Exploiting Vulnerability:  
A Study of the Lives of Filipino Women Who Have Been Trafficked into Sex Work

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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the exegesis is the result of work that has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Angela Jane Reed

July 2014
Abstract

Young women who have been trafficked for sexual exploitation have unique perceptions about their lives and the significance of having been trafficked. This research highlights Filipino women's experiences of sex trafficking. Grounded in a transformative critical feminist framework, it subverts stereotypes of a homogenous sex trafficking experience. Consisting of rich descriptions and interpretations of the domestic trafficking experience through stories collected in the course of focus groups and in-depth interviews, this study provides new ways of understanding the phenomenon, and it builds on a theoretical literature that is largely framed within seven sex trafficking paradigms. An eighth paradigm is proposed in this thesis, whereby women's sex trafficking experiences may be understood in the context of the life course. This life course paradigm allows for the multiplicity of trajectories that characterise sex trafficking and reflects individual events, transitions and turning points over the life span. It also recognises the historic, socio-economic and political contexts in which trafficking occurs. An analysis of the women's stories through a Third-Way Feminist perspective builds on and provides an innovative and new context for understanding and responding to the women who have been trafficked for sex. This is significant for those seeking to address sex trafficking, in particular, social workers, service providers, policy makers, program developers and trafficked women themselves.
for Badrakanthi Gheetika
woman of courage, woman of perseverance, woman of hope.
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Angela Reed
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CATW</td>
<td>Coalitions Against Trafficking in Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSWD</td>
<td>Department of Social Welfare and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GABRIELA</td>
<td>General Assembly Binding Women for Reforms, Integrity, Equality, Leadership and Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAAT</td>
<td>Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSWH</td>
<td>Good Shepherd Welcome House</td>
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<tr>
<td>GSRC</td>
<td>Good Shepherd Recovery Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>IOM</td>
<td>International Organisation for Migration</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>MILF</td>
<td>Moro Islamic Liberation Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBI</td>
<td>National Bureau of Investigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Government Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>OFW</td>
<td>Overseas Foreign Worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNP</td>
<td>Philippine National Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RA</td>
<td>Republic Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIP</td>
<td>Trafficking in Persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wedpro</td>
<td>Women’s Education, Development, Productivity and Research Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organisation</td>
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## Glossary of Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ate</td>
<td>A respectful term used to denote an older woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casa</td>
<td>Brothel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamagayan</td>
<td>Red light district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lola</td>
<td>Grandmother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lolo</td>
<td>Grandfather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mama-san</td>
<td>A woman in charge of a Casa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papa-san</td>
<td>A man in charge of a Casa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scavenger</td>
<td>Those who survive by living off the rubbish from garbage and tips are known by this term in the Philippines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shabu</td>
<td>A slang term used in the Philippines for the drug methamphetamines used throughout much of Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tita</td>
<td>Auntie</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PART ONE – SETTING THE SCENE
Introduction

Sex trafficking is a human rights violation and a form of violence against women. Operating at both the global and local levels, it is an inhumane practice through which young women are sold for sex. Trafficking women for sex, generates enormous economic profit and objectifies women, reducing them to a commodity to be traded in the commercial sex market. Preying on society’s marginalised, it exploits their vulnerability and it denies them their human dignity.

Although largely a hidden phenomenon, in recent decades, the nature of sex trafficking across the globe has begun to be exposed through the work of government and non-government organisations, anti-trafficking organisations and feminist academics and researchers. The associated increased public awareness about sex trafficking has resulted in a plethora of media stories and images that commonly situate sex trafficking outside the realms of every day events and experiences or the life trajectories of the women, emphasising instead the sensational, in narratives where accounts of kidnapping, rape and incarceration dominate, suggesting that sex trafficking exists within an isolated, secluded and specific network that is largely outside the day-to-day happenings around us, such as one account in the New York, US-based daily Mail Online, published for a global audience:

Forced to have sex with 60 men a day and tattooed with the name of their pimps: Human trafficking victims tell of torture they suffered at hands of three brothers who treated them like property… A woman named Carmen, who was forced into sex slavery at just 14-years-old, and another unnamed woman were taken from a Mexican town fast becoming infamous for being the source of unwilling prostitutes… ‘At the end of the day I was bleeding and in great pain caused by these men,’ she recalled, adding that he would savagely beat her if she wasn’t out earning money. Carmen hoped her tormentor would beat her to death. ‘I was upset because he hadn’t killed me and that I had to live another day of torture,’ she said (Ryan, 2014).

Such stories evoke shock, horror, anger and sorrow at the pitiful plight of the women. Feelings of revulsion towards the captors, whose cruel and inhumane treatment is almost beyond belief, create a distance between the reader and the one victimised. The problem with sensationalist accounts of sex trafficking is that they risk oversimplifying the phenomenon, as random, as one-off events in which young women experience violence. In other words, if we continue to focus on such sensationalised
aspects of sex trafficking, we will miss the depth and complexity of the experience. Whilst not wanting to discount the horrendous nature of sex trafficking, a heightened focus on random acts of sexual violence rather than the life trajectory of the person trafficked and their social, historical and economic circumstances results in narrow and essentialist ideas of what it means to be a victim of sex trafficking.

Other stories of sex trafficking that are not heard or attract little attention in public discourse do not necessarily have the same impact as sensationalised accounts. These stories tell us that sex trafficking can occur, and does, in less overt ways whereby a woman becomes a victim of sex trafficking throughout her life course; that is, through a more systemic process of victimisation than the sensational can allow. These stories need to be heard to enable a more comprehensive understanding of sex trafficking to emerge.

The importance of hearing these voices became a reality for me when I first encountered and engaged with women who had been trafficked for sex. Their stories revealed a lifetime of gendered oppression and marginalisation that included: family violence; economic deprivation; educational limitations; and the influences on them of class, culture and socio-economic status. When I first heard these women’s stories and saw their plight I was stirred to action. If we fail to hear these accounts of systemic abuse, which begins in childhood and blights life trajectories, and do not appreciate the importance of the insights into the nature of sex trafficking offered by the women, then attempts to address and eradicate sex trafficking may continue to fall short of the mark. During my first visit to the Philippines, the personal became political. My desire to have these women’s voices heard became an ethical imperative.

**Research Aim**

The aim of this study is to give voice to Filipino women who have been trafficked for sex, by hearing their first-hand accounts of the trafficking experience. In this qualitative study I adopt a phenomenological approach, using narrative inquiry in order to privilege the voices of women whose accounts of their experiences go largely unheard. Their stories illuminate and bring to the fore understandings and insights that may otherwise remain unknown. Drawing on a critical feminist framework and a social constructivist epistemology, my purpose is to create rich descriptions and interpretations of the human trafficking experience from young women who have been trafficked for sexual exploitation in the Philippines, thus providing new knowledge about the sex trafficking experience.

The scholarly literature on sex trafficking highlights both the absence of trafficked women’s voices and calls for research that prioritises the voices of those who
have experienced human trafficking. In particular, feminist researchers on human trafficking for sexual exploitation argue that in order to make it fully visible, we must hear from the women closest to the phenomenon (Gozdziak & Collett, 2005; Kelly, 2005; Lobasz, 2009; Long, 2004; Yea, 2005). Trafficked women construct their own, individual accounts and interpretations of the trafficking phenomenon, and these unique perceptions about their lives and the meanings of having been trafficked provide key insights into the trafficking experience.

There have been accounts about victims of sex trafficking but much of the detail has been sensationalised by the media, often merely retelling the story of a single trafficking event and highlighting the woman’s victimisation rather than her agency. This study seeks not only to describe the lived experience, but also focuses on how women who have been trafficked make sense of their experiences. It explores the human trafficking experience within the individual’s life course and considers events in their lives prior to the trafficking experience.

Drawing on the life course paradigm my research has focused on significant life events, transitions and turning points as articulated by the participants in the project. It also considers the participants’ socio-historical context, providing further insights into the trafficking trajectory which describes the story of exploitation throughout their lives, beginning in childhood and into early adulthood. The life course paradigm gives credence to a Third-Way Feminist understanding, that is: understanding sex trafficking as a system of oppression in which individuals make choices; a recognition of women’s multiple oppression and ways that they can be counteracted; and providing space for individual women to narrate their own trafficking story, name their own oppression and challenge stereotypical accounts (Cavalieri, 2011).

I believe that giving voice to trafficked women can be transformative for them. Engaging the women in the project and drawing out their distinctive and unique perspectives on their situation can in itself serve as a significant, transformative experience for them as well as providing important information and insights for those seeking to support them. As explained by Donna Mertens:

> The transformative paradigm supports the integration of the wisdom of indigenous peoples, feminists, people with disabilities, and the poor and invisible toward the creation of a constructed knowledge base that furthers social justice and human rights (2008, p. 11)
Motivation for the Research

I am an Australian Sister of Mercy, belonging to a Catholic women’s Religious Congregation that was founded in Ireland in 1831 to ensure the care and education of marginalised women. As a member of this Congregation for the past eighteen years, my interest lies in social justice issues, and my professional work has been in the advancement and support of marginalised women. As a Sister of Mercy and a social worker, the motivation for this research stems directly from my role of manager in a women’s safe house in Melbourne, where I first came across the issue of human trafficking. My work in the field of family violence sparked my interest in the issue of sex trafficking and was the impetus for this study.

From 2001 until 2007 I managed Mercy Care, a women’s safe house in Melbourne. Established by the Sisters of Mercy in the late 1980s, its purpose was to provide a safe place for women and children escaping family violence. Predominantly an after-hours service, it filled a gap in the social service system whereby women and children were admitted to women’s refuges only between the hours of 9am and 5pm from Monday to Friday, and often the women and children were left waiting in police stations, railway stations, hospitals or, even worse, in the place where they were experiencing violence. As a result, the majority of women and children arrived at Mercy Care in the late evening or early hours of the morning and on weekends. In most instances they came directly from a violent home. Managing this safe house heightened my awareness of the issue of family violence. I was shocked at its prevalence and disturbed at its impact. After a number of years of managing the service, it occurred to me that contrary to public perception family violence was rather more commonplace than extraordinary.

Members of the general community often questioned me: How do you cope constantly seeing women who have been bashed? What did these poor women do to deserve that? If these women are being pursued, does that put you in danger? Why do women keep returning to violent partners? Why don’t they just leave? What country do they come from? Why do you think that these women have such a low self-esteem that they continue to subject themselves to violence?

The very nature of these questions illustrated that there was a dominant narrative in the community that reflected a particular image of a woman affected by family violence: among other things, that she must have been bashed and presented with a black eye; she must somehow be deserving of her circumstances; she must be a ‘foreigner’; she must lack any sense of self determination; and she must have no ability to look after herself. Such was the stereotypical image held by the general public. My experience of working with and hearing the stories of women who were escaping family
violence pointed to a very different reality to the stereotypical accounts. I do not recall meeting a woman with a black eye. That is not to suggest that women were not physically abused; many were, but the majority were not.

I have never understood the notion of deserving and undeserving violence. I did encounter many women who ‘chose’ to return to a violent home. For those who have not experienced family violence this may seem contradictory to their seeking refuge and safety, but I came to understand that there are complex issues involved when leaving an established home with children. For many women, re-establishing a home for their children was very difficult, indeed, and involved, for example, financing affordable housing and their children attending new schools. The alternative of returning home can seem a better option in such challenging life situations.

Regarding the nationality of the women escaping domestic violence, I did meet women from a range of non-Anglo ethnic backgrounds who sought safety in our service but they represented less than one half of all the women. A majority were Australian-born women living in the suburbs of Melbourne. Their stories, whilst unique, held some commonalities, such as: dominance of a male partner or family member; psychological and emotional abuse; financial control issues; and secrecy about their difficult circumstances.

I began to see a very different picture of family violence and the notion of ‘gendered violence’ became part of my vocabulary. I saw systemic violence towards women in the community, and I saw police and court systems that condoned violence by failing to adequately respond to it. I saw a community that ‘turned a blind eye’ to family violence, viewing incidences as the exception rather than the norm. I heard women who were victims of family violence being put down in public hearings of their circumstances, and viewed as overly timid or lacking in emotional intelligence. I heard women who were subjected to family violence being blamed and shamed.

I had read and heard about sex trafficking and in the safe house environment I began to meet women who had been trafficked for sex. When I met women in Australia who were seeking safety from sex trafficking, I wondered whether the same ‘dominant narratives’ prevailed. In other words, was the reality of sex trafficking more commonplace than the sensationalised accounts as portrayed through the media? Was it in fact another result of gendered violence? Was it about complacency and acceptance in the community? Was it another story of stigmatisation and blame? In order to find answers to my questions, I was drawn to seek out stories of women who had been trafficked for sex. This led me to Cebu, Philippines.

My first visit to Cebu was in the context of my undertaking a Vincent Fairfax Fellowship on Ethics in Leadership. This was a two year fellowship through which I,
along with fourteen other Australian community leaders had the opportunity to explore ethical issues in leadership within Australia and the Asia-Pacific region. In 2009 the fellowship required me to immerse myself in an Asian country for one month to explore an issue of ethical importance. I chose to travel to Cebu in the Philippines to explore the issue of human trafficking of women for sexual exploitation. During that time I had the privilege of meeting with some young women who had been trafficked to Cebu. These women were willing to share their experiences as they felt that by telling their stories it might prevent someone else from falling prey to trafficking scams. Their stories encouraged me to explore at greater depth this phenomenon called sex trafficking.

Twelve months after my visit to Cebu, I was invited by the Good Shepherd Sisters, along with two of the women I met in Cebu, to present a workshop in Manila at the ‘Beijing+15 NGO Conference’ (Reed, 2009) where these two women shared their experiences of being trafficked. The Conference was a follow up to the United Nations’ Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China in 1995. It aimed to provide opportunities for women from non-government organisations to reflect on women’s status in the Asia-Pacific region in relation to commitments made in Beijing.

At the ‘Giving Voice to Trafficked Women’ workshop the young women told their stories and warned about the dangers of human trafficking. Both women relayed to me that giving voice to their experience at an international conference for women was very empowering. They now work for the United Nations in Cebu and have become peer support workers for young women who have been trafficked. Working with these two young women at the Beijing +15 Conference encouraged me to research this phenomenon further.

**The Research Design and Research Questions**

The research design stage comprised of six months of field work, during which I conducted three focus groups involving forty women and a series of three in-depth interviews with twenty two women from the focus groups. The research questions of this study were:

*What accounts do Filipino women give of their experiences of being trafficked for sex in the Philippines?*

*How do Filipino women’s accounts reflect what is already known about women and sex trafficking?*

*How do Filipino women’s accounts add to the body of knowledge about sex trafficking?*

*How can Filipino women’s accounts of sex trafficking inform policy making and support service provision?*
Thesis Structure

In presenting the results of my research I have chosen to structure my thesis in two parts. In part one, entitled ‘Setting the Scene’, I review the literature about the sex trafficking phenomenon to identify what is already known globally and locally. I then move my focus from the broad view of sex trafficking to the Philippines where I provide a contextual overview of the sex trade, giving particular reference to gender subordination, including a short history of political, social and economic factors. Through this discussion I examine the dynamics at work within the Philippines that allow sex trafficking to flourish, and the forces that work against it. I then outline the conceptual framework and methodology that underpin the study, positioning my research within a transformative critical feminist framework. Drawing on Third Way Feminism, the life course paradigm, phenomenology, critical feminist theory and social constructivism, I outline my method of data collection and associated analysis, entailing three focus groups and individual in-depth interviews as well as an ethnographic approach which involved living in the community in which trafficking occurs and observing day to day events in the community.

In Part Two of the thesis, ‘Giving Voice to the Experience’, I present the women’s accounts of sex trafficking. I first provide an account of the background of the participants, followed by key findings from the research concerning the childhood circumstances that the women believed contributed to their being trafficked. These findings highlight issues of childhood environments, early childhood relationships and behaviours. Key findings in relation to childhood circumstances provide an entry point to understanding a person’s vulnerability to human trafficking for sexual exploitation; therefore, I then extend the insight into personal vulnerabilities by describing the trafficking experience as perceived by the women. At the heart of these descriptions are the notions of deception, lost identity and objectification, along with commoditisation and the utilisation of the human person for exploitation. Meaning making within the lives of the participants is then explored, to elucidate the women’s insights about agency, survival strategies and dreams about the future.

