



**TECHNICAL REPORT**

**Youth Involvement in Prostitution:  
A Focus on Intrafamilial Violence  
-- A Literature Review**

**Steven Bittle**

**Month, 1999**

**TR1999-3E**

**UNEDITED**

**Research and Statistics Division/  
Division de la recherche et  
de la statistique**

**Policy Sector/  
Secteur des politiques**

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Department of Justice Canada. The views expressed herein are  
solely those of the author and do not necessarily  
represent the views of the Department of Justice Canada.*

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## **1.0 Introduction**

Since the early 1980s there has been a growing concern with the involvement of children and youth in prostitution. The discovery of youth prostitution as a social problem inspired an unprecedented quantity of government reports aimed at better understanding and combating the youth sex trade. Three major federal government responses have occurred since 1981. First, the federal government appointed the Committee on Sexual Offences Against Children and Youth (the Badgley Committee, 1984) to explore legal sanctions pertaining to child sexual abuse and to make recommendations aimed at protecting children at risk, including conclusions and recommendations following interviews with 229 “juvenile prostitutes.” The Badgley Report (1984) contained 52 recommendations to help confront the sexual exploitation of youth, which included the creation of new offences to protect youth and criminalize procurers and customers of prostitutes under 18 years -- while acknowledging that youth are not completely blameless.

Second, in 1985 the Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution (the Fraser Committee) released its findings and conclusions. When it came to research and recommendations pertaining to “youth prostitution,” the Fraser Committee largely deferred to the Badgley Report. However, the Fraser Committee included some discussion of youth involvement in prostitution.

Third, in 1992 a federal, provincial and territorial (F/P/T) working group on prostitution was established to examine “legislation, policy and practices concerning prostitution-related activities,” and to provide legal and social intervention recommendations (1998: 1). The working group’s mandate included special consideration of youth involvement in prostitution, and its final report contained 16 recommendations which reinforced that youth involved in s.213 offences should be dealt with as persons in need of assistance rather than treated as offenders.

### **1.1 Purpose of the Report**

This report is a comprehensive literature review on youth involved in prostitution, with a focus on intrafamilial violence (i.e., sexual, physical and emotional abuse) and its role in precipitating youth involvement in the sex trade. The review includes: a general overview of the literature, an annotated bibliography, a binder of materials reviewed, and a one page fact sheet. Information for this report was gathered through library sources, select Internet sites, and requests for prostitution-related information made to representatives of the F/P/T working group on prostitution.

### **1.2 Definition**

There are various debates in the literature about the definition and characteristics of youth involvement in prostitution. Typically, youth prostitution has been associated with females; however, research in this area has highlighted male involvement in the youth sex trade

(for example, see Badgley, 1984; Earls and David, 1989; Visano, 1987) and the over-representation of Aboriginal youth involved in prostitution (for example, see Currie *et al*, 1996; Lowman, 1987). Disagreement has surfaced about the meaning of youth involvement in prostitution; for some it constitutes the direct sexual exploitation of youth, while others consider it the exchange of sexual services to subsist (i.e., for food or shelter) or for monetary purposes (i.e., money to purchase drugs). Recent discussions emphasize the victimization and exploitation of youth involved prostitution (British Columbia, 1996; Halldorson Jackson, 1998; Manitoba, 1996).

Other of debates include the average age that youth enter prostitution, and the age used to describe youth prostitutes. The Badgley Committee (1984) reported that almost half of their respondents entered prostitution before the age of 15. Lowman and Fraser (1996) found the average age of entry was 16.3 years for females and 15.6 years for males. Research conducted in Victoria, British Columbia revealed 15.5 years as the average age for entering into prostitution (Report of the Sexually Exploited Youth Committee of the Capital Regional District, 1997). In general, the literature indicates that most prostitutes entered the sex trade before the age of 18 (and many before the age of 16).

Researchers have also used different ages to define a youth prostitute. The Badgley Committee (1984) identified “juvenile prostitutes” as being under the age of 20; while the Fraser Committee used up to age 18. More recent, the F/P/T working group used age 18 to define youth involved in prostitution, citing that the *Young Offenders Act* identifies a “young person” as being under 18, and that s.212(4) of the *Criminal Code* prohibits purchasing, or attempting to purchase, the sexual services of someone under the age of 18. Notwithstanding, most of the literature defines young prostitutes as being under 18 years of age.<sup>1</sup>

### 1.3 Overview of the Issues

A broad overview of the extant literature reveals many of the key issues surrounding the impact of youth involvement in the sex trade. Topics in the literature range from research on the factors preceding youth involvement in prostitution, to debates about appropriate legal and extra-legal responses to the youth prostitution. The first section of the report discusses the history and development of prostitution-related legislation and law enforcement. Following this, the document reviews government reports and activities, and several findings and debates in the social science literature. The conclusion reviews the findings and makes recommendations for future research.

This report is organized around the following key issues:

- Legislative History and Development
- Government Reports and Activities (Including criticisms and supporting articles)

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<sup>1</sup> Some social service agencies define “youths” as those under the age of 24 years; this provides agencies with more clients, and enables them to qualify for other government funding (Data collected in Vancouver, B.C. by Bittle, 1999).

- Social Science Literature: An Overview of the Findings and Debates

*Antecedents of Youth Involvement in Prostitution: Intrafamilial Violence and Subsequent Involvement in the Sex Trade.*

*Young Males Involved in Prostitution*

*Psychological Issues*

*Homeless or Runaway Youth Involved in Prostitution*

*International Issues*

*Research on Customers/Clients*

*HIV-Related Issues*

*Discursive and Conceptual Issues*

- Conclusion: Recommendations for Future Research

## 2.0 Legislative History and Development

Prostitution *per se* is legal in Canada; buying and selling sexual services are not prohibited by legislation. However, many peripheral activities necessary to engage in prostitution are illegal such that it is difficult to prostitute without breaking the law. The *Criminal Code of Canada* currently prohibits several prostitution-related activities: 1) being found in or operating a bawdy-house; 2) living on the avails of prostitution; 3) procuring, or attempting to procure, an individual to "...have illicit sexual intercourse with another person, whether in or out of Canada;" 4) obtaining, or attempting to obtain, the sexual services of a youth; 5) communicating in public, "for the purpose of engaging in prostitution or of obtaining the sexual services of a prostitute." Together these laws make it virtually impossible to practice prostitution without running afoul of the law:

[t]he prostitute has been legislatively encircled; prostitution is permitted as long as it is not practiced. It is virtually impossible to conceive of a location where prostitution can occur on a regular basis without one of the parties to the act risking criminal prosecution (Lowman, 1992: 78/80).

Throughout the twentieth century in Canada various special interest groups have provided the impetus for suppressing prostitution and for enacting and enforcing prostitution-related laws. There are examples of opponents who rejected prostitution on moral grounds because it encouraged sex outside marriage (Lowman, 1992: 70/71; McLaren, 1986). At times epidemiological concerns propelled the enactment of anti-venereal disease legislation (Backhouse, 1985: 390; Lowman, 1992: 71; McLaren, 1986). At other times feminist groups rejected prostitution because of its exploitation of women (Lowman, 1992: 71). From the mid-seventies through the early nineties, the visibility of prostitution and its associated nuisances dominated debates (Brock, 1998; Lowman, 1992: 71). Multifarious in origin and influence these various reformist rhetorics intersect throughout history to produce a matrix of prostitution-related legislation, law enforcement, and extra-legal initiatives to address youth involvement in prostitution.

### 2.1 The Soliciting Law and Concerns with Youth Involvement in Prostitution

Beginning in the 1970s, the academic literature describes two main developments in attempts to confront and suppress prostitution. First, beginning with the enactment of the soliciting law in 1972, there was a growing concern with the visibility of street prostitution and its associated nuisances (Lowman, 1986). During this period female prostitutes were harassed by residents and police who wanted prostitution removed from certain areas of the city. Second, starting in 1980 there was an increased recognition of child sexual abuse and exploitation cases (Hornick and Bolitho, 1992: xiv; Sullivan, 1986: 177). In response to concerns about the sexual abuse of youth the federal government convened the Committee on Sexual Offences Against Children and Youth (Badgley, 1984). The committee was later mandated to research youth prostitution (Badgley, 1984; Hornick and Bolitho, 1992; Lowman *et al*, 1986).

