our complicated social environment, men are not keen to appear as being driven by hormonal influences alone and few even make reference to ‘horny’ feelings. Only three participants actually used words to describe their motivations to buy sex as a base need for sexual gratification. At the same time these participants identified other reasons to buy sex, as if ‘being horny’ alone made them feel that they were shallow or callous and putting their own needs above others. Given the powerful nature of the human libido and the deviant construction of the man who buys sex it would seem that the low rates of admission to feelings of basic passion are an indication that these men do not wish to be viewed simply as men who cannot control their sexual impulses and that the decision to buy sex is not that simple:

I was looking for sexual gratification, but also to feel physical contact with a naked body. (participant 95).

What men said about the sexual act in commercial sex was important because all men said sex itself was not the only motivation to pay. While there were no narratives describing fantasies of sexual prowess or erotic accounts of the men’s egos, it is obvious that when
paying, the sex had to be good to justify the expense and that negative experiences were more acutely felt because of a perceived failure of the sexual contract and a risk to their feelings of masculinity. Consideration should also be made to the fact that good sex requires at least two performers (as we are not discussing masturbatory practices) and that good sexual experiences also raise the perceived virility of the narrator, meaning that men are more likely to report positive experiences. These participants described the sexual act:

*Plus the sex has been sensational.* (participant 64)

*Some of the best sex I have ever had has been with working ladies.* (participant 98).

In the same way, the sexual satisfaction of the worker is important to some participants to reinforce romantic sexual scripts, increase the participant’s perception of himself as a lover, and to separate himself from the stereotypical client who cares little for the physical or emotional feelings of sex workers. For example:

*I tell the guy that it isn’t about him, or me, but about us having a great time together and get right into doing that without any further concern about the money* (participant 63).

The Madonna/Whore Complex is described as a Victorian protraction that has influenced male/female sexuality immeasurably by increasing the double standard of male sexual privilege in view of the separation of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ female sexuality. While modern scientific inquiry has debunked myths of female sexual dichotomy, many men still have beliefs about the type of sex that you pay for as being different from the type of sex enjoyed within relationships and view people who sell sex as different from other people:

*That said I don’t think personally I could date someone who works in the industry.* (participant 116).

This participant may also be using a double standard approach:

*the sex isn’t as good as with a girlfriend I care about.* (participant 137).
The above comments indicate that emotional intimacy is important to these participants and, for them, emotional bonding is not as likely with a commercial sex worker.

In addition to sex not being the only goal of the commercial sex transaction, some men find the process of buying sex to be exciting and part of the experience. This includes cruising, seeking advertisements, planning which establishment to visit, making phone calls and arranging the man’s personal schedule:

*I sometimes find selecting the sex worker at the brothel or phoning around from newspaper or internet listings exciting.* (participant 137).

For some, the illicit nature of buying sex is a turn-on, particularly so when accessing illegal services. The fear of getting caught, or even arrested, can increase the adrenaline rush leading to increased ejaculation and provide heightened pleasure for these men:

*When I used to look for street workers I found that more exciting, probably due to the illegal nature of it.* (participant 137).

The need for sexual variety does not necessarily mean different partners, but may be different sexual acts themselves such as anal sex, fetishes, or sex with cross dressers or transgendered workers. The following participant expressed a need for sexual variety and described his frustration at not getting sexual variety with his wife:

*I initially wanted to spice things up with the wife, but she refused initially, and then said she’d try it but backed down* (participant 39).

This participant described that he received sexual variety by paying for sex, but the knowledge of these new experiences did not enrich his primary relationship:

*What I’ve done during my paid sex sessions hasn’t transferred across into my normal sex life.* (participant 64).

Some participants considered the sexual variety received through paid sexual liaisons as learning experiences:

*the first time I did it was to try something new, then the next times were to learn new things about myself, women and sex* (participant 58).
I do this to gain experience in areas that I need more experience in and can't get immediately from other sources, like bondage and bdsm activities for example. (participant 63).

Despite the age difference of these participants, learning about sex was a common goal and demonstrates that learning about sex is a lifelong experience. Some participants attributed sexual knowledge, skills and prowess as the domain of sex workers and expressed appreciation in learning from them:

*Escorts helped me discover, appreciate and enjoy my sexuality to its fullest, so being the learning client is wonderful.* (participant 63).

One participant specifically paid to lose his virginity:

*Well I originally went to a sex worker because I was still a virgin when I was about to turn 21.* (participant 18).

The above quote indicates this young person had a perception of masculinity being a man who has sexual knowledge, and that his own virginity and lack of sexual knowledge would not be shameful with a woman who specialises in sex.

Seeking variety in sexual acts and experiences is a major motivation for men who buy sex stemming from both biological drivers and culturally expected norms of male masculinity and sexual privilege. At the same time, and somewhat conversely, cultural expectations of sexual behaviour are also heavily influenced by individual relationship-status and a desire for men to distance themselves from stereotypical client roles. Another factor in a man’s choice to buy sex is that commercial sex is available and convenient.

*Convenience*

The ease and availability of the commercial sex act is another powerful motivator for men, with over half of the participants in the study referring to convenience of the activity. Sexual
convenience was referred to by the participants both as sex that was easy to access and sex that is separated from emotional responsibility. Another important aspect of convenience was that commercial sex implied discretion.

Sex that is separated from emotional responsibility is valued as a selfish desire because the emotional and sexual needs of the other person are not important or relevant. This construction of sex is unlikely to be sustainable in a long-term relationship without attendant abuse. These participants viewed the sex worker as available and ready for sex and considered that the exchange of money negated the need to emotionally or sexually satisfy the sex worker:

A friend of mine makes another point to others that when you go to McDonalds you want your Big Mac served over the counter to you fully prepared. When you are hungry you don't want to have to go around to the farm, kill the cow, process the entrails, make the plastic bread and put it all together yourself. Effort replaced by convenience. That's the whole point of fast food. The sex industry is the same. (participant 76)

Sexuality's a part of life - by going to a sex worker, I'm servicing my physical needs without having all the attendant emotional requirements of a relationship. If I pay the money, I get exactly what I ask for. Everyone wins. (participant 97).

When participants referred to convenience as a motivator to buy sex, they were not referring simply to the fact that commercial sex is available from a nearby brothel, but that the sex worker was ready and willing to have sex without the man having to find a willing partner or woo a willing wife. The separation of sex from emotional responsibility was not viewed the same as sex that is separated from emotion. Some narratives had elements of desires for uncomplicated sex while still seeking emotional intimacy, demonstrating that the sexual act is never devoid of emotion and that our biological sexual needs include a degree of bonding. These narratives are further examined in the next section on intimacy.
The only exception to participants appreciating the convenience of commercial sex was one participant who complained that the type of sex available to him to purchase was not always preferred or convenient because of his regional and financial situation:

_The choices are more determined by availability and opportunity than by inclination (participant 78)._  

**Intimacy**

The study found the same number of references for the need for intimacy in the act as for convenience of the commercial sex act, and sometimes within the same narrative, indicating that buying sex to satisfy carnal desire is not exclusive of intimacy. Constructing commercial sex along the same lines as romantic love protects a man’s masculinity in light of ‘having to pay for it’, and protects the sanctity of sex while further distancing the client from the ‘deviant’.

Many participants referred to the pleasures of being a ‘regular’ with one worker and feeling a sense of an ongoing relationship:

_When I have a "regular" lady I feel good about visiting them ..... Sometimes we just talk. (participant 98)_

_I have visited some of them quite a lot and we have got to be friends. (participant 86)._  

Examples of intimate relationships that have formed from commercial encounters occurred in five narratives, including this participant who married a sex worker:

_...... they call me or I ring them from time to time for a chat, and one of them I meet occasionally for a coffee or lunch. I really enjoyed those "relationships" - the ladies were beautiful human beings and I think we enjoyed our times together...... Two of them asked me out (not expecting any payment) and I took 3 of them to the theatre, the cinema or out to dinner a few times. I married one of them. (participant 95)._

Although participant 95 also indicated that he later divorced the sex worker that he had married, his narrative expresses an ongoing desire for intimacy with sex workers in general.
For most participants the commercial emotional relationship is enriched by feelings of not requiring coitus per se, but as skin-to-skin intimate contact with another, and sometimes in a reciprocal arrangement. Sexual pleasure is not just constructed as receiving pleasurable stimulus, but by being able to touch and be touched by another. For example:

> it is usually not so much the sexual act itself (i.e. penetrative sex) but the closeness and touching skin-to-skin with another person and also the open acknowledgement of what we are doing, the sense of fun and honesty that goes along with it. We both know what we are there for and we both aim to enjoy it (participant 101).

> I like giving girls pleasure, I get more satisfaction from giving than from getting orgasms but I am an ugly and ancient bastard so my options are limited. (participant 78).

Emotional intimacy has boundaries in any relationship, with commercial relationships having clearer and well understood boundaries that protect the client (and worker) and create a feeling of ‘safety’ in the anonymity of the encounter:

> I don’t mind talking before or after sex but I feel more comfortable (and I’m sure the other party does as well) if things are kept superficial. (participant 72).

Emotional boundaries that create welcomed limits to intimacy were described by some participants:

> Whilst we maintain anonymity, we discuss families, kids, life stresses, holidays etc. (participant 68).

Intimacy in commercial settings is increasingly valued in many occupations such as social work, marketing, nursing etc. Almost all narratives had components of need - for variety, convenience and intimacy, as motivators to buy sex, with only a few other motivations mentioned.

**Other motivations**

Some men in the study cohort indicated that, in addition to the above motivations, they bought sex for entertainment or they wanted some ‘luxury’. Reasons for seeking commercial
sexual services that are less often considered include people who cannot have sex or can not masturbate due to physical impairment. For example:

*I first started seeing a sex-worker when I broke up with my girlfriend and had no other sexual partner. And sexual activity with another person present is important to me because I can't have solo-sex (i.e. I cannot masturbate alone to orgasm). I have suffered from a condition of sex headache (orgasmic cephalgia) for 20 years since early-adulthood, for which the only trigger is masturbation-to-orgasm-alone (not with a partner).* (participant 13).