In the final Chapter I reflect on the research questions and highlight the contribution that the study makes to current knowledge about sex trafficking, emphasising the importance of a third way Feminist understanding and the contribution of the life course paradigm. I provide an overview of the findings of this study and conclude with recommendations that have key implications for social workers, governments, policy makers, anti-trafficking programs, service providers and most important, women who have been trafficked.
Chapter 1
What are they Saying about Human (Sex) Trafficking?

Introduction
In this chapter I establish what is known locally and globally about sex trafficking through an examination of the literature. In reviewing the literature, I provide an overview of the different contributions and perspectives of scholars and also respectfully engage in a critique of philosophical underpinnings. I first outline the United Nations definition of human trafficking and highlight significant aspects of it. I then situate and frame the literature within seven paradigms about sex trafficking that I have identified: globalisation, economic, migration, organised crime and corruption, gender, human rights and the localised paradigm. Whilst I recognise the valuable contribution that each of these paradigms offers in regards to knowledge about sex trafficking, I argue that they are limited by the absence of first-hand accounts of women who have been trafficked for sex. Furthermore, I draw on feminist writings that call for the inclusion of women’s trafficking stories in order to expand the knowledge base about sex trafficking. Additionally, I highlight the relevance of a Third-Way Feminist account for understanding sex trafficking. Finally, I propose an eighth paradigm; the life course paradigm, whereby sex trafficking is understood within a framework of life course trajectories.

Arriving at a Human Trafficking Definition
In the year 2000 after wide consultation with significant stakeholders, the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime formulated a definition of human trafficking that has been widely adopted across the globe. This trafficking protocol was signed by over 80 countries (Doezema, 2005). The process of coming to an agreed definition was a tumultuous one, with much debate as various anti-trafficking organisations held differing points of view and agendas about human trafficking. This section addresses some of the controversy. Over the past two to three decades sex trafficking has been brought to the attention of governments, international organisations, government and Non-Government organisations, religious institutions, local and international human rights groups and the media (Gozdziak, Bump, Duncan, MacDonnell, & Loiselle, 2006; Hanna, 2002). Human trafficking – often equated with the term ‘human slavery’ – is a gross violation of human rights (Amnesty International, 2004; Bales, 2000; Batstone, 2007; Fergus, 2005; Leishman, 2007). Manifested in different ways, human trafficking includes but is not limited to: sweatshop labour, debt bondage, forced marriage, organ removal, agricultural work and sexual exploitation. Those most highly at risk are young
women and children who are the main targets for trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation (Batstone, 2007; Bertone, 2000; Goodey, 2004; Hughes, 2000).

Whilst obtaining accurate data on trafficking is problematic, there is general consensus in the literature, and which concurs with available data – trafficking is growing significantly worldwide. The International Organisation for Migration (Migration, 2013), The United Nations Office of Drugs and Crimes (United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, 2012), the International Labour Organisation (International Labour Organisation, 2009) and the US Trafficking in Persons Report (United States Department of State, 2013) all indicate that trafficking is on the rise.

Prior to 2000, no common, international legal definition of human trafficking existed, though there were a number of agreements and conventions concerning trafficking, beginning as early as 1904. The major agreements and conventions included: The International Agreements for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic (1904 and 1910); League of Nations Conventions on Traffic in Women and Children (1921 and 1923); UN Convention for the Suppression of the traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (1949). These particular agreements and conventions were largely concerned with the traffic of women into prostitution. Intent on expanding the definition of human trafficking beyond trafficking into prostitution, the UN devised a definition that included other forms of exploitation and encapsulated the multifaceted nature of the phenomenon:

> Trafficking in persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs (United Nations, 2000).

As a protocol under the Convention against Transnational Organised Crime, this definition, known as the Palermo Protocol emphasises issues of state security. It contains three main elements:

1. An action - recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons.
(2) A means - threat, or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or position of vulnerability, giving or receiving payments or benefits to achieve consent or a person having control over another.

(3) Exploitation - Including at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others, or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

According to the United Nations, all three elements of this definition must be included for it to be considered human trafficking, except in the case of children where the means is considered irrelevant. This definition has been widely adopted by governments, NGO’s, law enforcers, policy makers and scholars (Gallagher, 2001). However, some critics believe it to be too narrow a definition in its focus mainly on border security, prostitution and criminal activity, and neglecting a strong human rights element (Doezema, 2002; Murray, 1998; Saunders, 2005). A key critic of the protocol, Moshoula Desyllas (2007), for example, argues that it is the dominance of the ‘Global North’, the countries of the developed world, that has defined trafficking and ensuing policy, and this has resulted in a framework that marginalises migrants and sex workers. I undertake a fuller discussion of this issue in the section below, on sex trafficking and the Gender Paradigm. Whilst the UN definition of human trafficking considers trafficking in different forms, for example, sweat shop labour, agricultural work and organ removal, the focus of this review is trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

Paradigms in the Literature on Sex Trafficking

Outlined below are seven paradigms that are dominant in the literature on sex trafficking. I take my definition of paradigm from one part of philosopher Thomas Kuhn’s tripartite definition, that is. ‘a world view or belief system, an ideological framework’ (O'Hara, 1999, p. 827). I understand this as a set of related ideas or ways of viewing and thinking about the phenomenon of sex trafficking. These paradigms help clarify how sex trafficking is understood or framed and whilst not mutually exclusive, they highlight the different agendas of governments and others. For example, the migration paradigm for understanding sex trafficking is often utilised by governments, and with a focus on strengthening border control.

These seven paradigms in combination are useful in understanding the diverse ways that sex trafficking may be theorised. A multi-paradigm approach to sex trafficking offers a more nuanced approach than the simple dichotomies and grand, sensationalist narratives that dominate discourses on sex trafficking. They can serve to bring to the
fore those who are often silenced or absent from the dialogue. Adopting a constructionist and feminist epistemology and methodology, I posit that women’s knowledge and experience are at the centre of any discussion on sex trafficking.

*The Globalisation Paradigm and Sex Trafficking*

With globalisation, in many ways international borders have become almost invisible, enabling the ‘unprecedented movement of material information, finance, and bodies across borders’ (Wonders & Michalowski, 2001, p. 545). Whilst this has brought about great opportunities, it also has its problems. Sometimes referred to as the ‘dark side of globalisation’ (Driscoll, 2010/2011; Yun, 2007), the escalation in border crossings often is seen as the causal link to sex trafficking (Bales, 2000; Bertone, 2000; Poulin, 2003; Tommaso, Shima, Strom, & Bettio, 2009; Turek, 2013; Wonders & Michalowski, 2001). Globalisation is seen as advancing the plight of many and as demonstrably widening the gap between the rich and the poor, further marginalising those struggling to make the most basic of livelihoods (Brown, 2000; Chuang, 2006; Shifman, 2003).

Globalisation has also entailed economic restructuring and an associated environment that is highly conducive to exploitation by means of sex trafficking. (Brown, 2000; Clark, 2003; Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2002; Sassen, 2000). Sociologist Saskia Sassen (2000) argues that due to globalisation, many traffickers are ‘making money on the backs of women’ (p. 255) and that the new global economy has resulted in the unintended consequence of entrepreneurs profiting in illicit markets that were previously confined to local regions. The development of sex as a commodity in the global market is summed up by researcher Lin Lim (1998). Reflecting on prostitution in South East Asia, she argues that ‘integrated into the economic, social and political life of these countries, the sex business has assumed the dimensions of an industry and has directly or indirectly contributed in no small measure to employment, national income and economic growth’ (Lim, 1998, p. vi).

Various global economic trends contribute to sustaining and advancing sex trafficking, for example: the deregulation of markets; privatisation of industries; the international export of human labour; the presence of multinational companies in the global south, structural adjustment policies and the feminisation of labour (Lindio-McGovern, 2007; Sassen, 2000; Tommaso et al., 2009). Sociologist Professor Jean Pyle (2009), argues that it is these global forces that have pushed women into ‘three gendered labour networks: prostitution, domestic service and low wage production work’. In this gendered labour network, women are all-the-more vulnerable to being trafficked.
The literature concerning globalisation and sex trafficking confirms that a neo-liberal global economy has benefited wealthy nations and marginalised those from the Global South, and particularly women (Angeles, 2002; GABRIELA, 1998; Pyle, 2002, 2006). Global economic restructuring has resulted in an environment that is conducive to exploitation, and sexual exploitation of women through globalisation includes militarised prostitution and sex tourism (These have been particularly prominent in the Philippines and will be discussed more fully in the next chapter). To ensure equitable outcomes for those currently marginalised by state policies associated with globalisation, especially those policies impacted by sex trafficking, proponents of this paradigm argue for policies that prioritise the needs of citizens over economic prosperity and neo-liberal capitalist forces (Lindio-McGovern, 2007; Wonders & Michalowski, 2001).

The Economic Paradigm and Sex Trafficking
Proponents of the economic paradigm argue that sex trafficking is fundamentally about financial profit, with the illegal sex industry understood to be the third fastest growing economic enterprise in the world. Annual profits generated by the illegal sex industry are in advance of US$7 billion (Poulin, 2003; Urada, Morisky, Hernandez, & Strathdee, 2013). Like any other business, the sex trafficking enterprise aims to maximise profits and minimise costs. Primarily related to a neo-liberal framework, the economic paradigm situates global markets as the causal link with the interaction of supply and demand at the heart of the sex trafficking phenomenon.

Those who propose that sex trafficking is largely an issue of economics argue that the demand for cheap sex from relatively wealthy customers is complemented by the supply of impoverished women and children who seek to improve their financial plight (Aronowitz, 2001; Brown, 2000; Hughes, 2000; Kara, 2009; Wonders & Michalowski, 2001). American law academic Hanh Diep (2005, p. 309) compares the sex industry to the fast food outlet, McDonalds. Both, she claims, are driven by consumption and are subject to the principles of supply and demand, with McDonalds dependent on selling hamburgers, and the sex industry, on selling bodies. The selling of bodies is referred to by a number of authors as the ‘sexual commodification of human beings’ (Bales, 2000; Brown, 2000; Fernandez, 1997; Lindio-McGovern, 2007; Poulin, 2003; Taylor & Jamieson, 1999). From this perspective, commodification of human beings is simply another product in the never-ending line of demands operating in the market. As Louise Brown (2000) summarises the position:

Let us make no mistake, prostitution is not just about poverty…
the sex industry makes money because it buys cheap raw
materials and packages them well. It turns vulnerability into a commodity and that commodity into a profit (Brown, 2000, p. 60).

The notion of sex trafficking as a marketing system is highlighted by others who see human beings as the goods that are marketed to the buyers (Pennington, Ball, Hampton, & Soulakova, 2009; Taylor & Jamieson, 1999; Wheaton, Schauer, & Galli, 2010). This ‘sex market’ includes but is not limited to: prostitution, sex tourism and pornography and is said to ‘occupy a strategic and central position in the development of international capitalism’ (Poulin, 2003, p. 38). One startling claim (Poulin, 2003) is that the manufacturing of these ‘goods' for the sex market involves making them functional to feed an industry requiring a constant supply, of human bodies.

Kidnapping, rape, and violence continue to act as midwives of this industry. They are fundamental not only for the development of markets, but also for the “manufacturing” of these “goods” as they contribute to making them “functional” for an industry that requires a constant supply of bodies (Poulin, 2003, p. 39). Therefore, those who are familiar with sex, whether it be through childhood abuse, rape or other damaging experiences, are seen as ‘functional’ by the sex industry.

In the economic paradigm a distinction is also made between illegal and legitimate markets. Legitimate markets are partly exploitive and illegitimate markets are the most exploitive. Huge profits are gained in the illegitimate sex industries and are then invested in the legitimate market through money laundering operations, producing a dynamic between legitimate and illegitimate business worlds (Aronowitz, 2001; Shelley, 2003). Other authors have argued that legitimate markets that subscribe to popular culture and especially the desire for a central place for sex also contribute to sex trafficking (Taylor & Jamieson, 1999).

An important focus in understanding sex trafficking within the economic paradigm is the marginalisation of women. Women employed in the informal or shadow economy are at the greatest risk of exploitation due to lack of transparency and regulation of their involvement. They are also very actively sought out due to the demand for low-paid labour. In this sense, they bear the greatest burden of economic policies that promote the greatest freedoms for markets (Chuang, 2006; Lindio-McGovern, 2007; Sassen, 2000).

Exponents of the economic paradigm argue that the cost of sex trafficking must outweigh the benefits in order for sex trafficking to cease. Just as the economic paradigm asserts that fulfilling market demand is fuelling sex trafficking, so, too, in
order to prevent human trafficking, there must be an economic solution (Mohammadi, 2007). They argue for economic policies that provide women with viable employment in their own countries and stress that it is nation states operating in the global economy that must dismantle the economic conditions that sustain the illegal sex industry (Mohammadi, 2007; Shelley, 2003).

The Migration Paradigm and Sex Trafficking

The migration paradigm claims an inherent link between women’s migration and sex. Framed within the broad context of livelihood and women in the Global South, this paradigm acknowledges women’s changing role in the workforce and that this has concomitant advantages and disadvantages. As emphasised in the economic and globalisation paradigms, changes in the international market have meant changes to lifestyles, for women and for labour more generally. Sometimes referred to as the ‘feminisation of labour’, women’s work in the international economy is highly sought after, particularly in the areas of domestic work and the caring professions (Piper, 2003). This is also referred to as ‘the feminisation of migration’ (Kempadoo & Doezena, 1998), and recruitment companies, individual money lenders and border-crossing agencies all benefit from women’s labour in the international domain (Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2002; Hart, 2005).

Alongside the advantages for numerous commercial industries are important impacts on the lives of women working for their livelihood and in most instances the livelihood of their family. For many, it has meant separation from family and friends and a familiar environment. It is, however, an opportunity to increase personal income and, in many instances, provides provision for families that is not possible in the workforce at home. Furthermore, some countries in the Global South are dependent on remittances from women’s work abroad to help in balancing their international accounts (Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2002; Hart, 2005; Parreñas, 2001). In this sense migration for work is state-sanctioned in countries such as the Philippines, Thailand and a range of other developing countries.

Some researchers claim that there are inherent risks to women who migrate to work in the new global economy. Women are deemed vulnerable on account of their engagement in industries that are largely informal and unregulated. In addition, in unfamiliar environments and often unable to speak the language, women are vulnerable to unscrupulous plans to exploit them (B. Anderson, 2002; Andres, 2008/2009; Fernandez, 1997; Rafal, 2011; Zarembka, 2002). Termed ‘imported female servants of globalisation’ (Hart, 2005, p. 1), many consider these migrant women vulnerable to different types of exploitation. Furthermore, with a tightening of national
borders to migration, women are resorting to undocumented labour agreements, thus making them even more susceptible to exploitation (Rafal, 2011). From this perspective counter trafficking measures have focused on the ‘protection’ and close monitoring of migrants, particularly migrant women.

Others argue that conflating migration and prostitution results in the marginalisation of women who choose to migrate to advance economically, for example, discouraging women from migrating and working in the informal sector because they may be at risk of being trafficked (Agustin, 2003; Sanghera, 2005). These migrant advocates claim that the United Nations definition of trafficking fails to acknowledge the agency of migrants, particularly migrant women from the Global South who seek new opportunities abroad. They question the way that the dialogue on trafficking has been constructed and the assumptions and myths that have developed, arguing that the issues of migration and prostitution have been subsumed into the anti-trafficking paradigm and, therefore, have led to simplistic and unrealistic solutions focussing on border security issues (Sanghera, 2005, p. 11). The relationship between anti-trafficking and anti-migration has led others to question the motivation of nation states that have increased their border security measures. Claiming to be countering trafficking measures, their border control operations are viewed as punitive and territorial, aimed at deterring potential migrants from entering the country (Chapkis, 2003).