## 2.2 The Soliciting Law

Vagrancy laws imported to Canada from England during the mid-1800s criminalized the status “prostitute.” Merely being a prostitute was sufficient to evoke a criminal charge (Backhouse, 1985: 389). It was not until 1972 that the federal government repealed the vagrancy law and replaced it with legislation that criminalized public solicitation for the purposes of prostitution. Section 195.1 of the *Criminal Code of Canada* stated: “Every person who solicits any person in a public place for the purpose of prostitution is guilty of an offence punishable on summary conviction.” Under this law the section defining a prostitute as female was removed, and, at least theoretically, the actions of male customers were not excluded (cf. Boyle and Noonan, 1986: 229/30; Lowman, 1991; 118).

Despite the gender-neutral wording of the soliciting law, the evidence suggests that prostitutes continued to be the main focus of law enforcement (Lowman, 1994: 154). Further, there was much debate in the courts as to whether a male could be charged with soliciting for the purposes of prostitution. The British Columbia courts ruled that a client could not be found guilty of soliciting, while the Ontario courts ruled they could (Lowman, 1994: 154). In this regard Boyle and Noonan (1986: 264) suggest that the gender-neutral wording of the soliciting law only veiled discriminatory practices embedded in law enforcement and judicial decision making.

Amidst the confusion over the meaning and applicability of the soliciting law came a series of court decisions commonly thought to have rendered the law unenforceable (Lowman, 1992: 157). The main catalyst was the now infamous 1978 *Hutt* decision in which the Supreme Court of Canada determined that, for someone to solicit for the purpose of prostitution, their behaviour had to be “pressing and persistent” (Lowman, 1994: 154). Some police spokesmen argued the decision emasculated the soliciting law and therefore made it difficult to control street prostitution (Lowman, 1986: 1). Perception at the time was the number of adult and youth prostitutes working on the streets increased substantially following the court decisions.

In contrast to the events attributed to the *Hutt* decision stands Lowman’s claim that, “...the evidence available does not appear to show that the Hutt decision had a significant impact on the geography of the city’s [Vancouver’s] prostitution ‘strolls’: at most it consolidated a pattern already well established” (Lowman, 1986: 2; see also, 1991). During the early 1970s prostitution had already expanded into new areas of the city:

As early as 1972, journalists were starting to talk about the problems besetting Vancouver’s West End, the most densely populated square mile in Canada, and that hitherto had not been thought of as a red light district (Lowman, 1992b: 72).

Further, in 1975, three years before the *Hutt* decision, an investigation by the Vancouver police resulted in the closure of two prominent cabarets that acted as a place for prostitutes to meet their customers (Lowman, 1986: 8). The net effect of these closures was to displace prostitutes onto the streets (Lowman, 1992b: 73) and encourage the trade to expand into areas of the city that had not formerly contained prostitution strolls (Lowman, 1986: 8).

Similar patterns of displacement occurred in Toronto during the late 1970s when, in an effort to “clean up Yonge Street” (cf. Kinsman, 1994: 177), prostitutes were forced to turn to the streets to ply their trade (Brock, 1998: 43). Brock notes there were long-standing plans for a “...renewal of commercial development on Yonge Street” (1998: 32). As a result of this gentrification process, certain resident groups and politicians wanted to clear the area of several body-rub, or massage parlours -- meeting places for prostitutes and their customers (Brock, 1998: 31/32). During the attack on the Yonge Street sex industry, a twelve-year-old ‘shoeshine boy’, Emanuel Jaques, was found dead next to a well-known massage parlour. “Emanuel Jaques had been sexually assaulted and reportedly drowned in a sink during what *McLean’s* described as a 12-hour orgy of abuse by homosexuals” (Brock, 1998: 35). The ensuing public panic led the police on a series of bawdy house raids that resulted in the closure of the Yonge Street massage parlours, and the subsequent displacement of prostitutes onto the streets (Brock, 1998: 43). In this regard the Jaques case was a catalyst for an already established agenda to clean-up Yonge Street (Brock, 1998: 35).

The evidence therefore suggests the *Hutt* decision was not responsible for the expansion of the street trade, but that the court decision acted as a timely rationale for those demanding new laws to control and suppress the street trade (Lowman, 1988: 74). Indeed, it appears that the Vancouver police stopped enforcing the soliciting law to compel legislators to enact new laws. Larsen (1992: 173) notes that “...the Vancouver police clearly wanted tougher laws dealing with street prostitution, and it appears that their ‘hands off’ attitude was designed to instigate public pressure on politicians.” In the process the police helped construct the “public nuisance problem” as being central to the street prostitution debate (cf. Kinsman, 1994: 177).

### **2.3 The Fraser Committee**

Amidst concerns about the expansion of prostitution on certain streets, the federal government convened the Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution (Fraser Committee, 1985). The Fraser Committee was instructed to “...study the problems associated with pornography and prostitution, and carry out a program of sociolegal research to provide a basis for its work (Lowman *et al*, 1986: xiii). To facilitate this mandate, the Department of Justice Canada commissioned a series of reports/studies that were categorized into three groups: 1) regional studies conducted throughout Canada that examined the business of prostitution and its control. 2) A national population study that gathered opinions towards prostitution. 3) Comparative studies that examined approaches to prostitution in Europe, Asia, Arabia, South America, and the United States (cf. Sansfacon, 1984) (for Working Papers, see Crook, 1984; El Komos, 1984; Fleischman, 1984; Gemme *et al*, 1984; Haug and Cini, 1984; Jayewardene, Juliani and Talbot, 1984; Kiedrowski and van Dijk, 1984; Laut, 1984; Lowman, 1984; Peat Marwick, 1984; Sansfacon, 1984(a) and 1984(b)).

The Fraser Committee argued that the law failed to meet its “theoretical object” of reducing prostitution and “...instead has operated in a way which victimizes and dehumanizes the prostitute” (Fraser, 1985: 533). The Committee called on the government to develop long-term

programs to address the social and economic conditions faced by women involved in prostitution (Fraser, 1985: 525/26).

In the short-term, the Fraser Committee argued that street prostitution is not likely to disappear as long as the government refuses to identify a location for it to go (Fraser, 1985: 534; cf. Lowman, 1992a: 10). The Committee recognized the need to address the public nuisances associated with street prostitution by identifying (private) locations where prostitution could occur (Fraser, 1985: 534-540). To overcome this problem the Committee recommended comprehensive changes to the *Criminal Code*, including, among other things, repealing the bawdy house laws to allow one or two prostitutes over the age of eighteen to employ themselves in a private abode (Fraser, 1985: 538) and empowering provincial governments to license “small-scale” prostitution establishments (Fraser, 1985: 546): “[t]his approach suggested that better control of the public nuisance aspects of the trade would be best facilitated by curtailing the power of the criminal law over prostitution in private places” (Lowman, 1991a: 309).

When it came to research and issues pertaining to “youth prostitution,” the Fraser Committee largely deferred to the Badgley Committee (1984). However, one notable exception was that the Fraser Committee (1985: 658/59) disagreed with Badgley’s recommendation to criminalize young prostitutes as a means of protection; the Fraser Committee argued that creating an age specific offence contradicted the spirit of the *Young Offenders Act*. Nevertheless, the Fraser Committee did recommend new legislation censuring the sexual procurement of a person under the age of 18 for prostitution-related purposes. In addition, the Committee encouraged the enactment of specific legislation to criminalize those who purchase, or attempted to purchase, the sexual services of youth (1985: 659):

We think it is essential that the *Criminal Code* contain an offence specifically framed around sexual activity for reward with a person under 18...In our opinion, a person who is even approached by an adult should be able to invoke the law enforcement process. To await the completion of the sexual activity before triggering the criminal process is to lose a substantial portion of the deterrent value of this provision...The section is directed toward the party whom we think is more likely to be the “aggressor” in the contact between the user and provider of sexual services of youth.