The motivations for men seeking commercial sex are multiple and often ambiguous within individual narratives. This is not simply to rationalise or to justify behaviour that may be outside of accepted social conventions, but to explain logically and judiciously behaviour that is not necessarily unusual or unreasonable. Similar patterning was found when participants wrote about the impact of buying sex, in that risks and benefits were not clear cut, as one factor might be a risk to one participant, yet the same factor could be a benefit to another. The following part of this section describes the study results for how buying sex affected the participants.

*The impacts of commercial sex on the male participant*

Participants described the consequences of buying sex in terms that reinforced their rational decisions to buy sex. Positive and negative outcomes were noted within each of the narratives, with analysis revealing several dominant themes such as money, and physical and emotional impacts on participants’ health. Money was discussed more often than sex itself, with both positive and negative comments on paying. The financial implications of compulsive sexual addiction was a perceived possible problem by the participants in the study, but not experienced as a problem by any of them. The physical and emotional health impacts of sex were also widely discussed, including health fears about such things as sexually transmitted infections and the impact of guilt.
Financial implications

The activity of buying commercial sexual services varies with every client, sex worker and occasion of service. A hierarchical structure exists within the full service industry (businesses offering sexual intercourse) which has the perception that ‘you get what you pay for’, meaning that more money spent directly equates to a higher quality of experience. This participant rates the ‘quality of the experience’ against how beautiful and sexy the provider is, which is directly related to money:

...as in my experience you get what you pay for. For example, in general the MORE expensive the better it will be which means that the girl will be more beautiful and more sexy (participant 23).

Money was important as both an endorsement for behaviour in the sexual contract and a limiting factor. Those who said that they would pay for sex more often if money was unlimited were also sure to describe their spending as within their personal budget and not taking away from other responsibilities such as family. For example:

If I could afford it, I would have paid sex every week - but I can't, so I make do when I can, perhaps once a month or so and I do it in a way that has minimal effect on the family's finances. My family does not go without anything because of my need to have sex. (participant 101).

Several participants described their strategies for saving and their pattern of commercial sex use within their means, although not necessarily within their dreams:

I believe it could be quite easy to become 'addicted' to buying sex. If money was no object for me I sometimes think I would be paying thousands of dollars each week for the hottest call girls money could buy. I just love sex and women in general. Luckily I am careful financially so I don’t, but I could see how easy it could be if you had money (participant 23).

Sexual addiction is widely debated amongst sexual health professionals and the current Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) does not use the term ‘sexual addiction’. The closest paraphilia relating to uncontrolled sexuality is hypersexuality, which must include distress about behaviour as well as failed attempts to change behaviour in order to achieve a diagnosis. None of the
participants in the study expressed current distress about their behaviour, although one did acknowledge a lack of control in the past:

Financially, it affects me badly financially, especially when I have gotten drunk and have gone to a brothel for a whole night. I recently spent $1500 dollars that I can’t afford at a brothel where I slept with three different women and paid for “extras”. The best way for me to handle it is to go to a brothel on a regular basis before I get desperate, because I will generally spend less then. Having a "rub and tug" is a good option too as it is cheaper, (participant 137).

Some argued that one's money earned is entitled to be spent as desired and that many people make poor financial choices:

Other people spend hundreds of dollars on booze and smokes and gambling - I don’t, thus have more disposable income. And the money I earn, I have the right to spend how I see fit. (participant 97).

A disabled participant described his strategy of budgeting for commercial sex which involved negotiating with government departments to access his disability care allowances - to be used as he feels is important to his care. Government agencies control disability care allowances that provide a limited amount of money for each disabled person to be used in defined ways. Even when a disabled person has financial control over these funds, accountability is required in the form of receipts for services to ensure that the care needs of the person are met.

Financially: we have negotiated with the (local) Government that the cost of a certain number of visits by our sex worker will be classified as personal care to assist us to maintain our long term relationship (ie. marriage). Whilst we would like our sex worker to visit more frequent, our budget prohibits this. (participant 14).

Having to justify sexual choices to agencies that control one’s personal finances are likely to create a barrier to accessing commercial sexual services for many disabled persons.

A prominent financial discourse emerged through the analysis of the narratives when 6 study participants compared the cost of commercial sex to casual or permanent relationships. Commercial sex was said by some participants to be better than sex in relationships: sex within long term relationships often decreases in frequency and satisfaction; that sex workers
will do more than ‘regular’ girls; and that it is possible to pay for both sex and personal attention – which is not possible in relationships. For example:

Although same as locating a partner in a normal bar, sometimes the person is not what you would expect, when purchasing rather than romancing you tend to have a higher expectation (participant 133)

I feel that all Straight Men pay for Sex. The difference is that when using a Sex Worker, the cost is only financial. The Girl Friends I have had all demand financial, emotional, labour and time compensation for the benefits of a relationship and the sex tends to suffer with law of diminishing returns. (participant 89).

The financial cost of traditional relationships was mentioned by participants who were single, previously partnered, and currently partnered.

A discourse emerged in which participants were keen to part with their money to reinforce their individual status as a ‘good client’. Participants talked of ‘tipping’ and also that they would pay upfront without negotiation in order to forget that the transaction was financial. For example:

I never mind paying for sex and often tip the lady. (participant 68).

Feelings about money are directly related to the quality of the experience. Less expensive services might be less satisfying as men believe that you get what you pay for, and the poorer the experience the more acutely the financial loss is felt. Particular services attract higher prices and the participants who chose ‘extras’ or specialist services did so without restraint, such as:

I just love giving anal. This generally costs more but it is worth the extra price. (participant 72).

The financial implications of buying sex were not solely negative in this group of sex industry clients. Although the risks of overspending were recognised, the money was seen as part of the construction of the sexual contract that was both limiting and boundary setting. The particular manner of paying (eg. with cash, giving money upfront, not bartering, tipping,
etc.) was important to some participants to reinforce their behaviour as good and generous clients. All narratives addressed money and also health benefits of paying for sex, from physical, emotional and social viewpoints.

**Health implications**

The implications for health were discussed as benefits of paying for sex in physical, emotional and social ways, as well as potential health risks raised, such as a lack of sleep by one participant who spent long night-time sessions paying for sex:

*Staying out late to go to strip clubs probably exacerbates my sleep disorder problems (participant 124).*

The possibility of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) was also an issue raised.

Physical benefits of sex were recognised by the participants in the study, such as: increased fitness, reducing pelvic pain, boosting the immune system and an aid to chronic pain relief. Many participants stated that ‘it feels good’ and that this was enough evidence for an activity to be good for you. For example:

*Sex helps to relax me and the release of hormones makes me happy for a day or two. I also experience pain in my pelvic area if I do not have sex for two or three weeks. Regular sex keeps me from experiencing this pain. I also understand that sex helps to boost my immune system to help fight colds and the like. (participant 14).*

*Health wise I usually feel really good and relaxed after a session with a girl. (participant 35).*

The overwhelming benefit of commercial sex in this study cohort was the benefit to their mental or emotional health, with 32 references to these benefits over 19 distinct accounts. Men generally felt that they were better people when relieved of sexual tension, and this assisted them in other areas of their lives such as work and family. For example:

*My life has been happier since visiting sex-workers. I'm very happy with the basic-service from sex-workers. I think this activity has helped me emotionally and socially, because it addresses my sex-drive which (from experience) can hurt me if I don't manage it and deal with it realistically as part of my overall life. (participant 13)*
If anything it probably is good for my mental health a little. A good sex worker builds your confidence, and makes you feel good about yourself (even if they do have to tell a white lie or two!) (participant 116).

Two of the participants who felt that paid sex was an emotional relief also felt that it could increase their feelings of loneliness later or that it could lead to social issues if relied on as a primary social outlet:

*Emotionally it’s nice; you fulfil your urges to touch someone. But you also feel more lonely and just a terrible person.* (participant 18)

*Socially, it’s probably not so good for me to rely on sex workers as a "crutch" instead of trying to improve my social skills and become less shy.* (participant 124)

The remaining 25 narratives expressed that commercial sex had improved their social wellbeing, indicating that the study sample included sex industry clients who were mostly motivated to contribute to the study by their positive experiences. Examples of positive social consequences of paying for sex are evident in the following quotes:

*I don’t think it detracts from my forming social-bonds with others including forming relationships, because sex and happy relationships are often exclusive from each other.* (participant 13)

*Though I must say that I have become more withdrawn as my marriage has faltered and it’s helped me to not be even more withdrawn.* (participant 39).

Common experiences described by participants were, emotional relief from being able to talk to workers about anything, and that good sex builds their physical and social confidence and self-esteem. Some men in this study again compared commercial sex to relationship sex and concluded that commercial sex was better emotionally since they didn’t have to beg for it, they were not being manipulated for it, and there was no accompanying complications or stress stemming from ongoing relationships. For example:

*Emotionally I am more balanced than my Married friends because I am not being manipulated by my sex drive, as most Married Men are* (participant 89)

*(commercial sex)...makes me feel good about myself, without the traumas associated with relationships* (participant 98).
As this study cohort had been paying for sex for an average of 18 years, it would be expected that the positive effects of buying sex would outweigh the negative results they reported. What was not expected was the ambiguity of the stated benefits of buying sex i.e. emotionally it is nice, but then lonely feelings emerge, as well as the level of guilt experienced by participants who had been choosing to buy sex for a significant portion of their lives.

**Guilt**

Participants indicated that guilt could be felt when paying for sex because of stigma, non-relationship sex, through concerns for the well-being of the sex worker, or for financial reasons. Seven men expressed guilt as a consequence of paying for sex, but four of these said that the guilty feelings came only with the first few occasions and that guilt decreased as they became more discerning consumers. This happened as they learned to manage their money more effectively, or to choose workers that they felt more comfortable with. The level of enjoyment versus guilt may be different with each commercial sex transaction depending on their other relationships, their experience of the ‘booking’ (commercial sex encounter) and the personal self-esteem of the participant at any given time.