Inherent in this argument are questions about migrant women working in the sex industry. Sex worker advocates claim that migrant sex workers are being categorised as victims of sex trafficking rather than women with agency making a free choice to sell sex in order to make money. This, they claim, is reinforced by a discourse on sex trafficking that situates the migrant woman as lacking any agency, and casts them as a victim (Agustin, 2003; Doezema, 2001). On the other hand, proponents of this paradigm argue that placing less importance on the migration aspect of sex work serves to undermine the vulnerability of migrants. This issue is discussed more fully in this chapter, in the section entitled ‘The Gender Paradigm’ which outlines the different feminist positions on prostitution.

Significantly, the discourse around the migration paradigm is almost exclusively focussed on international migration. Internal migration rarely features; issues of internal trafficking tend to be minimised or overshadowed by a predominantly international focus on sex trafficking (Brown, 2000; R. King & Skeldon, 2010; Obokata, 2006). Scholars of migration, King and Skeldon (2010) argue that the scale of internal migrations must be put into perspective. Drawing on data from both the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations Development Program
(UNDP), they conclude that on a global scale international migration represented 200 million people in 2010, which is three per cent of the global population, whereas internal migration can be estimated at 740 million. My own research situated within the realm of domestic trafficking concerns and gives insight into the role and risks of internal migration for individual exploitation.

Exponents of a migration paradigm claim that sex trafficking is fundamentally related to vulnerable migrants, particularly women. Thus, to work towards the elimination of sex trafficking, careful attention must be paid to the migratory patterns of women and to the root causes of their movement (Fernandez, 1997; Piper, 2003; Van Impe, 2000). They argue for programs that monitor migrant women, believing this will assist in their protection. Some also argue for strict border controls (Van Impe, 2000). However, advocates of women’s migration claim that women have an equal right with their male counterparts to migrate freely without monitoring and restraints (Agustin, 2003, 2005; Chapkis, 2003). This research project offers insights into the internal migration experience of women in the Philippines who have encountered sexual exploitation after migrating from rural to urban environments. It illustrates clearly that migratory practices can be both beneficial and detrimental.

The Organised Crime and Corruption Paradigm and Sex Trafficking

Situated in local, national and international contexts, organised crime is seen as a fundamental cause of sex trafficking by those who subscribe to the criminal paradigm. Organised crime syndicates have been described as ‘criminal organisations who seek to make their profit by providing illegal goods and services in illegal markets’ (Schloenhardt, 1999, p. 206). In sex trafficking, organised crime networks operate at different levels that profit from the trade of women and girls. These networks include large organised criminal syndicates, small-scale criminal networks and informal cooperation by a few people (Schloenhardt, 1999; Shelley, 2007). The UN protocol against human trafficking, referred to as the Palermo Convention (2000), which accompanies the Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime locates human trafficking primarily within the criminal domain (Shelley, 2007). By defining trafficking within the context of criminality, strict law and order is viewed as an appropriate response, and governments have responded by creating numerous anti-trafficking laws. (Chuang, 2006).

Locating sex trafficking within a criminalised framework posits it as something ‘out of the ordinary’. Sensationalised media accounts of sex trafficking often will highlight the criminal gangs and syndicates that seem to be out of reach of the law. This creates a picture of a phenomenon that is far from regular, as set within a criminal
context and separate from mainstream society. However, trafficking researcher David Feingold (2010, p. 48), with specific reference to the Mekong region, claims that ‘most human trafficking is undertaken less by organised crime than disorganised crime’. Zhang and Chin have also argued that this is the case in China where, rather than organised crime syndicates, local citizens and social networks are profiting from the trade in human beings (Zhang & Chin, 2001).

Notwithstanding these studies, sex trafficking and organised crime networks are generally represented in the literature as operating within an international framework and depicted as closely related to illegal migration and people smuggling. From this perspective, the policy focus should be to punish and prosecute traffickers so as to eradicate human trafficking (Cavalieri, 2011; Everts, 2003; Hughes, 2000; Shelley, 2007; Truong, 2001). While there is evidence of international criminal syndicates in the Philippines, small local organisations are also profiting from sex trafficking. In addition, the presence of wide scale corruption in the Philippines is said to contribute to sex trafficking. Proponents of the criminalisation paradigm advocate for a strong criminal justice response and see criminalisation as imperative for there to be a significant reduction in human trafficking.

The Gender Paradigm and Sex Trafficking
The gender paradigm situates gender-based subordination, discrimination and violence as causally linked to sex trafficking. Despite efforts at both national and international levels, the inferior status of women and girls is still considered to be an issue across the globe. Often framed as ‘Violence against Women’, this paradigm concerns the global, state and local marginalisation of women and, therefore, concerns itself with: women’s subordinate status in the workforce – often termed the ‘feminisation of labour’; women and domestic violence; the economic marginalisation of women – also called ‘the feminisation of poverty’; sexual victimisation of girls and women; and sexual violence, as demonstrably expressed in the prostitution of women. The issues of sexual violence and prostitution are by far the most controversial within this paradigm and form the basis to a robust body of literature with passionate arguments on all sides of the political divide.

Feminists hold opposing views on the relationship between sex trafficking and prostitution, the only common ground being the agreement that sex trafficking is a human rights abuse (Kelly, 2004; Sanghera, 2005; Worthen, 2011). The debate centres on the issue of prostitution. Abolitionists argue that it is a form of violence against women, whereas sex-worker rights advocates view prostitution as a woman’s right to assert her own authority over her body and how she chooses to use it.
Prostitution abolitionists argue that sex trafficking and prostitution are inherently related, as both are a form of violence against women. They assert that if prostitution were abolished then the end to sex trafficking would automatically follow. Most abolitionists make no distinction between prostitution and sex trafficking. Melissa Farley, an avid abolitionist, argues that to distinguish prostitution from sex trafficking is illogical and that sex trafficking is simply ‘the global form of prostitution’ (Farley, 2003, p. xvii). Likewise, Evelina Giobbe (1990, p. 67) asserts that the sex industry, including prostitution, pornography and strip shows are ‘merely different commercial vehicles through which men traffic women and children’. On the other hand, advocates of sex-worker rights argue that prostitution is a form of legitimate labour and that conflating sex workers with sex slaves negates the choices a woman may make to sell sex (Agustin, 2005; Ditmore, 2002; Doezema, 2001).

A long and heated debate took place between prostitution abolitionists and sex worker rights advocates during the legal drafting process for the United Nations human trafficking definition (Desyllas, 2007; Doezema, 2002; Gallagher, 2001; Kelly, 2003). The controversy extended to the term ‘prostitution’ and whether it should be specifically stated in the definition of trafficking and debate also transpired over the notion of consent to prostitution.

The abolitionists argued for no distinction between forced and non-forced prostitution as they believed the notion of ‘non forced prostitution’ legitimised sex work. On the other hand, sex worker rights advocates wanted this distinction in order to allow for agency by migrant sex workers and so as not to categorise all migrant sex workers as trafficked. Louise Brown (2000), a researcher of sex trafficking within Asia sheds some light on the subject of consent; for Brown, the element of choice in prostitution is ‘less and less meaningful the further you descend in the prostitution hierarchy’ (p. 17). She contends that consent around prostitution is like a pyramid with those at the bottom servicing the mass market, and the bottom layer comprises those women experiencing acute poverty and restricted life choices. Thus, she asserts, it is these women that have been coerced into the sex trade. Staunch prostitution abolitionists argue that the conditions that make for genuine consent are non-existent, notably physical safety and real economic alternatives, and equality of power with customers (Barry, 1995; Farley, 2004, 2009; Jeffreys, 1997, 2009; Leidholdt, 2003; Raymond, 1998, 2004; Santos, 2002).

The notion of a ‘third space’ in understanding prostitution has been proposed by Australian academic and researcher, Sallie Yea (2011) who suggests that ‘complex time-space dimensions of women’s experience gives rise to their shifting positions in commercial sexual labour’ (p. 42). Yea’s post-modern analysis of prostitution makes
room for the grey area that is so often ignored in the prostitution debate. Likewise, former Canadian policeman and current professor of psychology, Stephen Perrot (2012) argues that false dichotomies have been created in relation to the debates on the meanings of prostitution. He calls for a social justice response, prompted by a need to move beyond polarised positions to one that creates a common purpose for the most disadvantaged.

United States law academic, Shelley Cavalieri (2011) presents a comprehensive overview of the polarised positions on prostitution. She situates prostitution abolitionists in the realm of dominance feminism and pro-sex worker advocates in the liberal feminist domain. Arguing for a third-way feminist account of trafficking for sex work, Cavalieri (2011) proposes a middle ground between the poles of victimhood and agency, providing an alternative to what she calls a ‘bifurcated approach to trafficking’ (p. 1417). Cavalieri advocates for a post structural approach, focusing on the particularity of situations rather than a universalised approach that posits one theory for the experiences of all women. Rejecting singular discourses in favour of ‘poly-vocal’ discourses, Cavalieri (2011) argues against gender essentialism, as: ‘a feminist theory that purports to describe women’s lives without regard for realities of experience is insufficient’ (p. 1427). She further argues that there is a need for feminists to move beyond the political divide.

In the context of trafficking for sexual purposes, political pragmatism and feminist commitment to social change that improves the lot of women demand efforts to bring opposing organisations into dialogue (Cavalieri, 2011, p. 1444)

Further discussion on a Third-Way Feminist account of sex trafficking will take place in Chapter 3. Here I outline my conceptual framework and the methodological underpinnings adopted and the related process of data analysis.

There can be little doubt that the gender paradigm is conceptually complex. First, it posits men’s traditional sexual and social dominance as constituting causal factors in sex trafficking. Second, gender-based violence and exploitation of women can be seen as constituted through the largely informal economy in which women are expected to undertake domestic or caring roles for a low wage whilst also taking on responsibility for care of the family. In the global south, government fiscal policies are also biased, forcing women to migrate due to lack of employment and poverty. Informal promotion of sex tourism is also considered to be a discriminatory practice, marginalising women and exposing them to exploitation. Most significant, is the prevalence of domestic violence and sexual assault which continues to exist with virtual impunity in many places throughout the world. Third, is the issue of sex trafficking and
its relationship to prostitution. Viewed as a form of violence against women or alternatively, as an expression of women’s choice of sexual autonomy, prostitution debates are divided into two feminist camps, namely; the abolitionists and the sex worker rights advocates. Whilst each camp agrees that sex trafficking is a human rights violation, these mutually exclusive positions are firmly embedded in the sex trafficking discourse, making it difficult to work collectively to eliminate sex trafficking.

The notion of a ‘third way’ in understanding prostitution and its relationship to sex trafficking suggests a practical way of advancing on the trenchant debates. Rejecting the ‘grand narratives’ of prostitution it assumes a post-modern interpretation, recognising that there are multiple constructs of prostitution and its relationship to sex trafficking. Within this paradigm sex trafficking is depicted as a by-product of global and state institutionalised violence against women, and it is only by addressing these systemic injustices that sex trafficking can be abolished. This ‘third-way’ provides insight into the gender-based paradigm, offering multiple examples of how women are affected by the way gender is socially constructed in the Philippines.

The Human Rights Paradigm and Sex Trafficking

The human rights paradigm situates the exploited person (or ‘victim’) at the centre of any discourse on human trafficking. Considered to be ‘human centric’ its focus is on the rights and protection of trafficked persons (Caraway, 2005; Obokata, 2006). This paradigm makes a link to ‘root causes’ of trafficking, arguing for prevention practices that improve the socio-economic standards of those considered vulnerable to trafficking. In the case of sex trafficking, human rights advocates call for a particular focus on the environmental circumstances of women and children. Human rights advocates are concerned with the right to waged labour, an adequate standard of living, education, health and social security. The major focus for those who understand sex trafficking within this framework is that while recognising that sex trafficking is a consequence of the lack of human rights, sex trafficking is also seen as a cause of human rights violation, focusing on the ‘exploitation’ aspect of human trafficking, as outlined in the Palermo Protocol definition.

Great emphasis has been placed on the criminal aspect of sex trafficking but, this paradigm argues firmly for an approach in which the human person is seen as central; any effort to counter human trafficking must begin with a focus on the vulnerable position and human rights violation of the person (Jordan, 2005; Rijken & Römkens, 2011). In 1999, the then UN Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, called for a human rights framework when addressing global sex trafficking. She proposed that positioning human rights at the core of any analysis on sex
trafficking meant focusing on the needs of the trafficked person and thereby confronting the poverty, inequality and discrimination at the roots of the trafficking. Consequently, within the human rights paradigm, attention is given to rights such as rights to life, human dignity and security; work; health; education; equal opportunity (Wijers, 2004).

The human rights paradigm insists that it is imperative to understand the human condition of those most vulnerable to being trafficked and those who have been trafficked. One 2007 report on human rights and trafficking asserted that, ‘a human rights approach to trafficking is empty and meaningless if it does not place at the very core the voice and agency of trafficked and migrant women’ (Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women, 2007, p. viii). This report claimed that with the focus so much on the abstract, macro level of human trafficking, the lived experience of the human person has been silenced:

So long as we persist in denying migrant and trafficked women agency, intelligence and decision making abilities, they will be routinely imaged and used as mute victims similar to the cut-out paper doll image which serves as the “ventriloquist dummy” through which others can assert their moral and political agendas (Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women, 2007, p. ix)

This has implications for all who claim to be working within the human rights paradigm. It insists that there must be dialogue with those most affected by the trafficking phenomenon and that their voices must be given priority. Such insights inform my own research, which aims to give voice to women who have been trafficked for sexual exploitation and acknowledges the violation of human rights that they have experienced.

Supporters of the human rights paradigm also draw on international human rights instruments such as declarations, conventions and protocols. These include, but are not limited to the Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the UN Trafficking protocol. The call for a more ‘victim-centred’ approach is the dominant plea within the human rights paradigm, and a move from a predominantly criminal response to the promotion of human rights situates the person as of primary importance. Those who advocate a human rights response to sex trafficking seek to determine if a violation of human rights is a causal factor for sex trafficking and to address its consequences by attending first to the needs of the victim.

The Localised Paradigm and Sex Trafficking

Some literature emphasises that sex trafficking is not a generic phenomenon (Pijl, Oude Breuil, & Siegel, 2011) and makes an argument for recognising unique places
and unique experiences, asserting that sex trafficking is situational. I call this the localised paradigm. While the globalised paradigm refers to the impact of global factors such as free trade, labour exportation and sex tourism, the localised paradigm focuses on cultural, social and specific environmental factors that are unique to a particular place. For example, a study of trafficked women in Mexico highlighted the significance of racial marginalisation. The researcher found that the majority of trafficked women she interviewed belonged to the ‘Mestizo’ which is the Spanish mixed-race ethnic group (Acharya, 2008). Likewise, in a study of sex trafficking in Cambodia, Abigail Schwartz asserts that one of the causal factors is family disintegration as a result of the Khmer Rouge period (Schwartz, 2003). A study in Bangladesh (Bimal Kanti & Syed Abu, 2000) highlighted deteriorating law and order as a particular cause for sex trafficking in and from Bangladesh.

There are common macro factors which influence sex trafficking across the globe and so, too, there are causes that are specific to a particular region or nation state. The relevance of sex trafficking and the localised paradigm is evident in the number of studies about sex trafficking undertaken in specific places, including but not limited to Albania, Nepal, India, the United States, Portugal, The European Union, Bangladesh, Mexico and Korea (Chaulagai, 2009; Djuranovic, 2009; Farley et al., 2004; Hennink & Simkhada, 2004; Hodge, 2008; Huda, 2006; Melrose & Barrett, 2006; Raymond & Hughes, 2001; J. G. Silverman et al., 2007; Simkhada, 2008; Van Hook, Gjermen, & Haxhiymeri, 2006). In some instances, researchers refer to specific regions as particularly susceptible to trafficking. For example, research by Ashley Blackburn et al (2010) saw rampant poverty and political instability as the fundamental cause of human trafficking and sexual exploitation of children in Southeast Asia. Louise Brown (2000) claims that there are unique aspects of sex trafficking in Asia, one of which is the silence about Asian men’s sexual promiscuity. This may be one common feature but her portrayal of sex trafficking in Asia as one entity risks overgeneralisation. The geo-political and cultural diversity of Asia as a continent warrants a more nuanced approach.