## **2.4 The Badgley Committee**

Emerging at the same time as campaigns to control street prostitution, there was a growing concern about youth participation in the sex trade. The Canadian government had recently responded to fears about the sexual abuse of young people by launching the Badgley Committee (1984). “Youth prostitution” was not part of the Committee’s original mandate, however, it was added at a later date. The apparent growth of sexually exploited street youth garnered enough concern to have this issue included as part of the mandate (Lowman, 1986: 195). Released one year prior to the Fraser Report, the Badgley Report contained 52 recommendations to help confront the sexual exploitation of youth, including several conclusions

and recommendations the Committee made following interviews with 229 “juvenile prostitutes” (Badgley Committee, 1984: 967). The Badgley Committee’s research data produced substantial biographical information about youth prostitutes in Canada (Clark, 1986: 106); before this, academic information concerning the dynamics of “adolescent prostitution” was mainly from the United States (for example, Weisberg, 1985). To date, the Badgley Report remains a “definitive and official source of data on the sexual abuse of children and youths in Canada” (Brock, 1998: 115).

The Badgley Committee (1984) believed that the realities of youth prostitution justified the enactment of specific legislation aimed at customers (1984: 1055/56). The Committee (1984: 1056) further argued, “[our] findings indicate that the clients of prostitutes pose at least an equal if not greater public nuisance than do the prostitutes themselves.” As a result, they recommended legislation that would make the sexual procurement of youth an indictable offence (Badgley, 1984: 1055/56).

Besides recommending legislation criminalizing the sexual procurement of youth, the Badgley Committee argued it was necessary to criminalize young prostitutes to keep them from a life of prostitution (1984: 1046). Therefore, the Committee recommended the enactment of a specific offence for people under 18 years of age who sell sexual services (Badgley, 1984: 95).

## **2.5 The Federal Government’s Response to Badgley and Fraser**

Following on the heels of the Badgley (1984) and Fraser (1985) Committees, the federal government initiated two important legislative changes. First, in December 1985 they enacted a new law to confront street prostitution, and then, in January 1988, new legislation was introduced to criminalize the sexual procurement of youth.

## **2.6 The Communicating Law**

On 20 December 1985 the federal government repealed the soliciting law and replaced it with legislation that criminalized public communication for the purpose of buying or selling sexual services. The new legislation ignored the Fraser Committee’s recommendation that there be wholesale revision of Canadian prostitution law. The revision made it clear that prostitutes and customers meeting on the streets were equally culpable under the law (cf. Lowman, 1991a: 301/302) and, by criminalizing public communications for the purpose of buying or selling sex, confirmed the federal government’s commitment to confronting visible manifestations of prostitution (cf. Lowman, 1992b: 66) thus prioritizing concerns about the public ‘nuisances’ associated with the trade.

Initial survey data about the communicating law in some Canadian jurisdictions suggested that female prostitutes continued to be punished more frequent than male clients. Various regional assessments commissioned by Justice Canada (Brannigan *et al*, 1989; Flieschman, 1989; Gemme *et al*, 1989; Graves, 1989; Lowman, 1989; Moyer and Carrington,

1989) revealed that enforcement patterns focused primarily on female prostitutes: "...data from nine of the ten Canadian cities studied indicate that more prostitutes than customers are charged and that their sentences are more severe" (quote from Shaver, 1994: 133; also see, Lowman, 1992b: 66; Lowman, 1994: 155). However, Flieschman (1989: 41) noted considerable jurisdictional differences in charge rates for customers and prostitutes; in Vancouver and Montreal, a greater number of prostitutes were charged than customers. In Toronto the charge rates were close to equal for prostitutes and their clients. Further, youth prostitutes in Vancouver [and other jurisdictions] continued to be targets of law enforcement; in 1986 and 1987, ten percent of all communicating charges were levied against youths (Lowman, 1989: 200).

Concern also surfaced about the role of the communicating law in perpetuating violence against female prostitutes (Lowman, 1989: 203; O'Connell, 1988: 142/43). Vigorous enforcement of the new law forced female (both youths and adults) prostitutes to meet their clients in more vulnerable and secluded locations of the city so as to avoid detection by authorities (cf. Lowman, 1989: 203). Prostitutes were therefore exposed to dangerous situations because they had to meet clients in areas where there were no witnesses or police officers to help in cases where clients turned violent.

## **2.7 Legislating Protection - Bill C-15**

The second important legislative change occurred in 1988 when the federal government introduced Bill C-15 to help address the apparent increase of sexual offences against children and youth. The Bill was to help protect victims of child sexual abuse, raise the number of prosecutions of child sexual abuse cases, increase the severity of sentences and improve conditions for child victims and witnesses (Hornick and Bolitho, 1992: xiv; Schmolka, 1992: 2). "By proclamation of this Bill, the federal government sent a clear message that the protection of children and youths was a priority in Canada and that sexual abuse of children was unacceptable and would not be tolerated" (Hornick and Bolitho, 1992: xiv).

Bill C-15 included provisions that criminalized the sexual procurement of youth. Section 212(2) and (3) (living on the avails of a young prostitute under the age of 18) was amended to make it easier for police to arrest pimps, and the maximum penalty was raised from 10 to 14 years. In addition, s.212(4) criminalized obtaining, or attempting to obtain, the sexual services of someone under the age of 18.

Uniform Crime Reports fail to differentiate between various s.212 charges, therefore it is difficult to ascertain the number of section 212(2) and (4) charges across Canada. Nevertheless, the literature provides some commentary on the effectiveness of legislation aimed at prohibiting the sexual procurement of youth. An early sign these laws were not effective came from a mandatory evaluation commissioned by Department of Justice Canada that focused on the package of laws introduced in Bill C-15 (see, Hornick and Bolitho, 1992; Schmolka, 1992). The executive summary pointed out that there was a lack of charges under "subsection 212(2) (living on the avails) and subsection 212(4) (obtaining for sexual purposes)" (Hornick and Bolitho, 1992: xxix). With respect to subsection 212(4), the authors noted that charges could only be

obtained if the customer was “caught in the act...Thus traditional police methods are not effective for enforcing” this law (Hornick and Bolitho, 1992: 65).

Lowman and Fraser found that “...during the first six years of the new law’s existence, there were apparently only six charges in Vancouver for offering to purchase the sexual services of a youth” (1996: 100). Police officers suggested that s.212(4) was difficult to enforce because to obtain a conviction they must catch the offender “in the act,” attempt to use undercover police decoys (it is difficult to get an officer who appears under the age of 18), or rely on a youth’s testimony (why would a youth alienate a potential source of income?) (Bittle, 1999; Lowman, 1997; F/P/T, 1998). Lowman agreed that section 212(4) appears difficult to enforce, however he added that response (or lack thereof) to the ineffectiveness of this legislation was revealing about attitudes towards youth prostitution. When problems were perceived with the ‘soliciting law’ (from 1978 to 1985), the police and community groups were very vocal about the need to enact new legislation to control and suppress the street trade. “They’ve mounted no such campaign on behalf of section 212(4).”

In Vancouver, British Columbia some service providers and community activists questioned why s.212(4) was not enforced. In 1996 a Vancouver service agency commissioned a report to examine the lack of s.212(4) charges in British Columbia (Daum, 1996). The author argued that street children and youth must be protected from the sexual advances of pedophiles and sexual predators. Daum berated the police, the courts and politicians for not arresting customers of young prostitutes, and for not fixing the problems associated with the enforcement of s.212(4). In October 1998, another report (produced by the same author) criticized the enforcement of s.212(4) in British Columbia and other Canadian jurisdictions. The author acknowledged an increase in the number men charged for purchasing, or attempting to purchase, the sexual services of a youth; however, she argued that much more must be done to protect children and youth from sexual exploitation, i.e., more s.212(4) charges and the use of existing sexual offence legislation to prosecute male sexual predators.

In response to concerns about the sexual exploitation of street youth, the federal government amended s.212(4) to make it easier to enforce. Bill C-27 added subsection 212(5), making it illegal to purchase the sexual services of someone under the age of 18, or “who the offender believes is under the age of 18 years” (F/P/T, 1998: 25). This addition was introduced to address police concerns by allowing undercover surveillance officers to present themselves as being under the age of 18 to people who propositioned them. Further, various jurisdictions across Canada have launched initiatives to increase protection afforded to youth involved in prostitution (for example, see British Columbia, 1996 and 1997, Manitoba, 1996; Sas and Hurley, 1997).