The participants in this study said that guilt could be felt on moral grounds, not because of non-relationship sex but because of the perceived stigma of being the stereotypical client.

*I felt guilty about paying for sex as it had always been something nice blokes didn’t do* (participant 98).

*I put the difficulty in making a decision to see a worker as guilt about ‘not making a real relationship work’. Now I see sex-workers more frequently, I’m happy I did visit a worker because trying to live a respectable life without using sex-services was not working for me without emotional and physical pain.* (participant 13).
One way of addressing internalised stigma was to behave contrary to the stereotypical client. The following participant did so by offering a reciprocal service to the sex worker, which reduced his guilt and anxiety about being a client, enough for him to enjoy himself:

When I started going I still felt guilty about "using" the ladies which made it difficult for me to come. However I started asking if I could give them a massage to start with, rather than the other way round, which seemed to be enjoyable for them and I found that I was sufficiently aroused to able to come. (participant 98).

Several participants mentioned feeling guilty if the sex worker did not seem happy working in the profession. Rather than be angry at paying for poor quality of service, they seemed more concerned about the welfare of the worker. None of the participants directly stated that they had seen workers that appeared trafficked or forced into working, but they measured the level of job satisfaction for the worker based on his or her enjoyment of the particular encounter. The participants' own level of enjoyment was directly related to the perceived level of enjoyment of the worker, and if they felt the worker was unhappy, it increased feelings of guilt for them.

Negatives would include feelings of guilt about "using" someone, but as the people I usually see are working in safe environments and generally appear to have chosen to do the work(participant 95).

Three of the participants who spoke about guilt, felt remorse about the money spent, although they had all reconciled these feelings in their own ways:

Any issues might come after, when I wonder what I could have done with that money - could it have gone towards my mortgage, for example. But I only spend what I can afford, so there's no real problem. (participant 97)

Financially, I feel guilty - but then no more guilty than if I had to see a physiotherapist - which is a service about the same price. While I'm reasonably well-off, I am a spendthrift in all things (so seeing a sex worker can be a financial guilt-trip for me). (participant 13)

Although guilt was only expressed by 7 of the 27 participants, it was expressed in several different ways and often in the past tense, indicating that guilt had been resolved before writing their narratives. Guilt feelings can be used to critically assess risk and in particular, the risk of contracting an STI.
Fear about sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

Ten participants mentioned the possibility of STI contagion when paying for sex, with 3 saying that they felt safer with sex workers than with casual partners and 3 saying that they felt there was more risk. Two of the participants in the study stated that they worried more when they were younger and less experienced but worried less now as the regulations for the sex industry require 100% condom use. None of the participants admitted to not using condoms, and 3 explicitly stated that they always did. For example:

*Health wise, I have never had any concerns because the workers I visit always use condoms when there is any oral/genital contact and I'm quite comfortable wearing a condom - because I appreciate the safe practices in terms of sex health.* (participant 13).

One of the study participants caught ‘crabs’ from an escort, but no other reports of STIs were received. One participant believed that horny men may be fooled into paying for unsafe practices, but he would not do that. He provides yet another example of crediting ‘other’ clients with deviant qualities in order to distance oneself from client stigma:

*Health wise, you don't worry [at the time] but later you do. And I think some places offer services they shouldn't and men may be "fooled" into paying more for this and that which may be dangerous.* (participant 18).

One participant considered that everything would be fine if the worker is in ‘good health’, displaying a belief that a person can assess STI risk based on superficial evaluations of health such as vigour or skin tone. Two participants in this study worried about the risk that a condom might slip off or break and they recognised the risks of unprotected cunnilingus and kissing, although they continued to use the services. For example:

*I recognise the risks of paid sex, it's always with a raincoat on these days but accidents can happen. Condoms coming off during sex, cunnilingus that I love to do, kissing, are risks, I have regular tests at the STD clinic.* (participant 86).

Fear about contracting an STI, even when a condom is worn, can be more about feeling guilt as this participant demonstrates:
After the first time I paid for intercourse I felt terrible. I was paranoid I had caught something [even though I wore a condom] (participant 101).

Most participants were also reassured that sex workers are required to have regular health screens:

another positive could be that the prostitute is required to have regular sexual health checks and they always have condoms. (participant 58),

However, sex workers are not actually mandated to have sexual health screens in all Australian states and research has indicated that sexual health screens for sex workers are not required as often as recommended by most State authorities, meaning that the perceived risk of STI contagion through commercial sex is often higher than the reality.

Conversely, other participants paid for sex to avoid the possible risk of STI contagion during casual sex:

Initially I paid for sex for sexual safety from disease (participant 63).

These participants considered that paid sex was safer because of the laws and health checks and one participant suggested in his narrative that it was not worth asking for unsafe sex because ‘the ladies won’t do it’. It was reassuring for clients to know that a sex worker would not be unsafe with anyone and most considered that workers were ‘clean people who take care of themselves’, on which their future income depends.

One thing - I have never had, nor asked for, unprotected penetrative sex, (participant 98)

I have never had any health problems - sex workers are very clean people and generally take very good care of themselves (participant 95).

The impacts of accessing commercial sex services in this study have shown that these clients feel that, although there are financial risks and some fear of STIs, the physical, emotional and social health benefits outweigh both these and any guilt that might be felt.
But, the effect on participants’ families and friends was directly related to the amount of disclosure that participants communicated to them.

**Disclosure, stigma and the effect on family**

The decision to tell or not to tell was one that generated 37 references in the data and was usually stated last in the narrative. Some told a couple of mates, especially if they knew that they also bought sex (at times they bought sex together), some on the internet but not in real life, and one narrative stated that this account was his first disclosure of male to male sex:

*The only difference is I have never talked about male/male to my mates or anyone for that matter till now.* (participant 86).

There were 27 different references to the stigma of buying sex, which most often presented as participants being worried about what other people might think, feelings of shame, and being worried about the legalities of their actions. For example:

*After the first time I paid for intercourse I felt terrible. …felt ashamed, thought people would find out, concerned about the legality aspects etc etc, probably a lot to do with my upbringing (quite a conservative family!) (participant 116).*

*During my first time I kept thinking about how others would view my encounter. (participant 14).*

Most men told only a select few friends, or in fact no one, about buying sex because of perceived and real stigma or fear of private information becoming public knowledge. For example:

*I talk to very few people about my love of "working girls", most people neither understand nor accept such behaviour!!!!!!!! (participant 35).*

*I would never tell my family I visit sex-workers and I don't feel guilty about not doing so - a private activity is just that. What people do in private with their 'plumbing' is their business.* (participant 13).

*If I don’t tell anyone then I don’t have to worry about a confidence being betrayed.* (participant 64).
The similarities in the above accounts are as interesting as their differences. All three do not tell their families about visiting sex workers, yet the two older participants frame their reluctance in terms of recognising that it would not be well accepted by others, while the younger participant uses privacy as justification.

The effects of secret keeping for the participants included positive effects of creating boundaries between an individual and the outside world. However, big secrets that could have a negative effect on relationships, if disclosed, required constant vigilance to avoid critical judgements and/or negative consequences. Some participants expressed guilt at secret keeping which could affect relationships, but all said that the benefits of secrecy outweighed the risk of exposure. For example:

Makes it a little sticky in conversation sometimes, as you need to always be aware of what to divulge or not. So there’s a permanent censor in my brain now. (participant 97)

My family are much more conservative then myself so I really don’t talk too much about my private life with them. Even though this can get awkward, I feel the benefits of my lifestyle very much outweigh the negatives [partial estrangement from family]. (participant 72).

One participant felt that telling would lessen the excitement or simply not be polite to brag about sexual exploits or to talk about sex in general:

I never ‘kiss and tell’ and feel if you share your experiences then they are no longer your own. (participant 5).

Disclosure created discomfort for the participant who described himself as profoundly disabled, but telling others about paying for sex was necessary for him to be able to access services.

Only a couple of other participants said that they disclose their status as a client and it was mainly because they disliked keeping secrets or that they liked to deliberately challenge
public opinion. Only two participants said that they would speak up in social situations to support the sex industry, but most were fearful that even such support would expose them as clients. Examples include:

*I don't like that I feel I have to keep it secret from other people. It hasn't caused that much friction but I just don't feel comfortable having secrets.* (participant 124)

*The common responses from friends when the topic is discussed are things such as 'why would you pay for sex?' or some other argument that tries to take a moral bent. I often find that the ones who take this line are often men tied into relationships and I take consolation from the fact I lead a more independent and interesting life than them* (participant 76).

*Finally I have a friend who has a similar outlook on life and we openly discuss this sort of thing as I do with any people who I feel it is not inappropriate to discuss with in order to dispute the prudish values and opinions that mainstream society has on the sex industry and sex in general.* (participant 76).

Sex industry clients who avoid stigma by remaining silent in social situations are denied a voice that might contribute to social change. The following participant demonstrated how stigma has prevented him from speaking out about his sex industry involvement on several levels:

*I'm fairly well-known as a fetish artist in the adult genre. Some of the best, most creative work I've produced has been adult. That's where I've met and paid for a lot of adult material and girls (models, friends and for nudge-nudge-wink-wink). My work I'm most proud of I can't show, and I'm most proud of it because it contains all my passion and drive. It's got nude boobies and sexuality - but I can't show it without being demonized because it's non-vanilla.* (participant 97).

Most participants’ narratives said that because they did not disclose their commercial sex activities, there was minimal or no effect on their families, such as:

*Socially it has no impact as you don’t shout this sort of thing out in the street. I keep even my liaisons with normal girls secret from my family so there is no way prostitutes are going to affect my family life.* (participant 76).

The effects of stigma for being involved in the sex industry are evident by the general reluctance to disclose sexual purchases. The effect on families and friends were described as minimal because of their secrecy, and the effect of secret keeping on participants was
subsequently minimised.

This section has discussed the many motivating factors of buying sex and the impact that this had upon participants, their families and friends. These findings are taken directly from the narratives of the participants based on their comments about themselves and their feelings. The next section discusses how participants felt about workers and the sex industry in general, which indirectly describes more about the participants themselves, since they were often not as forthright or insightful when speaking of their own motivations and impacts.