If sex trafficking is a global phenomenon it is also a phenomena existing in different settings. Proponents of the localised paradigm call for an approach that recognises unique circumstances within nation states around the globe; sex trafficking is indeed global, and a local contextual understanding can provide greater insight into its particularities. Understanding sex trafficking within the localised paradigm avoids dominant, sensationalist narratives that tend to generalise about exploitation and victimisation.
**Identifying the Gaps**

I have identified seven different ways the phenomenon of sex trafficking is evident in the literature. These seven paradigms are reflective of specialised areas of research, including globalisation, economics, migration, crime prevention and control, gender relations, human rights and geo-cultural spaces. Often trafficking has been viewed as a threat to the state and to state controlled borders rather than as a human rights issue (Clark, 2003; Gallagher, 2001; Lobasz, 2009). A recurrent response to trafficking, therefore, has been to enhance border security and deport trafficked persons who are considered illegal immigrants (Lobasz, 2009). With this focus on the nation state, attention to the needs and listening to the voices of those who have been trafficked has been largely neglected. Some authors have recognised that the essential voices of those who have been trafficked are missing in human trafficking research (Gozdziak & Collett, 2005; Kelly, 2005; Lobasz, 2009; Long, 2004; Yea, 2004b).

Recognising a gap in the literature around women's perceptions of the trafficking experience, researcher Sallie Yea (2004a) proposes that there is a need to engage more productively with women’s thinking, imaginings and sense of selfhood. Political scientist Jennifer Lobasz (2009) also calls for feminist research on trafficking, for analysing the experience of those who have been trafficked, and with particular attention given to women trafficked for sexual exploitation. She argues that a feminist approach to researching human trafficking is one in which human security rather than state security takes precedence. Lobasz illustrates the different approaches to human security in the following table.
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For Lobasz (2009), traditional constructions of human trafficking have reproduced stereotypes related to gender and race and have undermined the agency of women. She calls for a reframing of the problem of trafficking, giving voice to trafficked women in order to make the reality of their experiences more accessible to mainstream society. She argues that this draws upon a longstanding tradition of valuing women’s voices and of incorporating women’s experiences into theory. Likewise, feminist sociologist Liz Kelly argues that while debates continue about the experience of human trafficking, we neglect to hear from those who have experienced it:

The voices of trafficked women themselves are muted to say the least, and many have no opportunity to participate because speaking out can literally endanger their future safety, as their inclusion in their own communities requires that they pay a further price of not discussing what they have endured (Kelly, 2005, p. 256).

The research to date has focused on state security, migration, legal definitions, policy directions and anti-trafficking initiatives, but it does not highlight the human security issues arising for the victims of trafficking. Calling for greater rigour and systematic analysis of trafficking, migration expert and researcher, Elzbieta Gozdziak (2005) argues that much of the research story has remained fixed within the realm of estimating the problem and defining trafficking routes and relationships between countries of origin, transit and destination. Further, such research has also entailed reviewing legal frameworks and policy responses but neglecting research in relation to the victim and the impact on them, their family and community members. Addressing this research gap, Gozdziak suggests, would provide greater clarity about the individual victim’s circumstances, needs and advice:

Rigorous ethnographic and sociological studies based on in-depth interviews with trafficking survivors would provide baseline data on trafficking victims and their characteristics. Too often victims of trafficking remain one-dimensional figures whose stories are condensed and simplified, which does not bode well for the development of culturally appropriate services. (Gozdziak & Collett, 2005, p. 122)

Similarly, Liz Kelly, a leading academic and activist on gender-based violence, provides a strong argument for research that involves the voices of those who are trafficked:

At the micro level there has been hardly any empirical investigation of how members of civil society and those whose
labour and trust has been exploited define trafficking, yet this has direct effects on whether people seek advice or help and will determine how they respond to questions intended to discern if they have been trafficked or merely smuggled. (Kelly, 2005, p. 238)

Anthropologist, Lynellyn Long, too, argues for research that places the lived experiences of trafficked women to the forefront of research:

Despite the current popularity of this topic, contemporary sexual trafficking experiences remain largely invisible, reflecting in large part the particular interests and agenda of those defining trafficking for sexual exploitation rather than the lived experiences and perceptions of those who are trafficked (Long, 2004, p. 8)

I am encouraged to pursue my aims by the strength and compassion of the feminists quoted above regarding the necessity of hearing first-hand accounts of the impact of sex-trafficking on the lives of women and their families. In giving voice to the women in my research cohort and in understanding sex trafficking through the perspective of their experience, I adopt a third-way feminist approach to understanding sex trafficking as outlined by Shelley Cavalieri (2011). This approach makes room for a more nuanced understanding of the sex trafficking trajectory and entails an exploration of women's individual circumstances alongside intersecting oppressions. Further discussion of the Third-way Feminist Approach to sex Trafficking is pursued, and in greater depth in Chapter 3.

In giving voice to women and in understanding sex trafficking from their perspective, I propose an eighth paradigm through which the experience of sex trafficking can be understood within the context of the life course. This paradigm allows for a more nuanced understanding of the sex trafficking trajectory. It entails an exploration of women's narratives about personal circumstances in childhood, through adolescence and into adulthood, combined with the factors that exist in the external environment. In order to illuminate the scholarly context of the life course paradigm and sex trafficking, an overview of the growth of interest in the Life Course perspective from its early human development phase to a more sociological perspective is outlined in Chapter 3.
Conclusion

This review of the literature demonstrates that sex trafficking research to date has largely focused on macro factors that include globalisation, economics, migration, organised crime and state security. Each paradigm has a particular focus or lens through which sex trafficking may be viewed. The emphases within these paradigms often reflect expertise in a particular disciplinary field and serve the agendas of those who promote them. Thus, for example, NGO’s tend to focus on the human rights paradigm, drawing attention to the injustices experienced by individuals whereas nation states tend to focus on the migration paradigm, highlighting the need for state security. These paradigms are not mutually exclusive but viewed in isolation they fail to reflect the complex nature of the sex trafficking phenomenon. By far the most controversial is the gender paradigm, in which sex trafficking is causally linked to the subjugation of women and the girl child, and inherently linked to this paradigm are the notions of victim and agency.

Numerous authors have called for a multi-disciplinary approach to understanding sex trafficking. A multi-disciplinary approach allows for a broader analysis and gives greater depth to this complex phenomenon. The literature also gives credence to the value of research project work that seeks to understand sex trafficking from the vantage point of those who have experienced it. A phenomenological approach to the research enables a deeper exploration of the impact and significance of human trafficking for those who have experienced it first-hand. This not only breaks down monolithic profiles of sex trafficking victims but also provides a resource for informing programs that seek to advise, prevent or repatriate women from human trafficking.
Chapter 2
The Philippines: A Contextual Study of Sex Trafficking

Introduction
The purpose of this chapter is to focus on the sex trade in the Philippines. The previous chapter identified what is known about sex trafficking from a broad global perspective. Here I draw on the ‘localised paradigm’ outlined in the previous chapter, with an emphasis on factors that are particular to the Philippines.

I begin with a brief profile of the country including its location and geography, followed by an overview of the sex trade, and with particular reference to locations, venues and roles within the trade. The discussion then outlines the social, economic, political and cultural reasons why the sex trade has been able to flourish in the Philippines. This discussion makes links with the seven sex trafficking paradigms outlined in the previous chapter and illustrates their relevance to the Philippines. Causal factors including globalisation, colonisation, American military bases, government endorsement of sex tourism, and gender subordination are examined. The chapter concludes with an overview of significant challenges and the developments in government policy, law and social services that have sought to address and work against the continuation of the sex trafficking.

The Philippines – A Country Overview
The Philippines is made up of more than seven thousand islands. However, the majority of the population inhabits just eleven of the islands. Whilst all areas are highly populated some are more remotely situated from capital cities than others, particularly areas in the southern part of the Philippines. In many cases, transport from one island to another is limited to infrequent ferries and dependent on weather conditions and demand. Travel from one part of the Philippines to another can be expensive for those living in rural and remote areas and in some instances infrastructure and basic social services are limited. Once considered to have the potential for a best performing economy in South East Asia, it now has an enormous national debt and tens of millions of Filipinos live in poverty (Baliscan, 1992). Its economy is highly dependent on the billions of dollars it receives through the 2.2 million Filipino workforce overseas (Philippine Commission on Women, 2013, p. 6). According to 2014 statistics the Philippines has the highest birth rate in Asia and it is estimated that the population could double within three decades. The current population of the Philippines is 96.5 million. The main religion in the Philippines is Catholicism. Its major exports are electrical machinery, clothing, food and live animals, chemicals and timber products (BBC, 2014 Philippines Profile).
Cebu is located within the Visayas which consist of nine major islands in the southern part of the archipelago, as shown in Figure 1. The second largest provincial city in the Philippines, Cebu is a thriving industrial town with a population of over four million people. Known as the ‘Queen City of the South’, it boasts historic churches, modern shopping complexes, pristine beaches and significantly, local and international
air and sea routes, which enable easy access in and out of Cebu. Alongside its many attractions, it is also considered a prime location for human trafficking into the sex trade (de la Cerna, 1992). Cebu is a major tourist destination in the Philippines and a destination point of many trafficked victims; it is considered to be among the top-five places in the Philippines for child prostitution and sex tourism (Campo, 2013). Promoted as a tourist destination for international tourists, it attracts a multitude of foreigners from predominantly wealthy countries seeking a relatively inexpensive holiday.

Mindanao, the second largest island in the Philippines lies to the South and is a place of conflict. With a history of minority Muslims fighting Spanish and American colonial rule, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) is fighting for political autonomy from Manila. The modern conflict in Mindanao began some 40 years ago when MOROS (Muslim ethnic indigenous peoples in the southern Philippines) demanded independence from the Philippines. In 2008 peace talks broke down between MILF and the Philippine government. As a result, violence and conflict in that region has escalated. Many civilians have left their villages and it is estimated that over 700,000 have been displaced in the course of this conflict (Mueller et al., 2011).

Despite the ongoing conflict in the south and recurrent periods of great suffering and the economic deprivation of so many Filipinos, there is resilience and a pride in the Filipino people. They are people who have suffered and yet they appear to carry no resentment or bitterness, even towards their oppressors. It seems that against many oppressive forces they have managed to maintain their own culture (Gripaldo, 2005; Licuanan, 1988). They have a great love of music and dance and enjoy many celebrations and festivals. As a visitor to this country, I am overwhelmed by the wonderful welcome and hospitality that I experience.

The Sex Trade in the Philippines

Sex trafficking, both international and domestic remains a serious problem in the Philippines (Brown, 2000; Consortium Against Trafficking of Children and Women in Commercial Sexual Exploitation (Catch-Wise), 2005; Flowers, 2005; Luga, 2010; United States Department of State, 2013). Considered to be a source country and, to a lesser extent, a transit and destination country for human trafficking, it provides a glaring example of large-scale commodification of human beings. This often-hidden phenomenon also exists in other South East Asian countries, including, but not limited to Thailand, Burma, Indonesia and Cambodia. Each of these countries has their own unique stories as to the emergence and existence of sex trafficking.
Both adults and children are trafficked domestically from poor, rural areas in the southern and central parts of the Philippines to city areas such as Manila and Cebu. Most recruits are female, aged between 13 and 30 years (US Trafficking in Persons Report 2008). In 2005 in the Visayas, Cebu was the primary destination point of internal or domestic trafficking of children as young as 11 years of age, with the children coming from Samar, Bohol, Leyte, Negros and Bacolod (Catch-Wise 2005, p3), which, as already noted, places Cebu among the top five areas for child prostitution and sex tourism in the country.

With regard to the women who are the focus of this study, traffickers provide women for both local brothels and sex tourists (Consortium Against Trafficking of Children and Women in Commercial Sexual Exploitation (Catch-Wise), 2005; Dioneda L.C, 1993; Pacis & Flores-Oebanda, 2005). Due to the clandestine nature of trafficking, it is very difficult to ascertain the number of women prostituted. Hence, government and NGO's rarely publish statistics regarding this. However, in 2005 a consortium of NGO’s working in Cebu against sex trafficking, estimated that 10,000 young women were prostituted in Cebu City. Of this number, a high percentage were suspected to be victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation (Consortium Against Trafficking of Children and Women in Commercial Sexual Exploitation (Catch-Wise), 2005). Nine years on this is likely to be significantly higher. In keeping with these facts, a recent research project carried out in Cebu considered the city’s notoriety for sex tourism:

Cebu City is arguably the most infamous sex tourism destination in the Philippines, and its prolific prostitution industry is comprised of thousands of women and girls, both trafficked and voluntary entering the sector (Yea, 2010, p. 159)

As part of my fieldwork experience in Cebu in 2011, I attended a lunch party for prostituted women that was hosted at Good Shepherd Welcome House, which is a drop in centre for prostituted women. The lunch provided an opportunity for the women to socialise with each other and learn about the supports being offered by the Welcome House. As the women arrived, I welcomed them and was asked to confirm their attendance from a prepared list. I noticed that each of them was identified on the list by their role within the sex industry. I was astounded at the different roles within the ‘flesh trade’: variously, call girl; freelancer; bar girl; casa worker and so on as I began to learn about the different aspects of the sex trade operating within Cebu City.

When I became more familiar with the women and spent more time visiting the Red Light District, I came to realise that these roles were significant in that they defined status, not only in the sex trade, but in society in general. It was clear that the young women in casas (brothels) were at the bottom of the rung when it came to terms and
conditions. After outreach work in the ‘Kamagayan’, the Red Light District, I recorded the following reflection in my journal:

The sex industry is a complex business and complex relationships exist between prostituted women, pimps, brothel owners, watchers, managers and customers. The red light district consists of a small number of dirty lane ways leading to a number of casas. What strikes me are the small chairs (designed for primary school age children) which line these laneways. The young women sit here and wait until they are called by their watchers or pimps to serve a customer. The atmosphere is tense and yet I had this strange feeling of being present at a carnival. Young children roam the lanes, drugs change hands, ice-cream is being sold and, at the same time, the lucrative business of the sex trade operates. (Researcher Reflexive Journal, May 9, 2011)

Although illegal, this industry is often overt. Commonly referred to in the Philippines as the ‘flesh industry’ it has various forms and expressions. Prostituted women are mostly termed ‘Hospitality Workers’ or ‘Guest Relations Officers’ as a form of concealment of the sex industry, but these terms are widely recognised in the community as euphemisms for prostitution.

The character of the demand for the sex industry in the Philippines varies, ranging from local users to international sex tourists (Brown, 2000; Ofreneo & Ofreneo, 1998; Ralston & Keeble, 2009). One researcher, Louise Brown, highlighting the significance of local demand for sex in the Asian region at large, has claimed that ‘there is a vast amount of money to be made from Western sex tourism but the major demand for commercial sex in Asia comes from the domestic market’ (2000, p. 11). Later discussions in this chapter highlight the reasons for local demand, including premarital sex for males as a rite of passage (Brown, 2000; Ralston & Keeble, 2009). On the other hand, there are also sex tourists from wealthier countries who seek cheap sex in the Philippines. To illustrate the kinds of demands for sex from international tourist in Cebu, the following advice was touted on an internet site:

Going on a vacation to the Philippines?

Forget about the overpriced Boracay tourist trap, forget about the Boracay’s poor cousin “Bohol” and don’t go to Manila to get robbed by street kids! Go to the “Queen City of the South” Cebu! There is LOTS to do in the beautiful city of Cebu. You can see the rich culture and strength of a proud Catholic people
that has overcome hundreds of years of adversity. But why see any of that when you can go straight to Cebu’s best ASSET, Cebu girls!! If you are looking for girls in Cebu there are four places that have the best crop of fresh (and not so fresh) Cebuana flowers: Mango Street, SM/Ayala Mall, IT Park, The Internet......If you want to just pay and get down to business, just step right outside and you will be asked right away especially if it’s a weekend and you happen to be a foreign looking guy. The street of Mango is littered with all kinds of hookers. You will find Cebu girls in different sizes and shapes: Fat ones, thin ones. Yes, you can get ALL types of working girls from the ugliest to the prettiest. Use protection because many of them go through 100’s of guys with no protection. It’s a recipe for the finest STDs; it’s like a STD Adobo. Mango is a street ripe with sexually transmitted diseases (dimetravel.org, 2012).