## **2.8 The Context of Responding to Youth Involved in Prostitution**

A review of the literature concerning the legislative history and development reveals a marked difference in the legal approach towards female prostitutes and customers and men who sexually procure youth. Regardless of age, female prostitutes have been subjected to discriminatory legislation and unequal law enforcement. In contrast to female prostitutes, men

associated with the demand aspect of the sex trade have enjoyed relative immunity from the law. As Sullivan notes:

Until now, Canadian law as it affects juvenile prostitution has historically been uneven and discriminatory both in its spirit and enforcement, essentially punishing rather than protecting, without significantly affecting those who benefit from prostitution (1986: 11).

Despite a history of discriminatory prostitution-related legislation and law enforcement, there are signs of change (cf. Lowman, 1997). There are indications in the 1990s that discussions and efforts to suppress prostitution are shifting towards the male client and men who sexually procure youths. Data produced by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics suggests that charge rates for prostitutes and their customers is close to parity. At the same time, national statistics indicate that youth involved in prostitution are not being charged with communicating as frequently as they have in the past (Duchesne, 1997). “The relatively small portion of youth (12 to 17 years-old) charged may reflect their frequent diversion to social service agencies by police” (Duchesne, 1997: 1). Furthermore, questions have been raised by some service providers and community members about the virtual immunity from the law enjoyed by men who purchase the sexual services of youth, and they have lobbied for the protection of youth involved in prostitution (Bittle, 1999).

### **3.0 Government Reports and Activities (including criticisms and supporting articles)**

Three major federal government responses have occurred since 1981: the Badgley Report (1984), the Fraser Report (1985) and the federal/provincial/territorial working group on prostitution (1998). In addition, numerous committees, reports and task forces have been launched by provincial and municipal governments to address concerns associated with the youth sex trade, and to develop steps to combat this phenomenon. The following section reviews these reports and the literature that supports and criticizes their findings and recommendations.

#### **3.1 The Badgley Committee**

The Badgley Report (1984) contained several findings and conclusions following interviews with 229 “juvenile prostitutes.” The Committee found that a majority of young prostitutes were female (1984: 969) and that 27.6 percent of the females and 13.1 percent of the males they interviewed were under 16 years of age (1984: 984). The Committee also found that youth prostitutes came from families that represent a variety of social classes, although a “large portion” of youths were from “middle class” homes (1984: 973). Lowman (1987: 102) suggested the Badgley Committee’s youth prostitution survey lacked the necessary detail to make conclusions about class background of youth prostitutes.

The Badgley Committee uncovered important information about home-life experiences of runaway youths before they became involved in street prostitution. For many youths the choice to runaway was precipitated by home situations they described as intolerable:

The National Juvenile Prostitution Survey’s findings clearly show that running away from home was an experience shared by most of the youths who later became juvenile prostitutes. For many of them, running away represented an immediate means of escaping from some aspect of their home environment with which they found it impossible to cope, rather than serving as an avenue through which to pursue some positive long-term goals (Badgley Committee, 1984: 983).

In general, a majority of youths characterized their childhood and teenage experiences as troubled and unhappy (Badgley, 1984: 985).

The Badgley Committee also determined that many males involved in prostitution ran away from home because they were ridiculed and ostracized for their homosexual preferences (1984: 969). With little support from family members and a homophobic school environment, many young males turned to the streets where they believed “...they could meet people of like sexual preferences, and where they could escape the hostility and derision of family and friends” (Badgley Committee, 1984: 970). In this regard, homophobic sentiments in “square society” propelled some young males to the streets where situational factors contributed to their decision to become involved in prostitution (Visano, 1987).

The Badgley Committee (1984) further found that young prostitutes were relatively uneducated compared to other Canadians of the same age. The Committee noted that, once on the streets, available social services for youth prostitutes had been "...ineffective and had provided inadequate protection and assistance" (1984: 986). The Committee recommended the development of specialized services to assist young prostitutes and to prevent youth at risk from becoming involved in prostitution (1984: 986).

Youths interviewed for the Badgley Report were asked to recall their "early sexual experiences," including situations where they were sexually abused by family members (1984: 976). The Committee compared survey information from interviews with "juvenile prostitutes" with data obtained from the National Population Survey to determine if there was any relationship between previous sexual experiences and becoming involved in prostitution. The comparison led the Committee to argue that "...youths who later became juvenile prostitutes were no more at risk when they were growing up than other Canadian children and youths of having been victims of sexual offences" (1984: 978).

Several commentators criticized the Badgley Committee's findings about past sexual experiences (i.e., Lowman *et al*, 1986; Bagley, 1985), which included: 1) the Committee used incommensurate data when it compared the Juvenile Prostitution Survey, which asked youths about unwanted sexual acts involving "threats or force" to which they had unwillingly submitted, and the National Population Survey that asked interviewees about their first unwanted sexual experience (Bagley 1985, 1986 and 1987, Brock, 1998 and Lowman, 1986 and 1987). 2) Interviews conducted for the Badgley Report included sexually exploited youths under the age of twenty, while the National Population survey included people between 17 and 70 years of age (Bagley, 1987). Lowman (1986) argued the age differences may have led respondents in the two studies to recall past sexual experiences differently (p.197). Further, "...young prostitutes, because of their street experiences, may interpret what constitutes an 'unwanted sexual act' quite differently from non prostitutes" (Lowman, 1986: 197). 3) Bagley (1987) argued the Badgley Committee downplayed the seriousness of the abuse experienced by young prostitutes, and they failed to explain that young prostitutes were assaulted at a much younger age than the general population. 4) Finally, the National Population Survey used self-administered questionnaires, while survey data produced for the Badgley Committee came from face-to-face interviews; these different methods of generating data may produce different types of responses (Bagley, 1986 and Lowman, 1987).

Lowman (1987: 103) challenged Badgley's interpretation of information on past sexual experiences by comparing categories from the National Population Survey and the Juvenile Prostitution Survey that focused on unwanted sexual experiences involving "threat or force."

It appears then, that prostitutes were *twice as likely* to have experienced a first unwanted intrafamilial sexual act involving force or threats of force as other member of the Canadian population. The important statistic not provided by the Badgley Committee was the number of prostitutes whose first 'unwanted sexual

experience' during childhood did not involve 'threats or force' (Lowman, 1987: 103)

Bagley also reinterpreted Badgley's data to suggest that prior to entering the street life, young prostitutes experienced twice as much abuse as the general population. Not every young prostitute experienced unwanted sexual acts while growing up (conversely, not every sexually abused youth becomes involved in prostitution) (Lowman, 1987: 104; Brock, 1998: 113); nevertheless, the Badgley Committee (1984) underestimated this important factor related to some youths' decision to leave home at a young age, and their subsequent choice to live on the street and become involved in prostitution.

The Fraser Committee (1985) disagreed with Badgley's recommendation to criminalize young prostitutes as a means of protection; the Fraser Committee argued that creating an age-specific offence contradicted the spirit of the *Young Offender Acts*. Other commentators argued that the Committee's suggestion to criminalize young prostitutes would only serve to entrench youths in prostitution, and it would ignore the factors that help make prostitution a choice for some youth (Appleford, 1986; Brock, 1998: 116; Lowman, 1986: 212). Further, Brock notes:

This measure for the 'protection' of young prostitutes was advanced in contradiction to the committee's statement that 'there is no desire on the part of the committee to affix a criminal label to any juvenile prostitute,' and its acknowledgment that criminalization would not serve as a deterrent to young persons entering prostitution (1998: 106).

In general the Badgley Committee was criticized for ignoring many of the structural factors that generate youth prostitution. Lorene Clark (1986) criticized the Badgley Committee for its paternalistic tone and its inability to recognize male sexual socialization as a mitigating factor in the sexual exploitation of children and youth:

They [Badgley] feel no need to stop and reflect upon the fact that it is males who are overwhelmingly responsible for this state of affairs. Nowhere do they discuss why this is so and how it can be changed. They seem simply to assume that of course we realize this, as we all do: boys will be boys, after all (98).