**How participants felt about sex workers and politics of the sex industry**

Participants often expressed their feelings about workers, revealing insights into their own behaviour and emotional scripts. In addition, many spoke politically about the sex industry as a whole, suggesting that they did not consider only themselves and that they were thinking more globally about the industry. The following section contains analyses and excerpts from participants narratives and further describes lived experiences of buying sex in Australia.

The narrative guide given to participants asked for their thoughts and feelings about the sex workers; most narratives contained more comments about workers and the sex industry than insights into themselves, which indicates that these men find workers more interesting than themselves or that they may have difficulty being insightful into their own emotions and behaviour. How men feel about sex workers reflects and emphasises how they feel about themselves when paying for sex. Many participants were particularly taken with the words ‘gratitude’, and ‘respect’, to describe sex workers and described their feelings about the commercial sex transaction in ways that revealed their values of honesty and integrity.
Integrity

The participants indicated that commercial sexual contracts are often more honest than sex within relationships because all parties understand the transaction and get what they want without the fear of unrealistic expectations or infatuation from either side. The boundaries of the sexual contract also induce a professional safety and discretion. For example:

At least with a sex worker the transaction is honest and above-board, there is no confusion, recriminations or bad feelings and everybody gets what they want (participant 101).

Having a commercial relationship simplifies matters. It means that we can enjoy sex without the risk that I or she will become infatuated with each other (participant 14).

The integrity of the client is preserved when a man can select a sex worker from several offered without embarrassment or fear of hurting another, a freedom of choice that is not so obviously available when meeting people in social situations:

you are able to say what you want and if the woman is not into what you want you can move on with little or no embarrassment (participant 5).

Three participants directly stated that they felt buying sex to be morally better than lying to a non-sex worker about intentions just to get sex. For example:

I also felt it was justified as an alternative to the practice of lying to women that I loved them when what I wanted was sex without permanent commitment. (participant 60).

The integrity of the sex worker is reinforced because the worker is honest about wanting money for a sexual act instead of demanding drinks, meals or gifts, or having ongoing relationship expectations. One example of respect offered to sex workers for earning money honestly is:

The Working Ladies I see appear to enjoy the freedom of the lifestyle they live and I feel that I would rather they sought financial benefit by asking for money directly, rather than marrying to financial advantage and using family law to obtain unjustified enrichment. (participant 89).
Participants also appreciated the conversation of sex workers which is considered more frank and authentic than general conversation, particularly on sexual subjects:

*I can mix freely at social gatherings, though I miss the forthrightness of sex workers! They call a spade a spade, aren’t afraid of their sexuality and can talk about anything without embarrassment* (participant 98).

The value of integrity of the sex worker and of the client is important to the participants of the study because it reinforces the idea that buying sex is a honourable pastime which is honest on both sides. Appreciating the honesty and integrity of sex workers also leads to feelings of gratitude.

*Gratitude*

It might be expected that clients who cannot have sex outside of the commercial contract feel grateful to the sex worker(s), and five accounts from participants in various social and sexual situations used words to describe thankful and grateful feelings, such as:

*Therefore, I am very grateful to the many workers who have helped me over the years because I feel that without their help I probably wouldn’t be here today to tell you all this.* (participant 101).

*I respect the women sex-workers I visit, and I am grateful for what they do for me.* (participant 13).

Expressing gratitude might be seen as simply polite but these participants felt and expressed feelings that would be exaggerated for any other type of service provider (for example, a hairdresser). The level of gratitude expressed indicates that these participants value the emotional intimacy that is shared during the sexual act as a quality that is not a direct or measurable commodity such as the purely physical sexual act. Grateful feelings also indicate a level of respect that the participants felt towards sex workers.


Respect

Eighteen different accounts made some reference to the respect and admiration that clients feel towards sex workers, indicating that even within a Madonna/Whore dichotomy men appreciate the sexual skill, the time, and physical and emotional energy that sex workers offer, as opposed to stereotypical sex worker qualities. The level of respect expressed may also be a part of romantic sexual scripts and a reflection of themselves in the calibre of the people with whom they associate. Several examples of respect toward sex workers follow:

I’ve met escorts from all walks of life, and the arrangements that they have with partners, wives, other lovers, etc has been fascinating, so I’ve gained wonderful personal experiences and insights that most in the community would be gob-smacked to learn about or discover their existence. I feel privileged to have been invited into their lives with such intimacy. As you can see I have great respect for these people. (participant 63).

I have a great respect for the women I have visited. I feel that most have a very good understanding of the social dynamic we live in. Many I find highly intelligent. (participant 67).

I strongly believe that a civil society would accord prostitutes the same respect as is enjoyed by nurses, social workers, teachers and actresses because they share so many of the same skills and attitudes. (participant 78).

As the study participants spoke more generally about the sex industry in their narratives, discourses emerged about how they felt the sex workers were affected by their career choices, including their incomes.

Money

While participants talked of parting with money more often, several considered how it is for the worker to be earning the money:

Secondly I admire their entrepreneurial spirit which is the foundation of our liberal capitalist society. .....When these girls make much money than I currently do I seriously question the standard feminist diatribe I have heard from some about who is exploiting who? (participant 76).
A hierarchical financial system applies to other service providers such as psychologists, plastic surgeons and tradesmen where there is a belief that a better service is provided for a higher fee. Given that sex work is not a profession based on education, experience or governed by a professional body, the high hourly rates charged might be expected to attract financial jealousy or resentment, particularly from clients who are parting with money. However, resentment was only expressed by one study participant when he referred to ‘some workers’:

Some workers are well off and just in it to make money, lots of money. They usually aren’t very nice. I hope they are well and do not have to only do this as work. You as a customer or client hope that they enjoy it. I have a friend who does this, and she feels that she just doesn’t want to “give sex for free”. But I think most maybe not in the best place during their lives. Some do seem to enjoy it, or at least the money (participant 18).

Consideration of the earnings of sex workers (apart from the exception above) underpins the participants’ argument about honesty and convenience of the commercial sexual contract, in addition to framing a discourse about sex work being work.

Sex work is work

Nineteen study participants referred to sex work as ‘recognised’ work and demonstrated acceptance that sex workers are people with choices. For example:

I think being a sex worker can be a good way of earning a living if you can control the way you do it and don’t get controlled by someone else. (participant 86).

I think what they do is their choice. However, some seem to handle doing it better than others and I think that people should think really hard before they make the decision to become a sex worker. Those who aren’t that comfortable with it should become erotic masseuses and give rub and tugs, it seems less of a big deal for them (participant 137).

Corresponding with client desire for emotional intimacy, many study participants enquired into the worker’s motivation to work and wrote about both the positive and the negative aspects of choosing to be a sex worker. Some examples are:
I like them as people because they are so honest, down to earth and open. While a
couple I have known had bad experiences with sexual abuse at home as young people
they did not appear to be carrying deep scars, most were perfectly "normal" people
and some I would be proud to count as friends. (participant 95).

I found the women involved to vary considerably. In Australia I met a couple who
were reasonably educated and in control of their lives. Most would rather have been
doing something else but had limited job opportunities and couldn't earn enough for
their needs otherwise. A couple of them said they sometimes enjoyed meeting with
clients and having sex with them, but most did not seem to have this view. (participant
60).

...and who do for the most part seem to enjoy the interaction with their clients - they
speak not only of the uncomplicated sex they too can enjoy, of the interesting people
they meet and of the help/practical suggestions they sometimes get from professional
clients regarding things like their taxation problems, difficulties with establishing
credit and getting housing loans because of their work and so on. (participant 98).

The working conditions of the sex worker were important to participants on a personal level
to ensure that they were not taking advantage of another and also on a philosophical level
about general work-place culture. In particular, comments were made about work hours,
work-life balance and that some agencies take too large a cut from the workers. Examples of
these comments follow:

I have concerns about visiting a sex-worker because I am a social-progressive and I
don't like the idea of sex-workers over-working by seeing a lot of clients - I want
people to have a work-life balance and I think the sex-workers I see often work long
(and late) hours. But they seem happy and in control of their working conditions:
Factors which I regard as important. (participant 13).

The people I usually see are working in safe environments and generally appear to
have chosen to do the work because it suited their circumstances. (participant 95).

The sexual arousal of the workers was accepted as real by most study participants as an
affirmation of their own virility, but were questioned by some, particularly when describing a
less satisfying experience or when displaying an emotional connection with a worker. One
example is:
I don’t think we knew at the time how different male and female sexual responses are in that only females can experience arousal in the absence of desire. I said to Sally that it was awfully hard for a male to understand how she was able to perform at work. She thought for while, and then said: "You know about the other job I have” referring to wiping incontinent bums at the hospital. "Well, it’s much the same really!" (participant 78).

Even when participants acknowledged the fact that the sex worker was just doing a job, or that he or she was good at acting, each participant felt that the emotional labour that they received was genuine.

The fact that study participants were interested in the lives and choices of sex workers demonstrates both an emotional connection and an acceptance of sex work as work.

How the client treats sex workers

What the study participants think of sex workers and how they treat them reflects not only the client’s needs but how he conceptualizes his behaviour. Treating sex workers with respect and kindness may represent simple good manners or demonstrate a measure of high regard that clients feel towards workers. And for men who value being sexually desired, behaving in sexually desirable ways includes having positive regard for a sexual partner. Examples of participants' thoughts of how their behaviour affects the behaviour of sex workers follow:

I show respect and good manners and am rewarded in kind. (participant 68).

I always treat the sex provider with utmost courtesy and respect and I want her to enjoy the session with me as much as possible. We all have to do a job, so we might as well try to enjoy it - and try to help others enjoy it. (participant 101).

It is difficult to separate possible self interest in receiving a good service from generosity or positive regard, especially as men are culturally expected to ‘chase’ and inspire sexual feelings by following a romantic script of ‘wooing’ a potential sexual partner. For example:

I treat the workers nicely and they treat me nicely back. I think we both have some fun that way (participant 39).
I find that I get a better "service" (perhaps experience is a better word) if we share some discussion (participant 68).