The above blog and ‘travel advice’ highlights one way that the ‘flesh industry’ is viewed in Cebu. The manner in which a sex tourist is able to ‘pick from the crop’ illustrates how young women are denigrated and commodified. Recent research, undertaken in the northern city of Angeles in the Philippines, identified demand for prostituted women from both local men and international sex tourists. This study concludes that men who travel to the Philippines for sex are predominantly middle-aged men looking for ‘cheap, available, and unequal sex with young, pretty, vulnerable accommodating women’ (Ralston & Keeble, 2009, p. 121), indicating a powerful financial and age imbalance. The authors contend:

They can have any woman they want regardless of what they themselves look like, what their social class is, or how personally repugnant they might be. And they can do it without too much cost to themselves economically, and with no need for any cross-cultural sensitivity...English is widely spoken. You don’t have to learn a single word of the native language (Ralston & Keeble, 2009, p. 121)

A number of authors have suggested that young Filipino women prostituted for sex share similar backgrounds including youthfulness, naivety, prior sexual abuse, dysfunctional families, lack of education and a desire to earn money to support family (Brown, 2000; Lee, 1992; Luga, 2010; Ofreneo & Ofreneo, 1998; Santos, 2002). As one in-depth account makes clear:
Most sex workers were born and raised in poor rural areas...throughout the whole of less-developed Asia the majority of girls who sell sex are poor and often illiterate and the sex industry likes them because their youth and lack of education makes them easy to manipulate and control... because they come from remote regions, and because they are young, clients are reassured that they are free of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV (Brown, 2000, p. 45)

The 2008 US Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP) also highlights the insidious nature of the work whereby human traffickers prey on the vulnerable:

Their targets are often children and young women, and their ploys are creative and ruthless, designed to trick, coerce, and win the confidence of potential victims. Very often these ruses involve promises of a better life through employment, educational opportunities, or marriage. (United States Department of State, 2008, p. 7).

In the Philippines recruitment into the sex industry varies. There are both legal and illegal recruiters in the Philippines. Legal recruiting agents are prolific and are monitored by the Philippines Overseas Employment Agency (Philippine Overseas Employment Agency) with whom all recruiting agencies must register. However, there are other agencies that operate illegally under the guise of being a legitimate employment agency. These operators seek to take advantage of young women looking for work. Recruiters vary, from family, friends and neighbours, members of the local community to more organised criminal groups (Ralston & Keeble, 2009). Illegal recruiters are opportunistic and pounce on the chance to recruit an unsuspecting target. In many instances young women are recruited under the guise of an offer of finding a good job in the city, such as waitressing, domestic work, or shopkeeping:

When Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines erupted and displaced thousands of people from their homes, it was the experienced agents of the sex industry who were some of the first to offer their sympathy and their own variety of support in the centres sheltering the victims. Like all successful business people they had their eye on a bargain (Brown, 2000, p. 60).

The Philippines has experienced many natural calamities such as typhoons, earthquakes, flooding and landslides, often resulting in the internal displacement of people. Traffickers have been known to take advantage of vulnerable people in these circumstances. The recent event of Typhoon Yolanda in 2013, which claimed the lives
of thousands on the island of Leyte, is one example of large-scale displacement of peoples. Human rights organisations in the Philippines expressed their concern that some of the displaced, particularly young women, risked exploitation from traffickers. The ongoing civil war in Mindanao has also resulted in the displacement of thousands of women and children; this has increased their vulnerability to being trafficked into the sex industry.

Prostitution, though illegal, continues to flourish and almost all sex establishments operate with impunity due to the oftentimes corrupt law enforcement and the influence of powerful vested interests (Guth, 2010; Perrott, 2012). Whilst the sex industry results in large profits for those who invest in it, the day-to-day management is taken care of by others. These managers include both men and women; many men operate at the senior level whereas women, often previously prostituted, take on positions in middle management, managing the women being prostituted and negotiating with her customers. She is often referred to as the ‘Mama-San’. If some managers are considered to be cruel and unkind, others are maternal and affectionate (Brown, 2000). With a fundamental aim of money making and high profits, women’s rights to safety and security are frequently compromised.

The working conditions in the sex industry vary according to the different roles in which young women are engaged. However, the prominent organisations in the Philippines that argue that all parts are exploitative include the Coalition against Trafficking in Women (CATW-AP), Women’s Education, Development, Productivity and Research Organisation (WeDpro) and General Assembly Binding Women for Reforms, Integrity, Equality, Leadership and Action (GABRIELA). Young women occupy roles ranging from high-class call girls to brothel-based workers or ‘casa’ workers. The high-class call girls represent a very small minority within the sex industry. The majority of prostituted women work in conditions in which they are monitored very closely by management and where penalties apply if strict rules are broken (Luga, 2010). Call girls tend to operate in large hotels or resorts and are mostly self-employed. Their clients consist mainly of rich local and foreign businessmen and local politicians. Call girls are considered to have the most freedom of all (Ofreneo & Ofreneo, 1998; Ralston & Keeble, 2009). Pick-Up girls, or freelancers who are not registered as ‘hospitality girls’ are street workers who often have more control over their lives than those working in casas or bars. They can sometimes regulate their own work and tend to make some profits, although these are mostly controlled by pimps. They are not confined to a particular establishment but are generally stationed within the vicinity of red light districts, and they also frequent hotel strips and other tourist areas (Ofreneo, 1998; Ralston & Keeble, 2009).
The ‘bar girls’ represent a large section of the sex industry and these women are often employed in nightclubs, strip bars and karaoke bars. Predominantly registered as entertainers, as ‘hospitality girls’, bar girls are closely monitored by bar personnel who ensure that they abide by the rules. Conditions for bar girls are somewhat better than for casa workers. They are regulated by management who impose strict penalties for lack of adherence to rules. Government regulations demand that they undertake a weekly hygiene test. They are expected to work shifts of some 12 to 14 hours per day, and rely on the commission on transactions from which both the woman and the bar profit: ‘ladies drinks’, drinks bought by customers, and bar fines, which are fees paid to a bar to take a girl from the bar for an agreed time; this could be a few hours, overnight or sometimes a package is negotiated whereby the customer has a girl for a week or more. The ‘fine’ is paid to the bar and the girl is given a percentage. Despite better conditions than the Casa workers, often the bar workers are subjected to violence such as physical and sexual abuse (Ofreneo & Ofreneo, 1998; Ralston & Keeble, 2009).

Most of the women I interviewed for this research were trafficked into casas in the ‘Kamagayan’ (the Red Light District) and other parts of Cebu City, although many had experienced work in the bars and some had worked in bars with casas attached. These casas are predominantly frequented by local Filipino men (Brown, 2000; Ralston & Keeble, 2009). Casa ‘girls’ are virtually owned and ‘enslaved’ within the brothels and they have the least control over their lives (Ofreneo & Ofreneo, 1998). They are effectively on call 24 hours each day, and ‘they make the least amount of money, work the most hours, and are the most indebted to their owners’ (Ralston & Keeble, 2009, p. 69). They do not earn directly from their customers but are most commonly indebted to the casa owner who indiscriminately provides for their daily needs. In a study of the sex trade undertaken in Manila, researchers, Ralston and Keeble concluded that:

The casa workers are the worst situated of them all. They are kept as virtual prisoners in small rooms in the backs of karaoke’s, truck stops and patio bars, accessible only by guards and owners. Many of the women we have met in casas have been trafficked from rural areas… kept as sex slaves (Ralston & Keeble, 2009, p. 99).

Likewise, Louise Brown in her work on sex slavery in Asia observes that in the Philippines:

There is another even more authentically local variety of sex establishment, it is called a casa and it is a closed brothel. In
other words the women cannot escape. Identifying casas is troublesome because they are hidden (Brown, 2000, p. 13).

Considered to have the worst conditions, for at least two decades Casas are predominantly serviced by the most marginalised young women in the Philippines:

Girls in the casas of the Philippines have no regular working hours. They have to be on twenty-four hour call and must service any customers the mama-san sends them. They have no control over the number of men they have to service. Ninety-five per cent of these girls work seven days a week (Miralao, Santos, & Carlos, 1990, pp. 16-19).

The commercial sex sector in the Philippines is diverse. Many women in the industry move from one role to another and sometimes are involved in more than one of the roles described above. However, it is important to note that the only visible workers in the sector are the ‘hospitality’ workers – the bar girls – who must be registered and are afforded protection by the law. As Ofreneo and Ofreneo observed, this industry benefits primarily those who reap the greatest profit and for the most part it is not the women being prostituted:

Apart from the women who earn a living, those who profit from the business include pimps, operators/maintainers of prostitution houses, tour operators (both local and foreign), recruiters and sometimes even corrupt police officers and politicians (Ofreneo & Ofreneo, 1998, p. 107).

Organised criminal networks in the Philippines play a significant part in the sex trade, operating in the trafficking of drugs and humans, especially women (Schloenhardt, 2009). Common organised criminal activities include, ‘kidnapping for ransom, drug trafficking… prostitution, illegal gambling, white collar crimes, fraudulent contracts with government and corruption’ (Savona, Adamoli, & Zoffi, 1995, p. 24).

Organised crime groups, for example, Japanese Yakuza and Chinese Triads are present in the Philippines and are involved in both sex trafficking and drug trafficking (Savona et al., 1995). Thus:

 Trafficking and prostitution need to be understood as problems arising from contexts not only of poverty and unemployment but also maintained and promoted by deep economic interests such as syndicated crime networks like the Japanese Yakuza and Chinese Triads such as the Sun Yee On... These illicit employment systems in cahoots with local politicians, criminals, police and judges are examples of the entrenched economic
and political interests that are the basis and cause of gender-based corruption (Quimson, 2001, p. 6).

The sex trade in the Philippines can, therefore, be viewed as a complex interplay of entrepreneurs, criminal syndicates, prostitution users, pimps, managers, brothel owners, Mama-Sans and young women who are commodified. Alongside these players are the many and varied sex establishments that cater for demand from both local users and international tourists. These include but are not limited to, girlie bars, Karaoke bars, strip clubs, massage parlours and Casas.

**Forces Enabling Sexual Trafficking in the Philippines**

There are certain preconditions that enable sex trafficking to flourish in the Philippines, including the impact of globalisation, the enduring influence of colonisation, the presence of American military bases, the influence of Catholicism, economic disparities, gender-based corruption, migration and organised crime.

Globalisation has proved to be a key force. Filipina sociologist, Ligaya Lindio McGovern (2007, p. 15) claims that neo-liberal globalisation is not a neutral process. With a specific focus on the Philippines, she writes that whilst ‘benefiting transnational capital and wealthier nations’, globalisation and neo-liberal policies have negatively affected the economic well-being of the majority of poor Filipino women. This is exemplified in increased levels of poverty, unemployment and demand to export women for cheap domestic labour.

Sex tourism to the Philippines has become more prolific within a globalised economic structure. Thus in her article on globalisation and sexual exploitation, Sheila Jeffreys (1999) Australian academic and long-time anti-trafficking advocate uses the Philippines to illustrate the dynamics of ‘prostitution tourism’. Reflecting on her own immersion experience in the Philippines, she argues that prostitution has been normalised by the persistent use of women for sex, in the first instance, in prostitution around US military bases in the Philippines, which has been the case since the early 1900’s, then through the practice of mail order brides which she argues is a commercialised form of marriage in which woman are contracted to provide sex for one man and now, cyber-sex and sex tourism, each of which are clear by-products of processes of globalisation. Likewise, Canadian sociologist, Richard Poulin (2003, p. 41) refers to the industrialisation of prostitution, claiming ‘this once marginal market is an increasingly central aspect of current capitalist globalisation’.

Like globalisation, colonisation by the United States, which endured from 1898 to 1946, brought both positive and negative impacts to the Philippines. One of the enduring impacts has been the presence of American military bases. The role of the
bases in the construction of the Philippines as a sex tourist destination is an important facet in understanding the evolution of the sex industry. Prostitution around the military bases developed directly from demand by the military for “sexual services” (Bertone, 2000; Enloe, 1989; Jeffreys, 1999; Mananzan, 1991; Ofreneo & Ofreneo, 1998). This became an institutionalised practice and used Filipino women to fulfil the demand.

In her exploration of the politicisation of military bases at large, Andrea Bertone (2000, p. 9) infers that there is a history of local governments procuring sex for foreign military, thus condoning the practice of sexual exploitation of women. The presence of US bases in the Philippines over a long period of time has most certainly contributed to the accepted practice of buying women for sex and it fostered the spread of sex tourism, particularly from Australia to the Philippines.

Sheila Jeffreys (1999, p. 191) demonstrates that the US withdrawal from military bases resulted in 'a hiatus in the sex industry in the city which was quickly filled by Australian entrepreneurs and Australian sex tourists’. Other authors also propose that the institutionalisation of prostitution as in the Philippines is a development brought about by the presence of American military bases and the related promotion by government of sex tourism as an economic strategy (Dionisio, 1994; Mananzan, 1991; Ofreneo & Ofreneo, 1998).

The sexual and social dominance of men in the Philippines is another significant force in allowing sex trafficking to flourish in the country. Many Filipino authors have discussed the patriarchal influences brought about by the Spanish colonisation of the Philippines (1521-1898). These influences include male dominance in relation to religion, culture, politics, economics and domestic life. This was later reinforced by American colonisation (Estrada-Claudio, 1991; Eviota, 1994a; Honculada, 1994; Medel-Anonuevo, 1994; Sobritchea, 2012).

Filipino feminist and academic, Elizabeth Eviota (1994a, p. 57) claims that in pre-Hispanic times, when the Philippines was recognised as a society of kinship with a subsistence economy, women experienced ‘a relative freedom and autonomy within the sexual, social and economic spheres’. However, in both colonial and post-colonial times, the Philippines has experienced a ‘sexist ideology’ of which the Spanish and Americans were key contributors. This has brought about a culture of silence and the subjugation of women in many areas of society (Medel-Anonuevo, 1994).

Male dominance is most pronounced in the role of sexuality in society. Male promiscuity in the form of premarital and extramarital sexual relationships is tolerated and to some degree expected. Women on the other hand are expected to remain chaste and faithful to their husbands, representing a double standard of morality.
Elizabeth Eviota (1994a, p. 58) argues that this double standard is most blatant in the sexual arena where women are condemned for being promiscuous and men encouraged. The keeping of a mistress in the Philippines is said to be a common practice, acceptable across all classes, ‘politicians, movie actors, businessmen, jeepney drivers and policemen; on the sly or publicly keep a mistress or two or maintain other households’ (Honculada, 1994, p. 99). This double standard of morality is recognised as detrimental to women, casting them as silent and passive in a world dominated by men. In terms of social status, ‘there is no more hapless pair in Philippine society than the unwed mother and her illegitimate child. She is faulted for not having defended her virtue from male sexual desire’ (Honculada, 1994, p. 90). Marriage is seen, therefore, as the only viable option for a woman with a child (Brown, 2000; Law, 2000; Ralston & Keeble, 2009; Santos, 2002).

With colonisation by the Spanish came Catholicism, this had a profound influence on Filipinos’ ideas on women and sexuality. Elizabeth Eviota (1994a, p. 58) claims that the Spanish not only exported their economics and politics but also exported a ‘male dominated Judeo-Christian view of sexuality’. Catholicism had a huge impact on the way women began to perceive themselves. The transformation of women from pre-Hispanic times to the colonial era was made explicit by new societal roles prescribed by the Spanish missionaries, which caste women as ‘chaste, otherworldly, meek and devoted servants of men and the faith (Dionisio, 1994, p. 1). Women who previously were leaders in religions such as Animism, were actively recruited to Catholicism (Noelle Leslie Dela Cruz, 2011).