Likewise, Brock and Kinsman (1986) criticized the Badgley Committee for obfuscating gender power relations that contribute to male sexual violence against children and youths (110 and 123). For Brock and Kinsman the Committee erased "...the historical process which has structured patriarchal relations, youth oppression and the present policies of sexual rule, thereby preparing us to deal with them as natural and thus confining our field of vision to a narrow, legally defined realm" (1986: 124). Sullivan (1986) criticized the Committee for ignoring many of the broader and social economic factors that makes prostitution a "significant point of entry into the labor force for some young workers." Further, Lowman (1986: 212) chastised the Badgley Committee for not addressing the "...structural context of youth prostitution;" they

avoided detailed discussions of gender, class and power imbalances between adults and youths, all factors that help to generate the sexual procurement of youth (Lowman, 1986: 212).

### **3.2 The Fraser Committee**

The Fraser Committee (1985) was inaugurated in response to growing dissatisfaction with prostitution-related legislation (Lowman, 1986) and feminist concerns about pornography (McLaren, 1986: 40). The Committee was instructed to examine pornography and prostitution and to recommend ways to address relevant issues (Fraser, 1985: 5). The Committee was to “...study the problems associated with pornography and prostitution, and carry out a program of sociolegal research to provide a basis for its work” (Lowman *et al*, 1986: xiii). The Fraser Committee released its recommendations on 23 April 1985.<sup>2</sup>

When it came to research and issues pertaining to “youth prostitution,” the Fraser Committee largely deferred to the Badgley Committee (1984). However, the Fraser Report included some discussion of youth involvement in prostitution (see above sections).

### **3.3 The Federal/Provincial/Territorial Working Group on Prostitution**

In 1992 the federal/provincial/territorial (F/P/T) deputy justice ministers instructed a working group on prostitution to examine “legislation, policy and practices concerning prostitution-related activities and bring forward recommendations to address problems posed by prostitution.” Youth involvement in prostitution, violence against prostitutes and neighbourhood concerns associated with the street sex trade were earmarked by the working group as primary issues of concern. The Working Group released its final report in December 1998, which included several recommendations with respect to youth involvement in prostitution.

The F/P/T working group recommended the development of legal and social intervention strategies to combat youth involvement in the sex trade, and they suggested youth involved in s.213 offences be dealt with as in need of assistance and “distinct from being treated as offenders.” Other recommendations concerning youth involvement in prostitution include: increased awareness of the “dynamics of youth involved in prostitution” among criminal justice personnel; amend s.212(4) to make it easier for police to arrest customers of young prostitutes; special witness protection programs to help young prostitutes testify in court against pimps and customers; the development of “interdisciplinary protocols” involving child welfare, the police and the crown -- using the criminal justice system as a measure of last resort; emphasis on alternative measures for youth involved in prostitution; and, improved services (i.e., education, prevention, harm reduction and exit supports) for youth involved in the sex trade “or at risk of such involvement.”

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<sup>2</sup> For a critique of the Fraser Report, see Kanter, 1985; Lowman *et al*, 1986; O’Connell, 1988.

### 3.4 Violence Against Prostitutes

Another area of concern has been the incidence of violence against women involved in prostitution. The Badgley Committee (1984) reported that approximately two thirds of the youth interviewed for the Juvenile Prostitution Survey reported physical assaults in the course of selling sexual services (cf. F/P/T, 1998). Data produced by Statistics Canada revealed that 63 prostitutes were murdered in Canada from 1991 to 1995; of those victims, 60 were female and 7 were under 18 years of age (see, Duchesne, 1997; Wolff and Geissel, 1993; Lowman, 1997).

Miller and Schwartz (1995) conducted interviews with 16 street prostitutes to examine the “experience and meaning” of violence against prostitutes. Respondents indicated high levels of rape and violence while involved in prostitution-related activities. The authors argue that stereotypical rape myths “come together uniquely in the case of prostitutes to fuel both the violence and devaluation that allows society to ignore such treatment,” and that violence against street prostitutes represents a continuum of violence against women in general. Schissel and Fedec (1999) explore the “culture of violence” experienced by young prostitutes by analyzing youth probation files in Regina and Saskatoon. In addition to high levels of childhood physical and sexual abuse among youth prostitutes, the authors find several examples of indirect and direct victimization. As the authors note: “prostitution creates a context in which those youth who are involved will run a high risk of being damage by a predator or by themselves - whether directly through assault and self-injury or indirectly through high-risk behaviour” (Schissel and Fedec, 1999: 51).

In 1993 a coalition of Vancouver service agencies commissioned a study to examine violence against street-involved women (Currie, Lalibertie, Bird, Rosa, Noelle, and Spring, 1993). The research includes in-depth one-to-one interviews with 85 street-involved women. The authors found that a majority of respondents experienced violence (sexual and physical abuse) at home, and after they became involved in prostitution. Further, 98% of the women experienced violence as a result of a bad date, and youth involved in prostitution were identified as more at risk of victimization than adult prostitutes.

In response to concerns that the law perpetuated violence against prostitutes, the Department of Justice Canada sponsored a series of jurisdictional studies to examine the incidence of violence, both before and after the introduction of the communicating law (Bill C-49) (see, Brannigan, 1996, Flieschman, 1996, Lowman and Fraser 1996). Among the findings produced by the evaluations: 1) composite data from research in B.C. revealed 67 homicides of prostitutes since 1978 (60 since 1982). A newspaper analysis indicated that victims ranged from age 15 to 41, and that four youths involved in prostitution (under the age of 18) were murdered between 1974 to 1994. Lowman and Fraser concluded that, “preliminary analysis suggests that women known to have been involved in street prostitution are murdered at a rate somewhere in the region of sixty to one hundred and twenty times the rate at which non-prostitute women are murdered.” The authors asserted an indirect link between the enforcement of the communicating law and violence against women involved in prostitution (Lowman and Fraser 1996). 2) Research in Halifax reported numerous acts of violence against prostitutes by pimps and customers. However, the police, crown, defense and social agencies reported that Bill C-49 has

not created a more dangerous working milieu for street prostitutes (Fleischman, 1996). 3) Research in Calgary and Winnipeg reported 20 homicides of women involved in prostitution since 1985. The author suggested that an increase in violence against prostitutes corresponds with an increase of violence against women (Brannigan, 1996).

### **3.5 Other Reports and Initiatives to Address Youth Involvement in Prostitution**

There has been numerous youth prostitution-related reports, committees, task forces and initiatives launched by provincial and municipal governments. There are examples of projects developed to help understand the characteristics and dynamics of the youth sex trade (for example, see LeBlanc, 1997; Sas and Hurley, 1997). There are initiatives and reports aimed at preventing youth involvement in prostitution, i.e., prevention programs for families and schools, and improved services for street involved youth (for example, see British Columbia, 1994; C/S Resors Consulting, 1996; Daum and Dion, 1996; Recommendations of the Prostitution Policy, Service and research Committee for the Calgary Community, 1996; Madsen and Moss, 1996). Other reports focus on harm reduction strategies for youth involved in the sex trade, i.e., substance abuse programs, initiatives to reduce violence against prostitutes, and protection for youth witnesses (for example, see Committee for Sexually Exploited Youth in the CRD, 1997; British Columbia, 1994; Halldorson Jackson, 1998). Finally, several committees and reports recommend counseling, education, employment, housing and support services for youth who want to exit prostitution (for example, see C/S Resors Consulting, 1996; Canadian Child Welfare Association, 1987; Safer City Task Force, 1993).

Several recent reports and initiatives emphasize the need for co-operation and communication between the various agencies responsible for dealing with youth prostitution. The *Report of the Working Group on Juvenile Prostitution* (Manitoba Child and Youth Secretariat, 1996) recommended that the Department of Family Services foster networking and coordination among Winnipeg agencies that “provide significant services to juveniles in prostitution and in street life.” In 1996, the British Columbia government launched a provincial action plan on prostitution that encouraged police, service providers, parents, youth and communities to work together to develop “initiatives that target pimps and johns, violence towards prostitutes, and safety and nuisance issues in neighbourhoods.” Further, Sas and Hurley (1997: 185) recommended an “inter-agency investigative protocol to combat child sexual exploitation, including significant authorities such as the CAS [Children’s Aid society], police, Crown Attorney’s office, local boards of education, and health unit.” The authors also recommended a national strategy to “combat child sexual abuse.”