Descriptions of how clients treat workers reinforce the idea that some clients are following romantic scripts and/or consider the relationship as ‘special’ or, at the very least, the relationship is based on more than ‘just sex’:

When single I search out up to three prostitutes that I click with. I do this for availability reasons. It has occurred in the past that I fall for one of these ladies and when that occurs I treat them as I would a girlfriend and see no one else until circumstances end the relationship. (participant 67).

While my relationship with my sex worker is principally professional based on sex, I think and hope that we will develop a friendship in the same way that work colleagues or a frequent café customer may develop a close relationship with people he or she regularly meets. My sex worker is very friendly. (participant 14).

Whether or not the relationship is based on romance, many of the study participants behave in ways that invoke feelings of being a ‘nice’ client as opposed to any other. For example:

When I see someone I have not been with before it can be awkward and again I feel guilty about "using" them, but always try to demonstrate that I have the greatest respect for them (participant 98).

I have done some things with women that did not turn me on but did them to please (or at the wish) of who I was with at the time. (participant 5).

The study participants’ need to distance themselves from the stereotypical client was further emphasised by their descriptions of ‘others’ who buy sex, particularly when this question was not asked in the questionnaire or survey instructions.

The other clients
Some study participants talked about the fact that all people deserve sex regardless of appearance, abilities or social status and that the sex industry is a necessary avenue for some men. Still, these and other participants referred to other clients as being disrespectful or
distant and that they needed to be especially nice to workers to compensate for the behaviour of the ‘other’. For example:

*I always try to make them feel special during my time with them, as I am aware not every man they see is respectful or even so much as bothers as trying to connect on a deeper/intimate level with the sex worker.* (participant 71).

Common stereotypical ideas about clients being sexually desperate and deviant men who perpetrate violence against women and may even be pimps and drug peddlers (Malarek, 2009; Sullivan, 1997) are rejected by all the study participants on an individual level, whilst being projected onto others to demonstrate their own particular virtuousness. A lack of academic research into client behaviour, and the perpetuation of anti-client rhetoric from a number of scholars and groups across a broad spectrum of positions reinforce the perception of the deviant stereotype and stigma (Malarek 2009; Farley, 2009; Jeffreys, 1997). Stigma prevents frank and open discussion which does not allow individuals to share peer support and to discover that they are not different from the typical client, albeit vastly different from the stereotype. Therefore, each study participant examines his behaviour using stereotypical client ideas as a determinant of his own decency. In finding that he is not deviant, he assumes that ‘others’ must be and projects the image away from himself. In this way, clients themselves are perpetuating stereotypical ideas of behaviour and reinforcing the very stereotype that they reject. For example:

*One thing about strip clubs that really pisses me off is when guys will sit in the front row without any 'cash' to give to the dancers. I feel this is disrespectful to the dancer and to people like me who acknowledge that the tips that the dancers get, although just paper money to the holder are actually equivalent to real dollars to the dancers (i.e. money that they are working for)* (participant 72).

*I actually have a high level of respect for someone who can put themselves out on the line (either dancing naked or giving sex) in an environment where they will no doubt meet their fair share of jerks. I think it takes a huge amount [of] humility to earn a living by satisfying someone who is clearly an asshole.* (participant 72).

The phenomenon of separating stereotypical clients from oneself applies also to the separation of some sex workers from other sex workers and is a way of defining good and
bad sex workers, and therefore good and bad clients.

I have watched young women and boys desperate to sell their bodies on the streets just to buy another fix they just slide downhill until they are beyond help and they just die. These poor people are often called sex workers, they are no such thing they are just victims of someone’s greed. (participant 86).

While client stigma silences the voices of clients of the sex industry, clients suffer alone and are unable to promote their behaviour as decent and reasonable, which in turn perpetuates stereotypical ideas.

Political commentary was predominant in the narratives, demonstrating that each participant had examined his own behaviour in consideration of stereotypical ideas and societal expectations of behaviour, and finding his own behaviour to be respectable he then found societal expectations unacceptable.

The politics of the sex industry

Although there was no specific prompt in the questionnaire for men’s opinions of the sex industry, eight narratives spoke of the industry as a community service. Additionally, 16 of the narratives contained 27 references that could be construed as political in nature. Most of these were suggestions for a better legal system in that the law should not decide on moral issues, particularly when regulations and laws increase difficulties for workers or clients by not adhering to a harm minimization approach. For example:

On the whole, I’ve not a problem with sex workers, they provide a valuable service that should be legalised across the country. It would make it safer for everyone. Much better than the alternative of having people pressuring/forcing others into acts they do not feel comfortable with. (participant 116).

Also due to legal requirements, locations can be quite far away (participant 133).

The taboo on prostitution means it is hidden and lays the way open for abusive people to be involved and the women who do the work don’t get fair pay for doing the work. (participant 60).
Only one participant described having had direct consequences of the legal system:

*I once got charged with picking up a prostitute on the street. This caused me a lot of angst, going through the court system and when it came to getting a government job I thought I might have some problems but there hasn’t been. I have had some problems with a professional registration though recently.* (participant 137).

That there should be government subsidies for disadvantaged groups and a discourse of sex work as a community service was a common thread throughout the study. Although only one of the study participants identified as being disabled, participants considered the needs of clients less fortunate than themselves, which may be related to ideas that typical clients may be socially inept or incapable of having other sexual outlets. The following examples are from able-bodied participants:

*They also provide a service for those who may not so easily be able to get sex themselves among the general populous (deformities, confidence, socially unaccepted, disabilities etc)* (participant 116).

*... but one section of the community who would benefit from such contact, and I think sometimes that it should even be government subsidised, is that group of people who are either physically or mentally disadvantaged. The physically disadvantaged are certainly discriminated against by able bodied guys on the net, and for obvious, but unfair reasons .... amputees, paraplegics etc. I also think that there is merit in providing services to the mentally disabled,* (participant 63).

The impacts of legal frameworks increasing stigma was not just experienced by the participants of the study for buying sex, but for all involved in the sex industry, including workers. The following participants considered the impact of stigma for sex workers as well as for themselves:

*The only negatives I encounter are people who over-moralise the sex industry, and are so caught up in rhetoric and dogma, that they are removed from the fact that these people and their clients are very much human beings. Don’t demonise.* (participant 71).

*I am responding to your survey because I dearly wish to change the attitude to prostitution of the society I live in. Girls get hurt, get raped, get bashed, get broken limbs and get killed and no one cares because they are just whores.* (participant 78).
Other political comments were made which reflect on Australian society tolerating violence in popular media and in expected behaviour, but not sex, demonstrating that in current Australian culture sex and in particular, commercial sex is taboo. Voicing political opinion displays a frustration about cultural expectations and also portrays a client’s commitment to being a member of a community, although most participants were normally unable to speak openly because of stigma.

**Summary**

The results presented in this chapter represent an interpretive phenomenological approach to the analysis of 27 narratives written by clients who have each accessed sexual services in Australia for an average of 18 years. That clients wanted to discuss their experiences and self-perceptions was indicated by the response rate to the survey (137 individual responses), especially when considering the private and stigmatised nature of the activity under study. The participants’ narratives revealed that men wanted to discuss the reasons why they buy sex, and under which circumstances. The narratives also express their joys, fears and the real-life consequences of paying for sex, including their practices of disclosure and experiences of stigma. The participants also shared their thoughts and feelings about the sex workers they visit, sometimes in greater detail than their descriptions of themselves. They often divulged a romantic sexual script which included within it a need for emotional intimacy. Given the opportunity to write their narrative free-form, many participants offered opinions about the sex industry as a whole. These results are discussed and compared with the existing literature in the following chapter.
Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion

This final chapter presents a summary of and discusses the key findings of the study, which are compared and contrasted to previous research by others, as discussed in Chapter 3. I first address possible researcher bias, present and discuss the findings, and then consider limitations of the study. Finally, the implications of the results of this research are presented.

Researcher reflexivity

Despite all efforts for qualitative research to be objective, the subjectivity of the researcher should not be ignored and may enrich the objective comprehension of the world view presented by participants (Breuer, Mruck, & Roth, 2002; Ratner, 2002). Phenomenological interpretation depends on the researcher considering the world view of each participant and the core themes that emerge from analysis using his or her prior knowledge of the phenomenon. Researcher bias, specifically in sex industry investigations, has been noted by Weitzer (2000) as a challenge faced by all researchers and he suggests that studies are influenced strongly by the author’s prejudices about sex work.

Although I have not experienced buying sex, I have had the privilege of working with both clients and workers of the sex industry in counselling situations. As counselling progresses, incongruence develops which exposes the normality and sensibility of people who choose to buy sex, against contemporary discourses about people who pay for sex and the associated social stigma that they face. A desire to understand these individuals has driven this research project, without explicit preconceived ideas about people who buy sex in general. The use of interpretive phenomenological analysis and linking themes and findings directly to
participant narratives has been used to attempt to eliminate or minimise researcher bias, whilst recognising that researcher subjectivity is imperative to achieving meaningful results.

Without my own conceptions to interpret meanings, analysis could only produce a descriptive account of men’s experiences, to which we now turn for discussion.

**Key findings**

In the previous chapter the narratives of the study participants were analysed using thematic analysis, and results were presented under broad themes followed by subthemes. A summary of the research results were presented as key findings and reflected the 27 study participant’s feelings about buying sexual services. The participants had been accessing sexual services for an average of 18 years, their ages ranged from 19-74 years, and they described a variety of sexual orientations. Participants bought sex from sex workers of all genders, and some participants bought sex from genders other than those that their self-identified orientations would suggest.

Results showed that the relationship status of the participants was an important motivator to buy sex, regardless of being single or partnered. In general, motivations to buy sex were multifactorial; broadly, they were seeking sexual variety, convenience and intimacy. The impacts of buying sex included financial implications, effects on physical and emotional health, feelings of guilt, and fears of STIs. Results also showed both positive and negative aspects of paying money as a more important factor in buying sex than sex itself.
Participants rarely disclosed to others that they bought sex due to stigma and therefore felt that family and friends were not affected, although secret keeping was an issue. They described relationships with sex workers in terms of integrity, gratitude and respect and were mindful of sex work being work. Participants made political comments regarding current laws and working conditions for sex workers, and discussed services for the disadvantaged and disabled.