The notion of the gentle and subservient woman is rejected by Filipino feminist activist and Catholic religious sister, Mary John Mananzan. A Benedictine nun and founder of the Philippine feminist organisation, ‘Gabriela’, Mananzan (1991, p. 26) states that much of Catholic teaching has subjugated women and instilled great guilt in them. She claims that the dichotomy of body and soul which forms part of Catholic moral theology has identified women with sin and ‘has implanted much guilt in women [such] that they feel guilty when they are raped, they feel guilty when they are beaten up, they feel guilty when their marriage breaks up’.

Mananzan and others also claim that Catholicism has instilled in Philippine society the notion that women are only valued as virgins, wives and mothers. This, they argue, has resulted in the socialisation of women as compliant, meek and mild. Women were to be valued for their contribution to their family, household, and faith, and were ‘trained to accept trials and hardships without question’ (Medel-Anonuevo, 1994, p. 44).
This view of the ideal woman continues to hold influence in the Philippines (Brown, 2000; Eviota, 1994b; Mananzan, 1991; Medel-Anonuevo, 1994), exemplified in the way that state laws and policies are so highly swayed by the Catholic Church’s teachings. Examples include: the status of marriage in which there is no legal avenue for divorce, only annulment or separation, birth control in which the pressure to engage in natural family planning is encouraged rather than the use of contraceptives. These kinds of influences reinforce the notion that women must be submissive and faithful to the Catholic tradition (Medel-Anonuevo, 1994; Ofreneo & Ofreneo, 1998). Mananzan’s feminist critique of the church’s view on women is representative of feminist theologians across the globe who analyse the operation of power in the Catholic Church. In Chapter 3, in the section on reflexivity, I discuss my own position as a feminist within the Catholic Church.

The economic struggles of women have also been a key element in the prevalence of sexual exploitation. In the Philippine capitalist economy, many women are highly exploited. They are used, in effect, as cheap labour, occupying the lowest paying jobs yet comprise two thirds of the Filipino workforce overseas (Angeles, 1994; Parreñas, 2002, 2003; Rosca, 1995). Doubly oppressed by expectations to perform household labour and earn an income for the family, women, often in dire economic circumstances, are highly vulnerable to exploitation.

Economic adjustment policies that have pushed women to work abroad have also increased their vulnerability. Filipinos were first deployed as overseas ‘OFW’s’, or overseas foreign workers under the Marcos regime in the 1970s and the practice was subsequently given official state sanction (Santos, 2002). State dependence on overseas workers is partially constructed by underemployment within the Philippines. Overseas foreign remittances totalled an unprecedented US$17,348 billion in 2009, and equalled 9.5 percent of the country’s GDP (POEA, 2009, p. 1). Consequently, travel for work, especially for a woman, has become normalised by the state. A corollary of this dependence of the state on the out-migration of labour is the significant shortfall in government efforts to build skills and employment opportunities at home.

Gender-based corruption is also a significant force allowing sexual exploitation to thrive. The notion of gender-based corruption within the Philippines is a key theme of academic Gabrielle Quimson’s work who defines it as ‘the abuse or exploitation of women by public authority for private gain’, (Quimson, 2001, p. 1). She considers that Gender based corruption is more insidious than general corruption and sees the problem as two dimensional. She notes:

The nature of the problem is two-dimensional. Firstly, gender corruption exists both internally in the Philippines sex industry
and externally in the traffic and exportation of women abroad. Internally, gender corruption occurs in commercial sex work and prostitutes, call girls, hostesses, nightclub performers and entertainers, sex masseurs and Guest Relations Officers (GROs), a euphemism for sex workers, are the usual victims. Incidences are increased by “sex tourism” which is the selling of Manila as one of the “sex hotpots” of the world by travel agencies abetted by Government (Quimson, 2001, p. 3).

The policies of former President, Marcos illustrate the way that government used gender to support its economic development. Income through tourism has been high on the political and economic agenda for many decades. As part of the government’s campaign to promote tourism to the Philippines, Marcos presented Filipino women as welcoming, attractive and hospitable. Hence, he promoted the trade in female sexuality (Dionisio, 1994; Eviota, 1994a). Filipino governments have encouraged tourism to the Philippines and promoted it as a place of rest and recreation, with strong emphasis placed on the ‘hospitality industry’, which in many instances concerns the exploitation of young Filipino women for sex. Saskia Sassen (2000), writing on globalisation and its impact on women in developing countries, states ‘Prostitution, labour migration and illegal trafficking in women and children for the sex industry are growing in importance as profit making activities’(p. 258). This is a form of gender-based corruption

Gender-based corruption can also be seen in the purposeful marginalisation of women who enable society to function in a conventional manner, whilst themselves outcast and stigmatised. Filipina academic and feminist activist, Elizabeth Eviota (1994a) argues that in order for men to gratify their supposedly uncontrollable sexual urges, prostitutes and mistresses have been regarded as the solution. These women keep the conventional marriage relationship intact while meeting men’s ‘sexual needs’. In addition, Eviota (1994a, p. 72) argues that these marginalised women provide income to the state through ‘the requirement for medical certificates, tax revenue for clubs and bars and state financed hotels’, hence, making for an industry in the trade of sex. Gender-based corruption in the Philippines illustrates that as long as sexual inequality exists, the prioritisation of men’s sexual urges will continue to exploit women who are deemed to be purposely created to attend to that need.

The whole area of sexuality is not simply a private affair between a male and a female, but a relationship embedded in a network of other relationships. It is embedded in a system of
power and social, political and economic interests (Eviota, 1994b, p. 73).

The prevalence of violence against women is also a key impetus for sexual exploitation to continue. In no greater arena is the issue of subordination of women more pronounced than in that of domestic violence and sexual assault. As for other nations, violence against women is a serious problem in the Philippines (Philippine Commission on Women, 2012). Physical injuries and rape are the most common reported cases of violence in the home (Aguiling-Pangalangan, 2008; Philippine Commission on Women, 2012).

Another element in the perpetuation of sexual exploitation concerns lack of income. In 2012 approximately 25% of the population lived on the poverty line (World Bank, 2014). Filipino American public health researcher, Teresa Tuason (2010) asserts that the number of families living in poverty is closer to 50% of the population. She describes this poverty as multigenerational, claiming that it is largely impossible to overturn. She states that ‘for those born poor, the societal structures in the Philippines keep most everyone from being economically successful' (Tuason, 2010, p. 202). Other scholars have referred to the poverty in the Philippines as systemic and many attribute it to macro factors, including national debt, economic neo-liberalism and the failure of governments to provide adequate strategies to help improve the livelihood and employment of its people (Balisacan, 2007; Lindio-McGovern, 2007; Sakellariou & Lall, 2000; Silva, 1996).

Migration, both internationally and domestically, has made women more vulnerable to sexual exploitation, and since the 1980s there has been ‘large scale conscription of Filipina women as labour resources of the national economy’. This has meant a separation from family (Tadiar, 2009, p. 59). An estimated 1.3 million (Philippine Commission on Women, 2013) Filipino women are employed overseas in positions that are better paid than in the Philippines, be these professional or lower-paid roles. Professions such as teaching and midwifery are discarded for more attractive, paid domestic labour abroad, resulting in what is commonly referred to as the ‘brain drain’ (Fernandez, 1997; Mananzan, 1991).

Despite the economic benefits of overseas employment, there are inherent risks. Some overseas domestic workers have been badly treated, accused of all manner of crimes, ‘leading in some cases to the imprisonment and in the Middle East, even court trials that sentence them to death’ (Mananzan, 1991). The case of Filipina maid Flor Contemplacion who was charged with the murder of a child in her care and sentenced to death by the Singaporean government in 1995 has often been cited to highlight the vulnerability of overseas migrant workers (Hilsdon, 2003, 2006; May,
1997; Rodriguez, 2005; Romina Guevarra, 2006; Torrevillas, 1996). A Philippines based NGO, ‘Migrante’, which advocates for the rights of migrant workers, has reported cases where women have been exploited and denied their rights whilst working overseas (Migrante International, 2012).

Problems faced by these international migrants can tend to overshadow the vulnerability of migrants within the Philippines. Internal migration is significant, especially women’s migration from rural to urban areas for better employment opportunities (Acosta-Umali, Laguna, Banez, & Javelosa, 2007; Brown, 2000; McIlwaine, 1997; Pacis & Flores-Oebanda, 2005; Quisumbing & McNiven, 2005). Economic restructuring has impacted rural communities’ income streams and employment opportunities, and has directly impacted on the trend of women migrating from rural to more urban cities.

In a study on how ‘space’ is negotiated by sex workers in Cebu city, British geographer, Cathy McIlwaine (1997) surveyed sex worker migrants to Cebu City. More than one half of the workers she interviewed had migrated from Eastern or Southern provinces of the Philippines. They were motivated to migrate by such factors as: the search for economic opportunities and job prospects, the experience of stigmatisation of lone parenthood and the necessity of providing for their children. Some came specifically to work in the sex industry; others became involved at a later time. Migration sustains supply of women for the sex industry in Cebu, and as McIlwaine (1997) concludes, ‘sex workers tend to have more extensive migration histories than other occupational groups’ (p. 161). Sex trafficking and migration patterns are related, both outside and within the Philippines.

Sex Trafficking and organised crime are closely linked in the Philippines, and so are trafficking and various forms of corruption. Practised by high government officials down to local police, corruption is prominent in the prostitution arena. As the literature makes clear, prostituted women can be prosecuted for selling sex, while corrupt local politicians, bar owners and prostitution users carry on with impunity (Lee, 1992; Perrott, 2012; Ralston & Keeble, 2009). In this regard, police are considered to be complicit in the sex trade, ‘allowing the trade to flourish’ (Perrott, 2012, p. 8).

US anti-corruption expert Paul Guth (2010, p. 148) identifies corruption as a causal factor of the human trafficking in the Philippines, and he claims that corruption on a number of levels has resulted in the lack of enforcement of R.A. 9208, the Philippines Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003. For example, Guth states that from 2003 to 2009 only twelve individuals were prosecuted under R.A 9208 due to pervasive government corruption in the form of bribery of immigration officials and Filipino police. (Guth, 2010, p. 157)
Reflecting on the exploitation of women and children in the Philippines, Filipino, Victor Luga (2010) includes among the factors that contribute to the phenomenon, exploitation by,

the powerful over the powerless, male over female, adult over child, devious over naive, rich over poor, organised over unorganised. Urbanisation, the colonial legacy, machismo culture, commercialisation, tourism, military bases, religious and cultural factors...materialism, consumerism, patriarchy and promoting the idea of children as commodities (Luga, 2010, p. 203).

One of the key factors contributing to sex trafficking is the unequal status of women and men, illustrated starkly in the prevalence of violence against women. The 2008 National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) states that one in five women aged 15-49 have experienced physical violence since age 15 and one in ten women aged 15-49 experienced sexual violence (Philippine Commission on Women, 2013, p. 10). Other factors contributing to sex trafficking include economic policies that discriminate against women, particularly those forcing women to migrate for their livelihood, and corruption that allows the illegal trade to flourish without penalty. Whilst certain aspects of the trade are unique to conditions within the Philippines, some are also operational in other countries where sex trafficking is growing, namely violence against women, sexual mores that privilege men's sexual desires and global and economic policies that favour the wealthy and disempower women.

**Working to End Sex Trafficking in the Philippines**

Whilst there are many factors that foster sex trafficking in the Philippines, there are also individuals and government and non-government organisations working against the sexual exploitation of women, including local and international human rights organisations, law enforcement agencies and specific support services for women.

**Human Rights Organisations**

Human Rights organisations are prolific in the Philippines. Many NGO’s primary mission is to ensure that the human rights of Filipino’s are realised. A number of NGO’s focus in particular on the rights of women and work to end sexual exploitation and violence against women. The Philippines government is a signatory to the Declaration of Human Rights and has ratified all of the United Nations core human rights treaties (United Nations Human Rights, 2008). In a four yearly Universal Periodic Review conducted by the United Nations, the Philippines is shown to demonstrate significant
efforts to address human rights abuses in the country. Despite this, the Philippines has been challenged to give greater attention, and allocate more resources to the human rights of its citizens (United Nations Human Rights, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2013). The UN has confronted the Philippine government over its low spending on social services such as housing, health and education despite an increase in its GDP (United Nations Human Rights, 2008). Other areas of concern include discrimination against women, corruption, child exploitation, worker rights and lack of prosecution of crimes. In the Philippines prostitution is primarily problematised by its opponents as a form of discrimination and sexual exploitation against women. This is the dominant discourse of feminist NGOs in the country. The most prominent of these are GABRIELA, CATW-AP and WeDPRO.

GABRIELA, formed in 1984, is a nationwide alliance of approximately two hundred women’s organisations. Its main objective is for Filipino women’s liberation from domestic and foreign oppressive forces. (GABRIELA, 2013). The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW-AP, Asia Pacific,) is a Philippine based organisation which was formed in 1983. It is made up of a network of feminist organisations working against exploitation of women and focuses particularly on prostitution and sex trafficking (CATW-AP, 2013). The human rights collective, Women’s Education, Development, Productivity and Research Organization (WeDpro), focuses on women, children, youth and communities for whom it provides gender responsive programs in the Philippines (WeDpro, 2013).

Whilst prostitution is predominantly framed by abolitionists as ‘forced prostitution’ it has also been argued that HIV/AIDS has ‘unmistakably changed the way Filipinos conceptualize prostitution’ (Law, 2000, p. 120). With the introduction of the AIDS crisis and the need for AIDS education, Australian academic and HIV/AIDS educator, Lisa Law notes that some Filipino NGO’s have begun to construct the issue of prostitution within a ‘third space’. She claims that this third space moves beyond the political/everyday life choice dualisms inherent in the conflict between abolitionists and sex worker rights advocates. This third way moves beyond ideological frameworks and enables new ways of understanding the prostitute or sex worker as an agent who makes choices within the constraints of her life circumstances

The Law

The law also works against sex trafficking in the Philippines. The many laws protecting women and children from violence make prostitution illegal in the Philippines and steps are taken to enforce the law. However, for the most part prostitution has been allowed to flourish, and largely with impunity. Thus:
The state has always adopted an ambivalent attitude toward the sex sector. On the one hand, it outlaws prostitution in its legal statutes. The act of prostitution is illegal under the penal code. On the other hand it allows licenses, through local city and municipal ordinances, the operations of beer joints, massage parlours and other establishments known to be fronts for prostitution, giving the impression that the state promotes, legitimizes and regulates prostitution (Ofreneo & Ofreneo, 1998, p. 119).

Arguably, the requirement for ‘hospitality workers’ to maintain registration cards that ensure that they do not spread infectious diseases is ‘two faced’ and a ‘mockery of the law’ (Brown, 2000, p. 196). There are, in fact, many laws, as discussed below, which prohibit the practice of prostitution, but they are randomly enforced and for the most part it is young prostituted women who are prosecuted. The Philippine National Police (PNP) are the key law enforcement agency and the law of ‘vagrancy’ is commonly imposed against prostituted women.

During one of my visits to the Kamagayan with support staff from the Welcome House in 2011 all the women suddenly disappeared from their seats in the laneways and went into hiding. Suddenly a police car roaming through the Kamagayan picked up one or two young women, whom they arrested for prostitution and took off to the police station for incarceration overnight. I was shocked by an episode in which girls were so randomly arrested. However, in this scenario the police were seen to be fulfilling their duties. Ten minutes later all was back to normal; the women were well aware of the staged nature of these arrests. Louise Brown (2000) confirms this practice: ‘Arresting a few prostitutes will not upset important figures and men of wealth and power. And, as well as all these other advantages, punishing prostitutes can win the authorities a veritable incandescence for their fight against vice’ (p. 189).