### **3.6 Common Themes in Attempts to Address Youth Prostitution**

An overview of the various reports, initiatives and recommendations reveals an increased concern with the victimization/exploitation of youth involved in prostitution. In several Canadian jurisdictions there has been attempts to treat youth prostitution as the sexual abuse and exploitation of youth (for example, see Recommendations of the Prostitution Policy, Service and Research Committee for the Calgary Community, 1996; Manitoba Child and Youth Secretariat, 1996), and there are new programs to protect sexually exploited youth involved in prostitution (British Columbia, 1994, 1996, and 1997). In other jurisdictions recommendations have been launched to amend child welfare legislation so as to treat the sexual procurement of youth as child abuse (Recommendations of the Prostitution Policy, Service and Research Committee for

the Calgary Community, 1996; Manitoba Child and Youth Secretariat, 1996). These initiatives stand in contrast to previous efforts that supported the criminalization of youth involved in prostitution as a means of protection (for example, see Badgley, 1984).

Attempts to hold men who sexually procure youth accountable for their actions is a corollary of recent efforts to protect youth involved in prostitution. In 1996, the Manitoba Child and Youth Secretariat suggested that convicted procurers of young prostitutes be listed on a child abuse registry, and they introduced legislation permitting the seizure of vehicles used for prostitution-related offences (Manitoba Government News Release, 1998). In addition, various initiatives have been launched to develop techniques to enforce s.212(4) of the *Criminal Code* and target men who sexually procure youth (for example, see British Columbia, 1996 and 1997).

## **4.0 Social Science Literature: An Overview of the Findings and Debates**

An overview of the literature reveals several important issues surrounding the impact of youth participation in prostitution. This chapter reviews the key findings and debates that appear in the literature.

### **4.1 Antecedents of Youth Involvement in Prostitution: Intrafamilial Violence and Subsequent Involvement in the Sex Trade**

In an attempt to understand why some youth become involved in prostitution, researchers have examined the family background and history of young prostitutes, including their socioeconomic status, their educational and work-related experiences and psychological factors. A salient research topic is the relationship between family dysfunction (i.e., intrafamilial substance abuse and sexual, physical and emotional abuse) and subsequent involvement in prostitution. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, several studies in the United States examined the childhood sexual experiences of “juvenile prostitutes.” James and Meyerding’s (1977; see also, Vitaliano, James and Boyer, 1981) comparison of prostitutes with non-prostitutes revealed that many prostitutes were victims of childhood sexual abuse, resulting in an “abusive sexual identity” that made some youth vulnerable to entering the sex trade.

Silbert and Pines (1981, 1982 and 1983) produced several articles that asserted a positive relationship between early childhood sexual victimization and the subsequent decision to prostitute. The authors invited 200 current and former female prostitutes in the San Francisco Bay area to complete a Sexual Assault Experiences Questionnaire. The data indicated that 60% of the respondents were victims of childhood sexual exploitation, and everyone experienced physical and emotional abuse. Many (2/3) of the respondents had been “sexually abused by father figures,” and most stated their early sexual exploitation influenced their decision to become involved in prostitution.

In her research on male and female adolescent prostitution, Weisberg (1985) found that many prostitutes were victims of intrafamilial childhood physical and sexual abuse. Further, many young males and females ran away from abusive environments, and once on the streets they were exposed to a variety of conditions that influenced their decision to prostitute.

### **4.2 Canadian Research on the Antecedents of Youth Prostitution**

In Canada, concern with the relationship between sexual abuse and involvement in prostitution emerged with the Badlgey Report (1984). The Badlgey Report produced substantial debate about the prevalence and nature of the link between childhood sexual abuse and subsequent involvement in prostitution (see section 3.0 for details).

Contrary to the Badgley Committee, several Canadian studies report high levels of childhood sexual abuse among street prostitutes (see, for example, Gemme *et al*, 1984; Lowman, 1984; Bagley and Young, 1987; Earls and David, 1990). Bagley and Young (1987) attempted to replicate Silbert and Pines research on the association between childhood sexual abuse and subsequent involvement in prostitution. The authors compared interviews with 45 former prostitutes and results from a group of non-prostitutes who participated in a mental health study (including a second comparison group of 40 women from the mental health study who reported childhood sexual abuse). Bagley and Young concluded that former prostitutes were more likely to have experienced a home life that included family-related alcohol issues, physical and emotional abuse and sexual abuse. Former prostitutes were more likely to have attempted suicide, and they exhibited poor mental health and devastated self-esteem.

Earls and David (1990) conducted interviews with male and female “prostitutes” and “non-prostitutes” to compare early family and sexual experiences. Their results suggested a relationship between “sexual interaction with a family member” and becoming involved in prostitution: “Based on our results, it would thus seem that the probability of entering prostitution may be closely related to leaving home at an early age, having a history of sexual abuse, and, in the case of males, having homosexual preferences” (Earls and David, 1990: 10).

Some commentators have questioned the nature and prevalence of the association between childhood sexual abuse and involvement in prostitution. Van Brunschot and Brannigan (1992 - Unpublished paper) conducted in-depth interviews with 18 adult female prostitutes, and they administered questionnaires to a control group of 95 introductory level junior college and university students. The authors failed to find a significant difference between the two groups with respect to sexual abuse experienced during childhood. The strongest coefficients were criminal records, running away, having children, physical abuse, and non-traditional family arrangements.

Brannigan and Fleischman (1989) challenged the therapeutic view that characterized youth prostitutes as victims of childhood sexual abuse. The authors reviewed national prosecution data to argue that young prostitutes comprise only a minority of the total number of individuals involved in prostitution. Further, they suggested that research on the association between childhood sexual, physical and emotional abuse, and subsequent involvement in prostitution is guilty of methodological and ideological inconsistencies. A review of two studies on runaways in Canada (Fisher, 1989 and Kufeldt and Nimmo, 1987) downplay the link between child abuse, leaving home at an early age, and becoming involved in prostitution. Lowman (1989) challenged Brannigan and Fleischmans’ position by reminding us that a majority of prostitutes entered the sex trade before the age of 18. Further, an alternative interpretation of the data revealed that prostitutes experienced more intrafamilial physical and sexual abuse during their childhood than non-prostitutes.

Brannigan and Van Brunschot (1997) agreed that some young prostitutes ran away from physically and sexually abusive home situations. However they argued with prevalence and nature of the link between childhood sexual abuse and prostitution; the “evidence is inconsistent and contradictory.” The authors suggested it is more important to address the delinquent

situations a youth encounters after running away from home than searching for “unobservable traumas and psychiatric disturbances.” Finally, Nandon, Koverola and Schluderman (1998) conducted interviews (based on Silbert’s sexual assault experiences questionnaire) with 45 adolescent female prostitutes and 37 adolescent non-prostitutes. Their results echo previous studies that report “childhood physical and sexual abuse, intrafamilial violence, substance abuse problems, and poor self-esteem among prostitutes.” However, “these factors...failed to discriminate the prostitutes and the nonprostitute groups.” The authors also found that prostitutes ran away from home more frequently than non-prostitutes (suggesting a process of entering prostitution, not a causal link).

### **4.3 Young Males Involved in Prostitution**

Researchers have noted important dynamics associated with young males involved in prostitution. As with research on female prostitution, the literature suggests that young males involved in the sex trade ran away from physically and sexually abusive home environments (Janus, Burgess and McCormack, 1987; Tremble, 1993; Earls and David, 1989 and 1990). Tremble’s research on gay street youth revealed that a majority of the respondents came from abusive home environments or “placement families.” Earls and David (1989 and 1990) found that in comparison to control groups, male prostitutes experienced more physical and sexual abuse while growing up, and they witnessed more violence between parents, more drug and alcohol use among family members, and were more likely to identify male partners as their first sexual experience. Janus, Burgess and McCormack (1987) found that male runaways experienced more sexual and physical abuse than “randomly sampled populations.”

The literature also reveals several characteristics that are unique to the male sex trade. Weisberg (1985) noted that many adolescent males involved in prostitution exhibited homosexual preferences (also see Earls and David, 1989; Price, Scanlon and Janus, 1984). In general, it appears that many young males involved in prostitution ran away from home because of anti-homosexual/homophobic sentiments in mainstream society (i.e., family, friends, school, etc.) (See, Kruks, 1991 and Visano, 1987); in essence, they were ridiculed and ostracized for their homosexual preferences (Badgley, 1984). In this respect, discriminatory attitudes in “square society” [society beyond prostitution] propelled some young males to the street where situational factors contributed to their decision to prostitute.