Participants distanced themselves from deviant client stereotypes by not appearing to want to buy sex simply for sexual gratification, by being especially generous with money, using a romantic sexual script for commercial transactions, developing real and lasting relationships with sex workers, and by treating sex workers especially well. They further emphasised their desire to be separate themselves from client stereotypes by expressing a view that other clients were in fact deviant.

A discussion of these findings in view of other research is presented.

Discussion

This section discusses the results of the study in line with other published works, reinforcing previous knowledge, and providing new knowledge. One of the strengths of this study is that the narratives were written entirely by the participants whose comments reflected their own issues and priorities. The results represent the experiences and opinions of the self-selecting volunteers in Australia who participated in the study in 2010, and not all clients of the sex industry. The demographics of the participants who buy sex is first examined and then their
relationship status, motivations to buy sex and impacts upon them. Next, the ways that
participants spoke about others, workers and clients are discussed, highlighting the self-
perceptions of the participants.
Demographics

This study concurred with previous studies which acknowledged that men who buy sex fit a broad cross-section of the community and do not differ on demographic variables such as age or marital status; that is, the demographic characteristics of participants indicated that participants were diverse (Grenz, 2005; Perkins, 1999; Pitts et al., 2004; Schumann & Giesen, 1980; Wilcox et al., 2009; Xantidis & McCabe, 2000). Also, specific studies have been undertaken on particular sexual orientations of clients of the sex industry (Minichiello et al., 2000), indicating that men do not always buy sex from women. Indeed, the results of this study showed that some men buy sex from men, women and transgendered sex workers, and that some clients buy sex from genders other than those that their identified sexual orientations would suggest.

This study found that buying sex is a lifestyle choice for most people and which may continue for their entire adult lives. No studies could be found in peer-reviewed literature to examine the length of time that people buy sex, but this study found that participants' average duration of access to commercial sex was 18 years, ranging from 1 year to 59 years. Possible correlations between years of accessing commercial sex, age, marital status and disposable income were not found in this study, reinforcing the diversity of the sex industry client.

Relationship status

Several studies have examined the relationship status of consumers of commercial sex and found them to be married or single (Perkins, 1999; Pitts et al., 2004). A dominant theme of participants in this study was their declaration of their relationship status and justifying their commercial sex activity because of it, regardless of their being single or partnered. This is a
particularly important issue, since participants had not been prompted to make such declarations, suggestive that participants' relationship status was important to them. Participants displayed a sense of entitlement to buy sex despite their relationship status, while also rationalising and defending their decision to buy sex, in an attempt to offset a community perception of deviance. The overwhelming response of participants describing their primary relationships indicates that more research into how men who buy sex construct their primary relationships, and would provide a greater understanding of their relationship styles.

Motivations to buy sex

Motivations to buy sex in this study mirrored those already identified (Pitts et al., 2004; Wilcox et al., 2009), but also demonstrated how many, and complex, factors can play a part. For this reason, multiple-choice questions about motivating factors are not seen as an appropriate strategy for future research unless the participants have options to choose several factors and add their own. Conflicts within narratives about motivating factors revealed the human struggle to reconcile our need to seek sexual variety which is inherent in our biological natures (Ryan & Jetha, 2010) and our need to act within the culture of romantic constructions of love, sex and monogamy. Sanders (2008a) and Blevins and Holt (2009) discuss the emergence of romance in commercial sexual relationships which suggest that it is too limiting to ask men if they buy sex only out of a need for sexual gratification without exploring motivations more broadly.

The results of previous studies show that men buy sex because they desire simple sexual satisfaction. However, when participants in this study had unlimited words in which to express their feelings in the subsequent narrative section of the questionnaire, they all offset
the fundamental need for sexual acts with an accompanying need for human contact (Coy et al., 2007; Seib et al., 2010; Wilcox et al., 2009). Although it might be obvious that men buy sex for sex, the results of this study demonstrated that men did not wish to be perceived as acting on purely selfish grounds or to be seen as incapable of controlling their hormonal impulses, as past stereotypes of commercial sex clients, and perhaps all men, have been portrayed.

Furthermore, this study reinforces relatively new constructions of commercial sex as providing emotional intimacy and builds on this by illustrating the complexity of clients' ambivalence in requiring both sexual variety and intimacy (Earle & Sharp, 2007; Sanders, 2008a). Overall, this study revealed similar motivations for buying sex to other studies such as seeking variety, intimacy and for convenience, but also demonstrated that sufficient understanding of nuances of the motivations cannot be gained from simply making a list of reasons why men might purchase sex.

*Impacts of buying sex*

Rather than prompting study participants with known potential consequences of buying sex, this study allowed participants to be the expert in their own lives by identifying the impacts of buying sex that were meaningful to them. The most important theme that arose was money, followed by emotional benefits to themselves. Of less importance were fear of STIs, and guilt. It is interesting that previous research emphases had not focused on the issues that seem the most important to the clients.

All narratives discussed money for several reasons: as a measure of quality; as an indication of legitimate spending within their means; as an argument against sexual addiction
constructions of sex industry clients; as a comparison to romantic relationships to argue against socially sanctioned and expected romantic pair-bonding; to demonstrate their generosity, and; to justify the commercial nature of the sex act and their entitlement to consumerism.

The cost of purchasing sex could be anything from a $10 entry into a strip club with no tipping, to $1,000 per hour for an escort. The amount that participants spent was not asked as it was considered too variable and some men may not know, or care to evaluate the amount. Considering that the amount of money paid is perceived to reflect the quality of service, the prices paid for sexual services, and as a percentage of income, would be of interest to evaluate, although one client’s perception of quality may vary a great deal from another’s. Money is an important aspect of commercial sex that is rarely addressed except in terms of entitlement (Farley et al., 2009; Malarek, 2009). Furthermore, money is considered a motivator for people entering the market to sell sex, but the impacts of earning money through sex work have not been well examined (Willman & Levy, 2010). Thus, participants in this study demonstrated that money was important in many ways that previously have not been recognised or questioned.

Study participants also recognised emotional health as being positively affected by buying sex and revealed that these benefits were of greater impact than any physical benefits of having sex. These emotional benefits have only recently been identified and deserve much more research attention, particularly in response to constructions of sex industry clients as men who use women solely for their physical, sexual satisfaction (Earle & Sharp, 2007; Sanders, 2008b).
Guilt about paying for sex was felt by study participants not because of the sex or because of the commercial encounter, but because of the deviant status of clients of the sex industry. The men in this study used negative feelings to further scrutinise their motivations for buying sex, the settings in which they did so, and to question the sex industry as a political issue. While guilt was not overtly expressed by 20 of the 27 the study participants, it was apparent in their strong justifications for their behaviour as rational, honest and fair. For a couple of study participants, guilt increased fears of STIs above actual risk, while for others the risk of STI contagion was non-existent. Given the evidence of high condom use and low STI rates among sex workers in Australia, the actual STI risk of commercial sex is low (Wilson et al., 2010) and fears about STI contagion are more likely to be from uninformed clients.

The results of this study regarding the diversity of sex industry clients’ fear of STIs mirrors the findings of many studies; it is an issue that has received a lot attention due to discourses of sex with multiple partners being dirty or unhealthy, and discourses that consider the sex worker to be the vector of disease (Harcourt & Donovan, 2005; Remple et al., 2007; Sawyer et al., 2001; Wilcox et al., 2009; Wilson et al., 2010). While fear of STI contagion through commercial sex has been thoroughly examined, it has not been undertaken in a way that explores the psychology of guilt that could drive rational and irrational fears of STIs for clients.

Guilt is also evident in men’s reluctance to disclose their status as clients of the sex industry, which isolates them and provides a breeding ground for internalised stigma. Several studies have found that online forums for men who purchase sex do shape client attitudes and behaviour, and therefore it would be worth knowing to what extent that is true by contrasting
It was unfortunate that the narratives from this study did not provide sufficient data to compare clients who do and do not use online forums for support.

In summary, the participants rated the importance of giving and parting with money higher than sex itself; and similarly, that emotional benefits of commercial sex were of more importance than physical benefits of commercial sexual intercourse. Furthermore, participants indicated that stigma contributed to non-disclosure, which contributed to internalised stigma and created discomfort and guilt even amongst men who purchased sex for a significant portion of their lives.

*Feelings about sex workers and the commercial sexual contract*

This section discusses the study’s findings about the political perceptions of participants, and their perceived position within the context of the sexual contract.

Farley et al. (2009) found that men who bought sex in London had attitudes that normalised rape and more than half of the interviewees believed that men would ‘need’ to rape if they did not have access to prostituted women. In the USA, Monto (2000) interviewed men who had been arrested for accessing street-based sexual services and found that they were not more likely to endorse rape myths than other samples of men and that most clients do not hold views that might support violence against prostitutes. This Australian study allowed participants to write free-style narratives, expressing their attitudes about the commercial sex contract, and found no evidence of violence or attitudes about rape.
Earle and Sharp (2007) noted that men in their study wrote more about the orgasmic experiences of sex workers than their own, to affirm their own sexual prowess and masculinity; similarly, the participants of this study wrote more about how they felt about sex workers than their feelings about themselves. While writing about their feelings for sex workers, participants revealed their feelings about accessing commercial sex and also about their political opinions of the sex industry in general.

The three major themes that emerged from an analysis of participants' narratives that spoke of sex workers were integrity, gratitude and respect. The need for participants to express these feelings above others indicates that if they did not respect the sex workers, they could not respect themselves. The expression of gratitude and respect for female sex workers opposes ideas that all male clients are acting out a form of erotic hatred against women (Storr, 1964) or notions that all men wish to inflict violence against women (Malarek, 2009). Other studies have identified romantic sexual scripts as a dominant theme in commercial sex transactions, and the findings of this study reinforce these (Earle & Sharp, 2007; Sanders, 2008a). Further, this study has revealed that men who purchase sex think about how it might be for the sex worker to be engaged in this type of work, in terms of receiving money, in working hours and conditions, and the effects of working in a highly stigmatised environment.