It is clear that prostituted women figure disproportionately in prosecutions relating to prostitution. There has been a remarkable lack of prosecutions of the many others in the sex trade, including the investors, managers and pimps, and despite the numerous laws that prohibit the practice. In writing about criminal abuse of women and children, Filipino criminal expert Victor Luga (2010) provides an extensive overview of the laws that have been passed to protect the rights of sexually exploited women and children. These include but are not limited to Republic Act (RA) 7610 providing stronger deterrence and special protection against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination; RA 9208 Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003; RA7658, An Act Prohibiting the Employment of Children below 15 years of Age in Public and Private Undertaking, RA

RA 9208, the Anti –Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003, is the primary law against trafficking and it closely aligns with the UN definition of human trafficking. Prosecutions under this act have been minimal, however. In 2010, the US Trafficking in Persons Report placed the Philippines in its ‘Tier 2 watch list’ because there was no indication that the Philippine government was serious in its endeavours to abate Human Trafficking. In 2012, the Philippines was taken off this watch list and placed in Tier 2. The subsequent 2013 Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP) also placed the Philippines in Tier 2. In spite of this improvement the Philippines still fails to reach the Tier 1 standards. One of the criticisms is the lack of convictions of traffickers, with the judicial system accused of hindering ‘efforts to hold trafficking offenders accountable’, and with a ‘disproportionately low number of prosecutions and convictions compared to the size of the problem’ (United States Department of State, 2013, p. 301). Notwithstanding the criticisms of the TIP Report, Victor Luga (2010) has outlined many anti-trafficking initiatives in addition to legislation that have been undertaken by the Philippine government.

Luga argues that ‘the state is giving top priority to the enactment of legislative measures and development of programs that promote the protection of women and children from all forms of violence and exploitation’ (Luga, 2010, p. 207). The Philippine Plan for Gender-Responsive Development (1995-2025) aims, amongst other things, to ‘empower women, eliminate gender stereotyping, and protect against all forms of violence, including the commoditisation of women for sexual purposes’ (Luga, 2010, p. 207). Even though this is a significant government initiative advancing the fight against trafficking, it is not as effective for women who are trafficked domestically. Questioning the impact of these plans, Sallie Yea notes:

Although the Philippines is remarkably progressive in its response to human trafficking compared with many of its Association of South East Nations (ASEAN) counterparts, it is fair to say that the government has been more successful in its efforts to curb international than domestic trafficking. The situation in Cebu certainly confirms this (Yea, 2010, p. 159).

Adequate legislation and government initiatives to prevent sex trafficking are, therefore, not the key problem in the Philippines; rather, the issue lies with law enforcement and prosecution. Faced with an overwhelming problem that is largely given assent by
society, law enforcement is sporadic in enforcing the laws and haphazard in prosecuting offenders.

**Sex Trafficking Victim Support Programs in the Philippines**

Victim support programs also work against sex trafficking. The Philippine 2003 Anti-trafficking law guarantees that provision is made for the rehabilitation and care of victims of trafficking. The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) is primarily responsible for recovery and reintegration programs for victims of trafficking. The government reported that in 2012 2,569 victims were cared for by the state. Of this number, most received ‘skills training, shelter, medical services, and legal assistance. An unknown number of these also received financial assistance to seek employment or start their own business’ (United States Department of State, 2013, p. 302). However, despite significant funds from government, there are inadequate resources to fully support those identified as victims of trafficking.

The care of trafficked women and children is, therefore, subsidised by the non-government sector and charitable organisations that make up a large percentage of services providing support to victims of trafficking. Many of these services are generic in that they respond to a wide range of needs, including those of street children, abused women and girls as well as prostituted women. Specific services for trafficked victims are rare. Good Shepherd Recovery Centre in Cebu, where I undertook my research, is one of the few services that provide long-term support and rehabilitation to trafficked women. A fuller description of the service is developed in the next chapter.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I described the array of socio-historical forces that have both shaped and served to perpetuate sex trafficking in the Philippines. Drawing on a localised paradigm enables an overview of a trade that is multifaceted and complex. Illustrating that the demand for the sex industry comes from both locals and international visitors, I highlighted the multiple actors the industry involves, including investors, managers, pimps, government officials, and the prostituted women. It is clear also, that women who are trafficked are subjected to the worst conditions in the industry when engaged in the casas, which are the most exploitative employers in the sex trade.

The forces that allow the sex trade to flourish in the Philippines include global factors such as capitalist markets that favour the wealthy and further marginalise the poor, economic policies that doubly burden women, and social and cultural norms that favour the sexual and social dominance of men. The forces working against the sex trade include the human rights organisations that campaign against it, including a
number of feminist organisations working tirelessly over decades to counter women’s subordination. In addition, the Philippine government has been a frontrunner in South East Asia in its anti-trafficking laws and programs. It is a signatory to major UN conventions and protocols concerning trafficking. Numerous government and non NGOs provide support to victims of sex trafficking through providing shelter, education and alternative employment opportunities. Despite all these efforts to combat sex trafficking at a local level, it continues to be a serious problem in the Philippines because of the uncontrollable nature of the global forces as outlined in Chapter 2.
Chapter 3
A Transformative Framework: Conceptual and Methodological Underpinnings.

Introduction

The previous two chapters have focused on what is known about sex trafficking. Chapter 1 explored the global context of sex trafficking and Chapter 2 firmly focussed on experiences in the Philippines and the socio-historical context of the sex trade. The focus in this chapter is on the conceptual framework and methods, with particular reference to ethics and reflexivity.

The primary aim of my research is to give voice to Filipino women who have been trafficked for sexual exploitation by illuminating and bringing to the fore, their experiences, understandings and insights. In privileging their voices I recognise the women as experts and prioritize their experiences in understanding the phenomenon of sex trafficking. With attention centred on the lived experience of these women, my study is necessarily qualitative as it focuses on the ‘social world and the way that world is thought about and understood’ (Cheek, 2010).

Undertaking fieldwork in a cross-cultural context and interviewing women who have experienced sexual exploitation has required close consideration of the ethical dimensions to the study. This has entailed attention to the human rights and dignity of the women and to social justice (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2011; International Federation of Social Workers, 2014; National Health and Medical Research Council & Australian Research Council, 2007). It has also required careful planning and deliberation about methods and techniques for approval by the university’s Higher Ethical Research Committee, which I will discuss in detail in a later section of this chapter. Whilst this type of study posed ethical dilemmas it also provided me with a unique opportunity to embark on transformative research that is qualitative, culturally sensitive, feminist, ethical, empowering, social-justice orientated and anti-oppressive.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first outlines the reasons for conducting the research in Cebu and tells the story of my initial introduction to the field. It also describes the agencies from which participants were drawn. The second section discusses the conceptual framework and methodological underpinnings, which include: critical feminism, a third-way feminist account of understanding sex trafficking, phenomenology, constructionism, narrative and the life course paradigm. I also discuss strategies implemented to ensure the trustworthiness of the research findings. Particular attention is given to my personal ethical journey. The third section outlines
the research design, giving attention to the research methods involving three focus groups and a series of three individual in-depth interviews. Data analysis is then addressed, including the contribution of the life course perspective as a way of understanding sex trafficking trajectories, situating their stories within a socio-historical, economic and political context. Finally, while acknowledging the limitations of the research, I assert its value and contribution to the literature on sex trafficking.

This research fieldwork was located in Cebu for both logistical and strategic reasons. My contacts with Good Shepherd Social Justice in Melbourne made it possible to link with their agencies in Cebu. Because Cebu is a place where sex trafficking flourishes, I was more readily able to access women who had been trafficked into the sex industry.

The Unfolding Research Journey

In January 2009 I made my first visit to the Philippines. This visit was part of a planned Southeast Asia ‘exposure trip’, an integral phase of the two-year Vincent Fairfax Fellowship in ethics and leadership that I undertook in 2008-2009. As a participant in this program, I was required to visit a country in Southeast Asia for one month and to explore an issue of ethical significance. Due to my background in working with women in refuges in Melbourne, I chose to explore the issue of sex trafficking in the Philippines. Through my contact with the Good Shepherd Sisters in Melbourne I was able to arrange an immersion time in Cebu with a program run by the Good Shepherd Sisters. The program operates Good Shepherd Welcome House (GSWH) in Cebu City and Good Shepherd Recovery Centre (GSRC), about a one hour drive from Cebu City.

The Good Shepherd sisters have been present in Cebu since the 1950s and their work has largely been with marginalised women and children. In response to a need for prostituted women to have a safe space and the opportunity to pursue a path out of prostitution, the Good Shepherd Sisters opened Good Shepherd Welcome House on the outskirts of the Red Light District in 2007. Good Shepherd Recovery Centre was running for a number of years prior to this and was formerly named ‘Balay Isadora’.

It was arranged that I would live for one month at the Welcome House. Because of some preconceived ideas about such a centre, I was hesitant about living at the Welcome House even though I was keen to engage with the issue and to meet the women. I imagined street-wise women toughened up by their circumstances. I pictured them surveying me with suspicion. I wondered if I would be accepted ‘on their turf’. In great contrast to my expectations I was greeted warmly by women who looked surprisingly young. I hesitate to refer to them as girls for fear of condescending or
infantilising them, but, in reality I felt like I was surrounded by adolescent high school girls who were keen to get to know me and for me to get to know them. They welcomed me as if I were family. I was struck by their young faces, their beauty, their poverty, the accompanying young babies and their sense of pride at being at the Welcome House. They greeted me with a welcome ritual and sang a song called ‘Welcome to the Family’. In my reflexive journal I reflected on my first impressions on arriving at the Welcome House:

The welcome song on arrival, the young age of the women, the connectedness around the table, the obvious lack of resources, the babies and children, the great sense of warmth and hospitality, giving all to make one feel welcome, the simplicity of life (Reflexive Journal, 2/02/09).

I was deeply moved by this welcome, which was in contrast to how I had imagined it. It challenged my preconceived ideas about what such a place would be like. In Australia my limited encounters with prostituted women gave the impression that these women were toughened up, slightly aggressive and defensive about their work and hostile to outsiders. This was in stark contrast to my experience at the Welcome House. The house itself was a simple building with a shared eating space and a few adjoining rooms. There was no running water in the building, and water was used sparingly. Despite the lack of resources there was a homelike atmosphere; food was basic but shared; discussions around the table were constant and a small livelihood project in which women made lanyards was also operating.

It struck me very forcefully how important this space was for these young women; it was a haven. During that month I joined the women in their activities, including lanyard making, watching movies, eating, singing, dancing and going on outings. I joined in their health-related educational sessions and other group activities. At the same time, I witnessed their deep sadness, their shame, their deprivations and their desire to change their circumstances. I was deeply moved that although I was only there for a short time, the women began to trust me enough to share their stores with me.

In addition to living at the Welcome House and being part of the day-to-day activities, the social workers invited me to join them in their evening outreach program, which runs every evening all year round. The Welcome House has a strong commitment to outreach to those in the Red Light District of Cebu. A unique feature of this program is the engagement of formerly trafficked women into community outreach. During that first one month visit to Cebu I sometimes accompanied the outreach workers to the Kamagayan and local bars. For safety reasons the outreach workers at
the Good Shepherd Welcome House are accompanied by two men from the Divine Word Missionaries religious congregation. This congregation is also committed to supporting trafficked women and eradicating sex trafficking. Each evening they visit the Red Light District, providing pastoral care, food and medical supplies. This combined outreach team has a strong presence in the Red Light District and its adjoining streets and bars as well as the port areas, and is dedicated to assisting the women who work there and to informing them of possible ways to exit their situation. As most of the activity happens at night, outreach begins mid-evening and often continues into the early hours of the morning.

When accompanying the outreach team, I was given very precise detail about the role. This included: being a friendly face for anyone in the area who wanted to engage in a chat, including pimps, watchers and Mama Sans (which challenged every bone in my body, because in being friendly to them, I felt that I would be condoning their exploitation of the women. I was to learn that this was an overly simple analysis of a complex web of oppression); never forcing anyone to engage in a conversation; offering medical supplies, including condoms; and informing young women of the Welcome House and its location. I was directed never to bring a camera, never to enter any establishment alone and never to intervene in transactions taking place between women and their managers or customers.

I was astounded at the reception that the team was given upon entering the Red Light District. I had expected to encounter a resistance to our presence but this was not the case. Many young women approached us to chat. Some had been at the Welcome House earlier that day, and some expressed their desire to exit their situation, and others were grateful for the opportunity to engage with the team. It was clear that the outreach team were familiar to many people in the area. This presence was not threatening and the team appeared to be welcomed, even by the pimps and other associates.

There was a sense of trust in the team. One of the outreach workers told me that it had taken years to build this trust. It struck me that this approach to the women’s welfare was in stark contrast to rescue operations described by the women. Some women who were visited in the Kamagayan eventually came to the Welcome House seeking safe accommodation and assistance. One woman told me that at first she had been unsure of whether to trust the outreach team. She thought they might also want to traffic her. However, after visits by the team night after night, she built up a relationship of trust with them, eventually deciding to make her way to the Welcome House.

This initial one month experience of living at the Welcome House provided the impetus for me to undertake research that could shed light on the sex trafficking
experience and that would also offer an opportunity for these young women to share their stories. The women had expressed their appreciation for my interest in them and their stories and I felt I had built up a good rapport with them and the staff.

I also visited Good Shepherd Recovery Centre (GSRC), which provides a more-intensive rehabilitation program than that provided by the Good Shepherd Welcome House. Once again, my first visit to the centre broke down all preconceived ideas I had about these women. On arrival I was greeted by warm, welcoming young women who were wearing traditional Filipino dress. They had prepared a welcome dance for me and once again I was overcome by their generous hospitality despite their obvious simple living. The program manager of GSRC, Sister Deena was initially hesitant about my visit. She did not want to expose the young women to strangers and explained to me that ‘the centre is like an intensive care unit; each woman is very fragile and needs special care’. My visit was only made possible through the recommendation from staff at the Welcome House who assured Sister Deena that I was trustworthy and had built up a good rapport with the women at the Welcome House.

The women at GSRC are permanent residents. Most of the young women who reside there have been clients of the Welcome House and have made the decision to enter the recovery program. Others have been referred through other agencies. The centre has been purposefully located at a distance from the city to allow the women the space they require. They have a tight schedule; some attend school and others attend skills training classes. In addition to their educational and vocational needs, all the women are engaged in therapeutic counselling and rehabilitation. The accommodation is simple, with dormitory style rooms and shared bathrooms. Each woman undertakes chores and contributes to the overall running of the house. The women eat together in the mornings and evenings. There are small recreation areas and a garden space for women to relax in.

Once again I was moved by these women who yearned for a better life. On the other hand, I found myself wondering about the impact such a routine existence would have on the lives of women who had experienced mostly disorganised and unregulated lifestyles. The women experienced safety and stability, but I wondered whether such a program would allow women to flourish or perhaps stifle some who felt that they could not fit the mould.

From this context, In October 2009, I ran a workshop on ‘Giving Voice to trafficked Women’ at the Beijing +15 NGO conference in Manila (Reed, 2009). I was accompanied by two formerly trafficked women whom I met at the Welcome House who agreed to share part of their stories at the workshop. These women expressed their gratitude at having had the opportunity to share their stories in a semi-public
They felt that they were acknowledged, respected and listened to. I felt, more than ever, convinced that research which gave women a chance to share their stories could be transformational in that the women would be given the opportunity to have their voices heard and as a result, new insights would be gained about the experience of sex trafficking.

Convinced of the value of such research, I returned to Cebu in November 2010, to scope out the possibility of undertaking PhD research. I met with the program managers of Good Shepherd Welcome House (GSWH) and Good Shepherd Recovery Centre (GSRC) and consulted them about possible research that would benefit the two agencies. They both felt that research that highlighted the women’s voices would be valuable and that such research could inform their own programs. They expressed appreciation of my interest and the rapport that I had with the women. I was aware that the opportunity to undertake research with these women was a privilege.

Numerous writings indicate that one of the difficulties in undertaking research with trafficked women has been the access to the women. The presence of ‘gatekeepers’ has meant that researchers are often not given right of entry to the trafficked women’s daily environment (Bosworth, Hoyle, & Dempsey, 2011; Brunovskis & Surtees, 2010; Gozdziak, 2008; Zhang, 2009). In my case, I felt respected and trusted to undertake the research. With this trust came a responsibility to undertake ethical research and to deliberate over the methodology and methods as it is a responsibility of qualitative researchers to ensure methodological and ethical congruence (Avis, 2003; Carter & Little, 2007; Liamputtong, 2013; D. Silverman, 2013).