### **4.4 Psychological Issues**

Some of the literature focuses on the psychological development and the psychological impact of youth involved in prostitution. Coleman (1989) found that disruptions in the psychosexual and psychological development of young males may contribute to their participation in “destructive and non-ego enhancing prostitution activities.” Dorais (1996) suggested that some male victims of childhood sexual abuse may become involved in “aggressive prostitution” as a means of diverting revenge against the true aggressor. Bartek, Krebs and Taylor (1993) conducted interviews with 20 juvenile delinquents involved in

prostitution, 20 non-prostitute juvenile delinquents and 20 control subject. Respondents were asked questions based on the Moral Judgment Interview (MJI) and Joffe and Naditch's coping and defending test. Delinquents characterized as "low coping" made "lower level moral judgments on the prostitution dilemma than on the less personally relevant MJI dilemmas," revealing a relationship between moral reasoning and moral judgment.

The psychology literature provides important information on the short- and long-term impact of youth involvement in prostitution. However, psychological studies risk marginalizing important structural variables that help propel the youth sex trade. To avoid this weakness, some researchers have combined psychological and sociological variables to examine youth prostitution. Edney (1988 and 1990) argued that young prostitutes who were sexually abused during childhood experienced a severe loss of self-esteem, and they exhibited poor physical and mental condition. The author describes the process of becoming involved in prostitution by exploring the impact of the social structure (i.e., cultural factors, gender stereotypes, family schools, employment structures, etc.) on individual "lives, behaviours and choices." For Edney, "...sexual abuse and the victims' responses to sexual abuse prepared and trained the young girls for prostitution."

#### **4.5 Homeless or Runaway Youth Involved in Prostitution**

Factors associated with childhood physical and sexual abuse, psychological issues, and sexual orientation does not fully describe how some youth become involved in prostitution. Indeed, the homeless and runaway literature has also helped us understand youth involvement in the sex trade. There are several situational variables associated with running away and being homeless that propel some youth to enter prostitution.

Some youth who runaway from home (as noted above, often from physically and sexually abusive home environments) are drawn to the streets by a sense of excitement and a desire for money and independence (Michaud, 1988). However, once on the streets some youth turn to prostitution as a means of subsistence. Weisberg (1985) found that many youth lacked the education and employment skills necessary to subsist, thereby contributing to their decision to prostitute. Sullivan (1986), echoed this conclusion and noted that situational difficulties associated with the street makes prostitution a viable option for some youth, i.e., prostitution for money, shelter and drugs. Michaud (1988) noted that problems associated with homelessness (such as youth unemployment) provides the impetus for some youth to enter prostitution as a source of income.

Webber (1991) conducted in-depth interviews with both street people and ex-street people in various Canadian cities. Her analysis revealed that many youths ran away from an abusive home life, ended up on the streets, and subsequently became involved in prostitution as a means of survival. The author criticized the criminal justice system for ignoring the living conditions of homeless youth; meanwhile, underfunded service agencies struggle to provide essential service to street youth -- a process that unfolds in an era of "growing poverty and a shrinking social safety net."

John Hagan and Bill McCarthy have co-authored several studies that examine the relationship between living on the streets and participation in criminal activities (see Hagan and McCarthy, 1992 and 1997; McCarthy and Hagan, 1991, 1992 and 1995; McCarthy, 1990 and 1995). The authors agree that negative home life experiences contribute to a youth's decision to runaway from home; however, they emphasize that situational difficulties/conditions associated with the street is a salient variable that precipitates youth involvement in crime and delinquency. Three main themes emerge from Hagan and McCarthy's research: 1) Disruptive family conditions encourage some youth to runaway from home. 2) Once on the streets, conditions associated with homelessness propels involvement in crime, i.e., hunger is related to theft of food, problems of youth unemployment and lack of shelter is related to involvement in prostitution. 3) The street culture produces criminal networks - street youth become involved in tutelage (student-teacher) relationships which increases their participation in crime and delinquency.

Factors associated with youth homelessness and poverty provides us with further understanding of how some youth become involved in prostitution. However, the runaway/homeless literature should not detract from the importance of social structural variables that help to generate the youth sex trade. Indeed, youth prostitution "arises from a gendered-based power structure" that contributes to the situational poverty of youth involved in prostitution, and fuels the male demand for sexual services (Lowman, 1992). In this respect, prostitution must be transformed from its current form by challenging the social conditions that makes prostitution a favorable choice for some young people (Brock, 1998; Sullivan, 1992).

#### **4.6 International Issues**

International research highlights a variety of youth prostitution-related issues. There are studies that examine the antecedents of youth involvement in prostitution in various countries and cultures (for example, see Adedoyin and Adegoke, 1995; Damgaard, 1995; Hwang, 1995; Udegbe and Fajimolu, 1992). Other studies explore the conditions youth prostitutes face in large inner-city/urban settings. Firme, Grinder and Barreto describe how adolescent involvement in prostitution in Brazil is associated with a depressed economic situation. Inciardi (1989 and 1991) examined the phenomenon of trading sex for "crack" cocaine in U.S. cities. Finally, some studies critically examine responses to youth prostitution; Pawar (1991) notes how legislation introduced to prevent the sexual exploitation of children and females in India has failed to stop the proliferation of the sex trade.

#### **4.7 Research on Customers/Clients**

There are relatively few studies on the client/customer. The paucity of research on men who go to prostitutes has been attributed to inadequate records providing information on the demand aspect of the trade (i.e., police have traditionally focused on the activities of prostitutes, and their institutional records reflect this practice), and a general perception that "clients are

unwilling to consent to interviews, and unlikely to respond to questionnaire surveys” (Lowman, Atchison and Fraser, 1996: 4).

Some of the customer studies reveal that men who purchase sex from prostitutes are interested in a “brief uncomplicated sexual encounter” (Geme *et al*, 1984, as quoted in Lowman, Atchison and Fraser, 1996; also, see McLeod, 1982) or they are searching for special sexual acts and they want to keep the “transactional nature of the interaction” secret (McKeganey and Barnard, 1996). Recent Canadian research conducted by Lowman, Atchison and Fraser (1996) indicates that the average age of clients sampled was 34 years, a majority were Canadian citizens and Caucasian, and most worked in blue collar occupations. In general, information on the (male) demand aspect of the sex trade remains a conspicuous gap in the social science literature.

#### **4.8 HIV-Related Issues**

Another focus of the extant literature is the relationship between prostitution-related activities and HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus). Several international studies indicate high-risk HIV-related activities (i.e., unprotected sex, multiple sexual partners, intravenous drug use) among inner-city street youth, and they encourage education and prevention programs to reduce rates of infection (Inciardi, Pottieger, Forney, Chitwood and McBride, 1991; Pennbridge, Freese and MacKenzie, 1992; Pleak and Meyer-Bahlburg, 1990; Raffaelli, Campos, Merrit, Siquera, Antunes, Parker, Greco and Halsey, 1993; Sullivan, 1996). Jackson and Highcrest (1996, and Jackson, Highcrest and Coats, 1992) found that HIV infection among non-drug using prostitutes was “absent or low.” Nevertheless, the authors argue it is important to provide prostitutes with HIV-related intervention and prevention programs that differentiate between the needs of street prostitutes and those working in off-street locales. Brock (1989) criticized images that scapegoat prostitutes as being responsible for spreading HIV. The author argued that few prostitutes have been found HIV positive, and that most prostitutes (except for young women and men who recently entered the sex trade) practice safe sex.

#### **4.9 Discursive and Conceptual Issues**

In section 1.1 this report highlighted the debates about the definition and meaning of youth involvement in prostitution. However, several articles transcend definition concerns to review the discursive and conceptual issues that influence how we understand youth involvement in the sex trade.