When given an opportunity to speak anonymously about their feelings, the participants in this study also divulged their political opinions about how legal systems should not decide the moral right or wrong of commercial sex, but should adhere to a harm minimisation approach
to regulation, and that the commercial sex industry is so important to general well-being that access should be subsidised by the government for people with disabilities.

The other clients

Multiple examples of study participants distancing themselves from other clients emerged from the analysis. Sanders (2008b) found that clients, who morally objected to buying street based sex differentiated their behaviour from men who did buy street based sex, thereby subscribing to a popular discourse that street based sex industry is inherently evil. This study revealed that when men were isolated from other clients of the sex industry they supposed that clients other than themselves were perhaps potential violent abusers of vulnerable and exploited populations. In rejecting the stereotype for themselves, they projected this upon the unknown clients and perpetuated myths about people who buy sex.

Rejection of themselves as stereotypical was displayed in several ways: by the common behaviour of using romantic sexual scripts, by having respect and care for sex workers, by justification of their right to buy sex when partnered, and by explaining their reasons for being single. The study participants needed to create a positive impression of themselves as generous and caring, and that they thought intellectually about the sex workers' feelings and situations. Their political voice displayed a desire for social justice and a wish to speak out on behalf of the sex industry community. However, stigma and discrimination often prevents clients from speaking out in defence of the sex industry and its clients.
Limitations of the study

Chapter 3 of this thesis presented the methodology, methods and the rationale for the approach used in this study. In this section, the effectiveness of each method is discussed, beginning with recruitment and subsequently data collection.

Recruitment

The recruitment method of online advertising and data collection allowed for anonymity, and achieved 137 responses, consisting of 53 narratives, most of which contained rich descriptions of men’s experiences regarding commercial sex. Subsequent qualitative analysis achieved theoretical saturation and presented new findings. Therefore, the overall recruitment design was considered successful.

The aim of advertising was to attract as many study participants as possible from the general community. Although it was not possible to canvas every client of the sex industry in Australia, the advertising regime nevertheless was broadly effective through the Australian Sex Party and was expanded via snowballing through URL sharing. It is acknowledged that Members of the Australian Sex Party may be a select group of the community who have particular political views about the sex industry and may not represent all people who buy sex.

The other recruitment method, using the sex worker organisation, Scarlet Alliance, to advertise the study to clients was limited by the possibility that sex workers may have chosen only ‘good’ clients to promote the study to, and that members of Scarlet Alliance may
conduct their business with a greater commitment or a different focus from sex workers who are not members of the organisation, which could inadvertantly influence client behaviour and selection (Minichiello et al., 1999). While acknowledging this possibility, the client alone had control in sharing his (or her) experiences in the narrative, knowing that the sex worker(s) they engage with would not see the narrative or be able to identify him/her in any way.

The questionnaire asked participants where they found out about the study in an effort to ensure that snowballing did not target one particular geographical area or cultural group of participants. Twenty-two of the participants in the final analysis responded directly to advertisements from the Australian Sex Party and five from word-of-mouth. Although it is not possible to discover if the word-of-mouth participants were contacted via sex workers through Scarlet Alliance or through snowballing, the five narratives in question were not significantly different than the others. This indicated that all participants did not originate from the same source, which could potentially influence results.

Phenomenological research attempts to describe the meanings of lived experiences for several individuals who experience the same phenomenon and it is acknowledged that these results are a general description of experience and may not describe every individual’s experience (Creswell, 2007).

The online approach to advertising was successful in achieving a high number of participants with relatively modest effort. This success is considered to be a result of the powers of the internet to communicate information efficiently. Online studies have been criticized for being
accessible only to those with home computers and internet access, although it is now recognised that the digital divide is diminishing (in Australia) and online survey participants represent a broader sample of society than previously (Gaiser & Schreiner, 2009). Thus the online approach to data collection in this study, which offered potential participants convenience and anonymity, is considered a major contributor to the success of the project based on both the number of participants and the content of their contributions.

Data collection tools

The semi-structured questionnaire aimed to collect as much verbatim information as possible about each participant. This section reflects on the use of open text boxes for answers to closed questions, and reviews the questions asked in the semi-structured questionnaire. The narrative guide is then examined for its efficiency in guiding participants to describe their experiences in view of the study aims, and an evaluation of the numbers of participants is given.

Open text boxes used in the semi-structured questionnaire were generally well accepted, with many respondents identifying as neither ‘male’, ‘female’, ‘gay’ nor ‘straight’ and displaying a diversity in their descriptions of their sexuality. The only question in the questionnaire that had defined variables was about the type of sex purchased, and this used a numerical percentage of different types. A significant proportion of respondents used the ‘other’ option for the type of sex that they bought, indicating that the question should have allowed for participants to write the type of sex purchased which may have been commercial sexual massage services, specific fetish or BDSM services, phone or webcam sexual services, or services of which the researcher was not yet aware. Further understanding of participants’
feelings about the type of sex that was purchased might have been gained had participants been able to describe these services in their own words. Thus, an opportunity to collect valuable information about consumer choices was lost.

The semi-structured questionnaire failed to ask about participants’ relationship status, despite knowing that people in all types of relationships buy sex. It was not anticipated that participants themselves would emphasise the importance of their relationship status when considering the reasons why they purchase sex. In hindsight, had a closed question about relationship status been asked and answered, participants might not have felt the need to stress their relationship status as a motivator or enabler to accessing commercial sex and the importance of relationship status to the participant might have been overlooked. However, participants may have written more about other aspects of buying sex, had they not spent time explaining their relationship status. Future inquiries into the sex industry can be mindful of the importance of primary relationships to clients.

The narrative guide containing a list of suggested questions offered a single open text box for entering narratives, and was productive for most accounts. Indeed, giving participants control over their narratives highlighted the importance that each participant placed on questions, indicated by the amount of emphasis placed on certain questions and their order in the written narrative.

However, written contributions miss opportunities of reading valuable body language cues, and when received anonymously there is no avenue to contact participants for clarification or more information. Furthermore, while some people find writing about their personal
experiences cathartic and therapeutic, receiving anonymous data does not allow researchers to validate feelings and experiences, show respect, or personally thank participants. In addition, narratives rely on the writing skills and confidence of participants. People with poor English or writing skills presumably did not respond to the survey, exposing a limitation in sampling. It was expected that some narratives would not address the core issues, would be unsuitable or even be erotic stories of male ego. However, all 27 narratives appeared to be truthful and honest accounts, as they were considered and structured responses that were not flippant, snide or insolent.

The number of participants that chose to participate in the semi-structured questionnaire without submitting a narrative was 84 of 137. The data from the online site revealed that participants who wrote narratives spent an average of 30 minutes completing the survey (compared to approximately 3 minutes on average for those who did not write narratives), suggestive that participants who wrote narratives were committed to tell their stories in a truthful and valid way. More narratives were written at night rather than during the day, which might suggest that privacy or time issues were important. The number of participants who did not write narratives may indicate that the amount of time spent and time of the day could be a factor and/or that some people found it more difficult to write fluently about their own feelings but didn't mind answering direct questions. It is unknown how the participants who wrote narratives might differ from those that only filled in the questionnaire, as there were no significant differences in the answers to closed questions by all 137 participants.

Several narratives were received that spoke about the client’s impression of the sex worker's position, work ethics, thoughts and feelings, but did not share similar information about their own emotions, perhaps indicating a reluctance to express insightfulness which could indicate
that some participants were uncomfortable confronting possible negative self-perceptions. It is acknowledged that writing a narrative about one’s personal feelings is a difficult task, and in particular about sensitive and stigmatised subjects.

Some participants chose to write a short narrative that did not address many of the research aims and the subsequent process of selective sampling eliminated these narratives from analysis. My effort to have a sample of narratives with rich description may have resulted in the loss of shorter yet significant narratives. To account for this possibility, I compared the final results with all narratives to look for exceptions or contradictions and did not discover any. Therefore, theoretical saturation was achieved with an analysis of the selected 27 narratives and the selective sampling process was considered rigorous. The quantity and depth of narratives received reinforced the decision to use narratives over face-to-face interviews, given the limitations of time, money, geographical considerations, confidentiality and researcher/participant gender differences.

In summary, reflection on the methodology of the study indicates that using an online approach can be successful for research about sensitive subjects. Methods of advertising for participants, and in particular, online advertising, were effective in acquiring study participants, but who did not necessarily represent the entire client population in Australia. Furthermore, open text boxes and opportunities for participants to express themselves as much as possible provided data with richer description for qualitative research than multiple choice or closed questions.

The results presented in the previous chapter integrate well with previous research conducted, yet also provide new information about the self-identified sexual orientations of men who pay
for sex, the importance of their relationship status, their motivations and the implications for buying sex, their feelings for sex workers and their opinions of other sex industry players, including other clients. The implications of this research are discussed below.

Implications of the key findings

The key findings listed at the beginning of this chapter expose several areas that require further research, such as buying sex or having sex outside of the norms of one’s identified sexual orientation. Such a study could provide more understanding about self-identity in regard to sexual choices. New emphases placed on the primary relationship constructions of men who buy sex provides an opportunity for more research about the dynamics of relationships. In addition, considering that four women participated in the survey (but were not included in the analysis of narratives), further investigations might expose gender differences or illustrate social change in the sexual empowerment of women.

Published peer-reviewed material about the length of time that people buy sex over their lifespans was not forthcoming, and thus it would be interesting to be able to compare and contrast short and long term clients of the sex industry and to have more reliable information about the length of time that people engage in the market and when and why they may leave the market. Information about terms of access to commercial sex will provide a greater understanding of human sexuality in general and, more specifically, provide insight into the implications of long term access on health and well-being.

Further, the commercial aspect of paying for sex has not been previously examined other than in terms of sex as a commodity or money as an enabler. The results of this study have revealed that money is important in the transaction for many more reasons than simple
exchange, and this warrants further investigations. Discourses about sexual compulsivity and financial stress, as well as discourses about sex and power, could be challenged or strengthened with further research.

The study findings of guilt as a consequence of stigma, the effects of non-disclosure, and internalised stigma leading to projection of stereotypical client images onto others, create several research possibilities. Researching these, and the differences between men who use forums to discuss commercial sex and men who do not, might have implications that affect how people might deliberately effect social change regarding unrealistic yet socially embedded stereotypes.

In addition to providing opportunities for further research, these findings enable health care providers to better target the commercial sex clientele for health care and education. For example, the findings about clients' fears of STIs and participants' assertions of condom use will assist sexual health care providers to offer appropriate sexual health testing, while the research methods may provide a framework for contacting clients of the sex industry for education, health care, or for consultation.

The research findings will assist counsellors and therapists to be aware of the complex reasons that people buy sex and that they may do so for significant portions of their lives, and that relationship status, the effects of stigma, and the effects of secret keeping are important issues to clients of the sex industry.
This research has value in reducing client stigma by demonstrating that clients do not behave stereotypically, which hopefully will enable policy and law makers to seek and consider the opinions of clients of the sex industry as responsible contributors to inquiries regarding the sex industry.

This study is an overview of how paying for sex affects consumers, and represents the frankness and sincerity of each participant in the study. By presenting the long term client’s perception of his motivations to buy sex, the risks and benefits of purchasing sex, the effects on his family and friends and how he feels about sex workers, this study provides a better understanding of the phenomenon of men accessing commercial sexual services.
Reference List


Niemi, J. (2010). What We Talk About When We Talk About Buying Sex. Violence Against Women, 16(2), 159-172.


Appendix 1

Semi-structured Questionnaire

1. Where did you find out about this study?

2. What is your gender?

3. How old are you?

4. How would you describe your sexual orientation (sexuality)?

5. Which gender(s) of sex worker(s) do you see?

6. Which percentage of sexual services do you use?
   Indoor - private worker
   Indoor - brothel
   Indoor - strip club
   Outdoor - street/car
   Outdoor - safe house
   other

7. How many years have you been using sexual services?
Appendix 2

Narrative Guide

The rest of your contribution is your story. You can write anything that you feel is important.

It isn't necessary to write about the physical acts that you have experienced, unless they impact on your life in some way. Your story can be as short or as long as you like, but please try to write at least 1 page.

Please include things like:

- How does being a client affect how you feel about yourself and your sexuality?

- How you feel about paying for sex – before, during and after.

- Why you pay for sex.

- How does paying for sex affect your life in the following ways:

  - Financially,
  - Emotionally,
  - Socially,
  - Your relationship with family and others,
  - Your health,
  - Or any other way.

- Are there any 'negatives' or 'positives' about buying sex? What are they?

- What are your thoughts and feelings about the worker/workers that you see?

- Do you talk to anyone else about paying for sex, for instance, online forums, family, mates to go with you, etc?

The text box below is unlimited.
Appendix 3

Participant Information Statement

ABN 15 211 513 464
Ms Hilary Caldwell - Research Student
Mr Philip Birch – Supervisor
Telephone: 0430855739
Email: hcal7080@uni.sydney.edu.au

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

Self-perceptions of clients who access commercial sexual services in Australia

(1) What is the study about?
Finding out how purchasing sex affects client’s sexual health and well being.

(2) Who is carrying out the study?
Ms Hilary Caldwell, graduate researcher under the supervision of Mr Philip Birch, University of New South Wales. It will form the basis for the Masters degree of Applied Science at The University of Sydney.

(3) Who can participate?
People in Australia right now.
People who have paid for sexual services in Australia.
People over 18 years of age.

(4) What does the study involve?
Answering seven questions about yourself which will not identify you, and writing a story (a narrative) about what you think the outcomes of buying sexual services are for yourself. It will take as long as you want, depending on how much you would like to write.

The data will be completely anonymous, and will be encrypted and stored on a password protected computer and only available to the researchers. The intellectual property of the narratives will belong to the researchers and may be published in the study findings, in journals, in the media or as part of a book. The researchers may also present the study’s results at conferences.
(5) Can I withdraw from the study?

Being in this study is completely voluntary. Submitting your narrative is an indication of your understanding of this, and your consent to participate in the study. You can withdraw any time prior to submitting your completed narrative. Your response is anonymous – once you have submitted, your response cannot be withdrawn.

(6) How will I find out the results of the study?

If you would like a private email with the results, please send an email to the researcher with your email details. Please do not identify your own narrative in any way in your email. You do not have to participate in the study to receive a copy of the results via email.

(7) Will the study benefit me?

There are no rewards or remunerations for participants of this study. However, you may feel direct benefits from being able to tell your story. This may be particularly so if you are unable to tell many people because of secrecy. You may also feel an indirect benefit from having a voice in how clients of the sex industry are represented.

(8) Can I tell other people about the study?

Please do. You may give the URL to anyone interested. People wanting to contribute need to do so before December 2010.

(9) What if I require further information?

You may email the researcher, or telephone the researcher's supervisor. Contact details are above.

(10) What if I have a complaint or concerns?

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Deputy Manager, Human Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on (02) 8627 8176 (Telephone); (02) 8627 8177 (Facsimile) or ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au (Email).

☐☐ I have read the above statements, I meet the study criteria and I would like to contribute.
Appendix 4

Sample Narrative with Memoranda

Respondent 13

Question 1. Source of URL
By word-of-mouth – a friend in a pub

Question 2. Gender
male

Question 3. Age
45

Question 4. Orientation
Straight with bi-curious tendency

Question 5. Gender of workers
female

Question 6. Percentages of services
Indoor – private worker - 100

Question 7. Number of years of patronage
Five years

Narrative

I feel like my paying-for-sex is a very private activity. Since I’ve started being a client of sexual services, I’m more reserved about talking about commercial sex in the company of others. I regard my visits to a sex worker as very secret but special and enjoyable as well. I do tell my best-friend about my visits to a sex-worker. My friend is gay and I feel I can confide in him because he has to live his own secret lifestyle - just because our culture is so tailored to respectable married straight people at the expense of all others. I would be reluctant to tell anyone other than a trusted confidant about my visits. I first started seeing a sex-worker when I broke up with my girlfriend and had no other sexual partner. And sexual activity with another person present is important to me because I can’t have solo-sex (i.e. I cannot masturbate alone to orgasm). I have suffered from a condition of sex headache (orgasmic cephalgia) for 20 years since early-adulthood, for which the only trigger is masturbation-to-orgasm-alone (not with a partner). It appears to be benign (I know because my doctor sent me for a cranial CT scan - which thankfully didn’t show any conditions of concern but it has been inconvenient because I have a normal and healthy sex-drive. I visit sole-operator home-based sex-workers because I feel the environment is safe and discreet and they are quite professional. I don’t think it detracts from my forming social-bonds with others including forming relationships, because sex and happy relationships are often exclusive from each other. I respect the women sex-workers I visit, and I am grateful for what they do for me. They nearly always provide a good service and I don’t need to ask for anymore. In fact, when I have gone close-to-the-line I feel bad because I respect the boundaries they have quite plainly told me. In fact I’ve never felt like going over the boundaries. It all goes well - it is a good service for a good price. It is often my only sexual outlet (to orgasm) because solo-sex is not possible without headaches for me due to a medical condition I have. Financially, I feel guilty - but then no more guilty than if I had to see a physiotherapist - which is a service about the same price. While I’m reasonably well-off, I am a spendthrift in all things (so seeing a sex worker can be a financial guilt-trip for me). Emotionally - I feel
fine during and after seeing a sex-worker. It is such an ordinary (if enjoyable) experience and I don’t know why I invested so much fear and guilt initially in the decision to visit a sex-worker. The decision to go - while getting easier now - was hard at the start of my activities. I put the difficulty in making a decision to see a worker as guilt about ‘not making a real relationship work’. Now I see sex-workers more frequently, I’m happy I did visit a worker because trying to live a respectable life without using sex-services was not working for me without emotional and physical pain. I would never tell my family I visit sex-workers and I don’t feel guilty about not doing so - a private activity is just that. What people do in private with their ‘plumbing’ is their business. Socially - I have concerns about visiting a sex-worker because I am a social-progressive and I don’t like the idea of sex-workers over-working by seeing a lot of clients - I want people to have a work-life balance and I think the sex-workers I see often work long (and late) hours. But they seem happy and in control of their working conditions; Factors which I regard as important. Healthwise, I have never had any concerns because the workers I visit always use condoms when there is any oral/genital contact and I’m quite comfortable wearing a condom - because I appreciate the safe practices in terms of sex health. In short, I like the sex-workers I visit as decent people, and I want them to have happy and prosperous lives. But I don’t obsess over them, I know the sex-service is a working relationship for them and I respect that. My life has been happier since visiting sex-workers. I’m very happy with the basic-service from sex-workers. I think this activity has helped me emotionally and socially, because it addresses my sex-drive which (from experience) can hurt me if I don’t manage it and deal with it realistically as part of my overall life.

Memoranda

It is interesting that he mentioned privacy first. Is he feeling threatened by doing the survey? Did some research on his condition of not being about to masturbate. Seems genuine although not recognised by all medicine. I don’t quite understand how the physiological condition of orgasm changes when alone as compared to being with someone. I wonder if he does something different when alone which he is not willing to share, but whatever, he believes that he cannot have sex alone and that is what matters. And it is not used as his sole justification for buying sex. safety is important to him and safety means discretion for him. respect and grateful feelings again. He feels bad when he goes ‘close to the line’ – close to crossing boundaries? what does he mean exactly? overtime? something to do with condom use? kissing or touching somewhere that was not allowed? Doesn’t seem to be obnoxious or deliberately taking advantage. guilty about the money – but that does not explain his intensity in regard to privacy. is he guilty about anything else? lack of relationship guilt. perhaps, relationships are preferred and he would not purchase sex if in one. concern for the working conditions of sex workers and not over stigma. he really sees them as equal.