Sullivan (1992) asked the question: “who benefits from law reforms centered on the sexual abuse of adolescents?” The author argues that our response to child sexual abuse (including prostitution) is conceptualized within the “professional liberal welfare state.” Discourse produced by the Badgley Report, and upheld by legislative reform, have paved the way for “the regulation of sexual behaviour in adolescents and families within the context of professionalization of social and family relations, and the social reproduction of families to

consume the service commodities produced by helping professional in the post-industrial economy.”

Brock (1998) critically examines the construction of prostitution as a social problem; the work of the Badgley Committee helped redefine youth prostitution as child sexual abuse. In the process the Badgley report propelled the demand for the expansion of “criminal law and social services, despite the questionable adequacy of these measures in meeting the needs of young prostitutes.” Brock cautions that more legislation to control prostitution only serve to punish people involved in the sex trade. Instead, we must challenge the social conditions that make prostitution a favorable choice for some women and young people. Bittle (1999) echoes Brock’s point that youth prostitution has been redefined as child sexual abuse. The author conducted 32 qualitative interviews with various criminal justice personnel, social service professionals and government representatives in British Columbia to examine claimsmaking activities associated with section 212(4) of the *Criminal Code* (legislation prohibiting purchasing, or attempting to purchase, the sexual services of a youth). The findings indicate that reform efforts to encourage the enforcement of section 212(4) were expedited by a rhetorical system that conceptualized youth prostitution as sexual exploitation. This discursive framework confirmed state and social services ownership of the sexual procurement of youth issue.

Pheterson (1996) argues that social and legal strategies used to intervene in the lives of street involved youth have perpetuated the treatment of this population as “outlaw non-citizens” who are “dispensable, unworthy and lesser beings.” Pheterson warns that protectionist discourses are euphemisms for control: “that control is clothed in language of ‘protection,’ ‘prevention,’ ‘rehabilitation’ and ‘re-insertion’ of ‘victims’ but the message is consistently a prohibition of self-determination.” As Biesenthal (1993) argues, our ability to understand female youth prostitution is limited by theory biased toward youth involved in the sex trade, and by the inability to allow young women to express their experience as “subject rather than object of study.”

## 5.0 Conclusions

In Canada, youth involvement in prostitution has evoked considerable concern and debate about the meaning of the youth sex trade and the best way to bring about its demise. The Badgley Committee (1984), the Fraser (1985) Committee and the F/P/T working group on prostitution (1998) offered numerous findings and conclusions with respect to the youth sex trade. Further, numerous youth-prostitution related reports, committees, task forces and initiatives have been launched by provincial and municipal governments across Canada. Finally, the social science literature includes a variety of issues and debates concerning youth prostitution. This literature review revealed many of the key issues surrounding the impact of youth involvement in prostitution, and it raised important questions about how we understand and respond to the youth sex trade

Overall, the literature revealed that most prostitutes enter the sex trade at a young age (most before the age of 18, and many before 16), and once on the streets most prostitutes experience violence at the hands of their customers and pimps. A broad overview of the literature revealed many of the key issues surrounding the impact of youth involvement in prostitution. Two themes emerged from the literature: 1) There has been a shift in philosophy from treating youth involved in prostitution as criminals to identifying them as victims in need of protection. Censuring the actions of men who sexually procure youth is a corollary of this recent shift in emphasis. 2) There is some disagreement in the social science literature about the factors contributing to a youth's decision to prostitute. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify a general process of entry into prostitution.

The legislative history and development literature revealed that female prostitutes have been subjected to discriminatory legislation and unequal law enforcement, regardless of age. In contrast to female prostitutes, men associated with the demand aspect of the sex trade have enjoyed relative immunity from the law. Despite a history of discriminatory prostitution-related legislation and law enforcement, there are signs of change. There are indications in the 1990s that discussions and efforts to suppress youth prostitution are shifting towards men who sexually procure youths. Youth involved in prostitution are not being charged with s.213 (the communicating law) offences as frequently as they have in the past. Service providers and community members in several Canadian jurisdictions have questioned the virtual immunity from the law enjoyed by men who purchase the sexual services of youth, and they have lobbied for the protection of youth involved in the sex trade. Further, the federal government amended s.212(4) of the *Criminal Code* (prohibiting purchasing, or attempting to purchase the sexual services of a youth) to make it easier for police to arrest men who buy, or attempt to buy, sex from a youth.

An overview of the various federal, provincial and municipal government sponsored reports and recommendations also indicated a shift in the philosophical approach towards youth involvement in prostitution. Since the mid-1990s there has been a growing consensus that youth involved in prostitution are victims of sexual exploitation and/or abuse, and distinct from being treated as offenders. In many Canadian jurisdictions there are new initiatives aimed at protecting

sexually exploited youth involved in prostitution, and in some instances there are attempts to amend provincial child welfare legislation so as to (re)define youth prostitution as child abuse. Part of these efforts include attempts to censure the actions of men who sexually procure youths.

There is some debate in the social science literature with respect to the association between childhood physical and sexual abuse and subsequent involvement in prostitution. Beginning with the Badlgey Report (1984) there have been several questions raised about the nature and the prevalence of the antecedents of youth involvement in the sex trade. For some researchers there is evidence that prostitutes experienced more intrafamilial physical and sexual abuse while growing up than non-prostitutes. Other researchers question the link between abuse and prostitution.

Despite disagreement, it is possible to identify a general process of how some youth become involved in prostitution: 1) It appears that many young prostitutes ran away, or were “thrown away” at an early age from home environments that they described as intolerable, including frequent cases of violence and physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Many males involved in prostitution ran away to escape discrimination based on their sexual orientation. In this respect, intrafamilial family violence and dysfunction provides the impetus (or the “push”) for some youth to leave home. 2) Following the decision to runaway, many prostitutes were “pulled” to the street life by a desire for autonomy and the need for money. However, once on the streets the situational poverty of street involved youth (i.e., below average education, marginal employment skills, youth unemployment, and inadequate services for street involved youth) and a steady (male) demand for sexual services, makes prostitution a viable alternative for some youths. Not every youth involved in prostitution experienced physical and sexual abuse while growing up (and, conversely, not every sexually abused youth becomes involved in prostitution); however, the evidence suggests an association (not a direct causal link) between childhood physical and sexual abuse, running away from home and subsequent involvement in prostitution.

Finally, several questions have been raised with respect to discursive and conceptual factors that influence how we understand and respond to youth prostitution. First, discussions of antecedents to youth involvement in prostitution, and initiatives to combat the youth sex trade should not ignore the broader structural factors that help to generate this phenomenon, i.e., male sexual socialization, youth oppression, youth employment structures, and gender, race and class issues. Second, several articles caution that attempts to “help” or “protect” youth involved in prostitution can be interpreted by the youth as a form of control. As Gail Pheterson notes, “...control is clothed in language of “protection,” “prevention,” “re-habilitation” and “re-insertion” of “victims” but the message is consistently a prohibition of self-determination.” In this respect there is a need to develop “reflective and strategic” (cf. Shaw and Butler, 1998) responses to youth involvement in prostitution.

## **5.1 Recommendations for Future Research**

Knowledge gaps that emerged from the literature provide several ideas for future research. First, research should evaluate legislative amendments and law enforcement practices

with respect to men who sexually procure youth and men who purchase the sexual services of a youth, i.e., how does the enforcement (or lack thereof) of these laws impact upon youth involvement in prostitution. Second, the literature points to a growing concern with the actions of men who purchase the sexual services of a youth. However, little research has focused on understanding the (male) demand aspect of the youth sex trade; more research is needed to understand why men purchase sex from youths, and the effectiveness of current policies used to confront male customers. Third, considering the disagreement about the antecedents of youth involvement in prostitution, researchers must continue to examine the factors that precede youth entry into the sex trade, i.e., the association between intrafamilial abuse, running away and involvement in prostitution. Fourth, a conspicuous gap in the literature is research that incorporates the perspectives of youth involved in prostitution. Future research should ask young prostitutes what role, if any, the law and social services should play in addressing the youth sex trade, and whether youths believe they need “protection,” and if so, what measures should be adopted. Finally, research concerning youth involvement in prostitution should use an integrated approach that examines the broader social and political context (i.e., male sexual socialization, youth oppression and employment structures) that gives rise to the youth sex trade. Research that considers the broader social context is necessary to help develop strategies that address existing power relations that makes prostitution a viable option for some youths.

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