**Conceptual Framework and Methodology**

*Qualitative Inquiry*

Underpinning this research is my belief that women who have been trafficked for sexual exploitation have expert knowledge about the phenomenon. I chose to undertake qualitative research because it is an appropriate methodology for addressing my research question and its concerns with the women’s experiences and the meanings they attach to them. Unlike positivist approaches to research that are concerned with ‘sensory and rule governed forms of scientific method’ (Avis, 2003, p. 996), the qualitative approach is aimed at bringing to the fore human subjectivity and an ‘insider view’. Arguably, qualitative research is highly appropriate when researching in a cross-cultural context as it aims to ‘capture lived experiences of the social world and the meanings people give these experiences from their own perspective’ (Corti &
There are three key elements to my qualitative approach. These are constructionism, phenomenology and narrative.

Constructionism
A theoretical concept informing this research is the notion of constructionism. Constructionism rejects the notion that knowledge is objective and stresses that it is created through interactions. Researcher Michael Crotty (1998, p. 42) describes constructionism as ‘meanings constructed by humans as they engage in the world’. A constructionist epistemology is one in which the construction of meaning by the individual, in relationship to the world, is paramount. In adopting this epistemology, the importance of the women’s individual experience and perspectives is highlighted. Researcher Catherine Riessman explains the dynamic of constructivism in storytelling as:

Accounts of life events are always versions of reality, rather than objective and impartial descriptions of it. Further, the meaning of events is not static, but is constantly reworked as new events and discontinuities must be integrated into the story of one’s life. Meaning is constructed in context, for the same event, can take on different meanings depending on the conditions under which it is remembered. Thus individuals actively engage in the ‘creation of reality’ in their tellings and retellings, constructing their worlds and themselves through interpretation (Riessman, 1989, p. 744).

In line with this approach, a critical feminist epistemology questions traditional understandings of knowledge and concerns itself with whose knowledge is being considered. Critical feminist epistemology also considers the context and situation as crucial in understanding knowledge construction. A post-modern feminism is ‘critical of universalistic grand theories and focuses instead on multiple subjectivities, pluralities, and identities’ (Guerrero, 1997, p. 3). Hence, both a critical feminist epistemology and a constructionist epistemology stress the notion of knowledge being constructed by people in relation to the world in which they live (Flood, 2010). It is in this sense that I engage with a narrative methodology.

A Phenomenological Approach
In keeping with transformative research and complementing the critical feminist approach, I embrace a phenomenological approach that asserts that ‘truth and
understandings emerge from people’s life experiences’ (Byrne, 2001, p. 830). Adopting a Heideggarian approach known as the interpretivist tradition of phenomenology, I focus on the meanings of people’s ‘lived’ experiences and how they influenced the future choices they made (Clarke, 2009; Flood, 2010; Mapp, 2008). This is appropriate for this study because the focus is on the lived experience of women who have been trafficked. In phenomenological research the focus is on the ‘specific’ rather than the general. The research sample is, therefore, relatively small, with emphasis on individual accounts (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006). The women’s narratives provide knowledge into the day-to-day workings of the trafficking phenomenon, and their insights challenge taken-for-granted assumptions and conventional wisdom, providing new perspectives to policy makers and service providers.

Psychotherapist and researcher Linda Finlay offers deep insight and validation to the value of phenomenological research:

Phenomenological research is potentially transformative for both researcher and participant. It offers individuals the opportunity to be witnessed in their experience and allows them to ‘give voice’ to what they are going through. It also opens new possibilities for both researcher and researched to make sense of the experience in focus (Finlay, 2011, p. 10 emphasis in original)

**Narrative Methodology**

At the heart of my research is the notion of ‘giving voice’ to trafficked women. Narrative, as a form of inquiry, is an appropriate methodology for allowing the women to reflect on their experiences and enrich their narratives. Understanding that narratives are not factual accounts but, rather, the construction of meaning behind the experience (Elliot, 2005), I embrace a narrative methodology. The use of narrative also provides an opportunity for participants to situate their experience within a cultural and social context, providing further insight into the human trafficking phenomenon. In her study of prostitution and sex trafficking in Cambodia, researcher Wendy Freed (2004) interviewed young women about their experiences of being prostituted and the meaning they made from that. Drawing on a narrative methodology she reflects that:

What is the meaning of ‘the story’ and of telling one’s story?
The stories reflect what the woman and adolescent girls are able to communicate about their experiences. The ambiguities, uncertainties, denials, omissions, distortions, and historical
inaccuracies must be understood as an important communication in the telling. It is the challenge to the listener to sort out the many layers of truths (W. Freed, 2004, p. 137).

Thus adopting a narrative approach allows for multiple stories and layers of truth and requires me as the researcher to listen for what is being said and what is not being said. My desire to have the women tell their stories was also coupled with the fact that I was aware of the subjugation of women’s knowledge. As illustrated in the literature review, women’s voices have generally been absent from the dominant paradigms. Adopting a transformative critical feminist approach acknowledges that gap and prioritises women’s experience (B. Pratt & Loizos, 1992), which a narrative approach can help effect.

**Critical Feminism**

Critical feminism is also foundational to my research. As this study is concerned with women’s experiences, a feminist approach is essential in that it emphasises the importance of the women’s voices, ‘making the invisible visible... rendering the trivial important, putting the spotlight on women as competent actors, understanding women as subjects in their own right’ (Reinharz, 1992, p. 248).

Key to a critical feminist approach is the rejection of gender essentialism, which has been described as ‘the notion that a unitary, “essential” women’s experience can be isolated and described independently of race, class, sexual orientation, and other realities of experience’ (Harris, 1990, p. 585). Such a notion is seen to silence some women and privilege others. One suggestion for counteracting such essentialism is to engage in storytelling, enabling often-silenced voices to be heard (Harris, 1990), a core method I employ in this research.

Importantly, critical feminist research focuses not only on gender but also on sources of social, structural and cultural inequity (Ackerly, Stern, & True, 2006; Berger Gluck & Patai, 1991). This is particularly significant because Filipino feminism traditionally critiques oppression through the intersection of gender, race, class and cultural norms (Arnado, 2011; Noelle Leslie Dela Cruz & Peracullo, 2011) and, as described in the previous chapter, Filipino feminists have problematized sex trafficking in various ways; they critique women’s subordination but they also raise issues of race, economic and class oppression.

The concept of intersectionality, discussed in Chapter 1 as part of understanding ‘third way’ feminism, significantly influences my methodology. The essence of intersectionality can be usefully defined in the following way, that is,
in a society marked my multiple systems of domination (based on ‘race’, gender and class among others), individuals experiences are not shaped by single identities or locations (as a woman or a black person) but that the experience of each is also marked by other social divisions. Crucially, it [intersectionality] recognises that some women’s experiences are marked by multiple forms of oppression, and that single categories can be further broken down so that ‘women’ (for example) can be situated in powerful/less ways to one another (Thiara & Gill, 2010, p. 38).

A focus on the intersectorial nature of sex trafficking examines the issue not only of women in relation to gender oppression, but also to social divisions of class, race, sexuality, disability and other forms of oppression (Laing & Humphreys, 2013). As my research was situated in the Philippines, I wanted to embrace the long tradition of feminism in the Philippines, which has been characterised as ‘a bifurcated view of Western and Third World Feminist Perspectives’ (Arnado, 2011, p. 8).

Feminist academics outline three principles of feminist research: first, that research should contribute to women’s liberation through producing knowledge that can be used by women themselves; second, that research methods adopted should not be oppressive; and third, that research should continually develop a feminist critical perspective that questions the dominant tradition (Acker, Barry, & Esseveld, 1983). These principles are powerfully reinforced by feminist scholar, Patricia Maguire (1987):

Feminist Research also aims to transform and empower women. There is consensus among feminist scholars and researchers that research should move beyond knowledge for its own sake. The goal is to generate knowledge about women that will contribute to their liberation and empowerment. Research from this perspective becomes an instrument towards improving women’s daily lives and influencing public policies and opinion (Maguire, 1987, p. 121).

In the light of these insights, I position this research within a ‘transformative critical feminist framework’. Drawing on the writings of researcher, Donna Mertens (2008), I adopted the following transformative research principles: positioning myself as the learner within the community where I undertook the research; examining my own identity in the context of racism and privilege; investigating the root causes of oppression and contributing to action that will further the human rights of those in the
research. My adoption of these principles is illustrated in my discussion on the ethical dimensions of the research later in the chapter.

A Third Way Feminist Account for Understanding Sex Trafficking
I consider that a third-way feminist understanding of sex trafficking is in harmony with a critical feminist approach in that it rejects gender essentialism and considers not only gender oppression but multiple oppressions such as class and age. A focus on feminism and sex trafficking has resulted in ideological debates about prostitution, victimisation and agency. This has resulted in a theoretical impasse that has subsequently prevented effective policy decisions and practical interventions for women experiencing trafficking. There has been too much time and energy spent on the debate rather than focusing on practical initiatives. I want to move beyond those debates in order to respond to the human rights violations being experienced by these women.

A third-way feminist account of trafficking for sex work is outlined by Shelley Cavalieri (2011) and referred to in Chapter 1. This third way provides a useful framework for understanding the complexity of sex trafficking and moves beyond ideological clashes that prevent effective support and practical outcomes for women who have been trafficked. Cavalieri (2011) argues that this new approach brings out the best aspects of ‘dominance feminism’ and ‘liberal feminism’, and rejects unilateral solutions.

Dominance feminism extends its critique too far, compulsorily drawing all women into its purview, and offering abolition as its singular solution predicated solely on a stunted view of trafficking. Feminists focused on sex worker rights, in contrast, insightfully leverage liberal thought to appreciate the condition of individual women’s lives and place women’s decisions within a personal context; they look to post-structuralism to help construct feminism cognizant of individual difference. But they neglect the broader social context in which individual women make private life choices, which is a crucial element of a feminist social critique (Cavalieri, 2011, p. 1416).

Cavalieri calls for a third-way feminist account and names four central tenets, which she asserts provide a harmonised feminist account. The first tenet is to understand sex trafficking as a system of oppression in which individuals make choices. This aligns well with the life course paradigm as it allows for a study of the personal biographical story alongside the socio-historical, economic and political environment. Second, a
third-way feminist account explains and attempts to counteract multiple forms of oppression, including racism, classism and colonial privilege without subsuming particularised experiences of individual women, and while also reflecting the intersectional nature of oppression as outlined above. Third, space is provided for individual women to narrate their own trafficking story, name their own experience of oppression and thus challenge stereotypical accounts. Fourth, this feminist account allows for agency even under oppression, asserting women’s ability to stand in opposition to oppression.

This ‘third-way’ provides a useful path to understanding and conceptualising prostitution and its relationship to sex trafficking and is consistent with the feminist methodology I adopt in my research and in my social work approach, and it is consistent with my own world-view stemming from a strong and motivating sense of social justice.

In line with this approach, a critical feminist epistemology questions traditional understandings of knowledge and concerns itself with whose knowledge is being considered. Critical feminist epistemology also considers the context and situation as crucial in understanding knowledge construction. A post-modern feminism is ‘critical of universalistic grand theories and focuses instead on multiple subjectivities, pluralities, and identities’ (Guerrero, 1997, p. 3). Hence, both a critical feminist epistemology and a constructionist epistemology stress the notion of knowledge being constructed by people in relation to the world in which they live (Flood, 2010). It is in this sense that I engage with a narrative methodology.

The Life Course Paradigm and Understanding Sex Trafficking Trajectories

The sex trafficking phenomenon can be more fully explored by utilising the life course paradigm, which situates the life trajectory within social, historical and political contexts. Commonly interchanged with the terms ‘life course theory, life course framework and life course perspective (Alwin, 2012), I utilise the life course paradigm in the same way that I utilise the sex trafficking paradigms outlined in Chapter 1. I use the term life course paradigm to indicate a set of related ideas or ways of viewing and thinking about sex trafficking.

First formulated and articulated by sociologist Glen Elder Jr in the late 1960s, the life course is viewed as a way of understanding the relationship between a person’s biography and social context. Elder’s predominant focus on human development and life span psychology drew criticism from fellow sociologists that the life course perspective neglected the role of the social environment (Dewilde, 2003). However, Sociologist Karl Mayer (2003) argues that there has been significant development over
the years in understandings of the life course and he makes a clear distinction between life span psychology and life course sociology, arguing that while life span psychology focuses on genetic and functional capacities and behaviour, life course sociology ‘aims to understand the evolution of life courses primarily as the outcome of institutional regulation and social structural forces’ (Mayer, 2003, p. 463).

Over the decades, the notion of life course has developed into a multidisciplinary tool for understanding human lives. It is particularly useful when studying the phenomenon of human trafficking because it allows for both a study of the personal, biographical story alongside the social, historical, economic and political environment. In this respect it offers a study of sex trafficking nuanced accounts that take into consideration both personal and political factors and allow for a bridging of the micro and macro worlds (Hutchison, 2005).

The life course paradigm places importance on what the individual describes as significant events and life transitions. It enables participants to emphasize certain events and situations that they see as integral to their life course. As Hutchison (2005) states, ‘because gender, culture, social class and other types of diversity are considered a part of the story line, the narrative approach, like the life course perspective, can generate culturally sensitive practice’ (p. 150). Life course theory places the person within an historical, social, economic and political context (Elder & Giele, 2009), acknowledging the many influences on a person’s life, including life choices within that context.

In analysing the narratives of those who have experienced the phenomenon of trafficking, the life course paradigm allows for an understanding from the personal, socio-economic, political and historical realm. This provides insights into life course trajectories and highlights both the limitations and the opportunities individuals encounter across the life course and contributes to an understanding of how a trafficking trajectory can become part of one’s life course history.

Interpreting participant’s life-history narratives through the lens of the Life Course allows for a breadth of understanding in relation to the participant’s life context. Elizabeth Hutchison, a social worker and a key proponent of the life course perspective, sees the life course approach as emphasising life stories as they unfold over time and, therefore, it is particularly appropriate for narrative approaches (Hutchison, 2005). This fits particularly well with my own research, and for participants invited to share their childhood and adolescent narratives. The life course perspective has five basic principles or themes: life span development; agency; time and place; timing and linked lives.
The first principle of the life course perspective, life span development, is based on the notion that throughout one’s life course, one is influenced by earlier events and happenings. Therefore, one does not live life without reference to earlier contexts. Hence, in relation to understanding a person’s experience of being trafficked, it is important to take into consideration earlier events and contexts in life that may have impacted or contributed to the human trafficking experience. An exploration of the interplay between individual context and the context within the wider socio/economic and political realm provides greater insight into circumstances over the life span – a key feature of the life course perspective. Michael Benson, a sociologist in criminology and advocate of life course theory highlights the strong relationship between the micro and macro worlds over the life span.

Human development in the twentieth century cannot be understood in isolation from this ever changing social environment. To ignore social and historical change is to engage in a perverse and blinding form of tunnel vision (Benson, 2002, p. 8).

Other scholars have also acknowledged that it is through the interweaving of the micro and macro factors that insight into the life trajectories of people can be gained (Abu Ali & Al-Bahar, 2011; Elder, 1994; Reid, 2012).

The second principle of the life course perspective is human agency. I want to be very clear about my use of the term ‘agency’ as the use of the term in relation to sex trafficking and prostitution has been contentious amongst feminists. In applying the term agency to describe women’s behaviour in this research, I do not wish to understate the brutality and power that traffickers exercise over women who are vulnerable; nor do I want to be seen as complicit with the proponents of liberal individualism by focusing on autonomous choices. Rather, I adopt the term agency as outlined by social worker and life course advocate Elizabeth Hutchison (2011, p. 27); agency is understood as ‘independent action to cope with difficulties imposed by the rich and the powerful’. Whilst acknowledging the constrained social and structural choices in any given time and place, Hutchinson focuses on the strengths and resilience of the human person, arguing that they exercise agency when they show ingenuity in coping, and when they resist oppression. This understanding of agency is also in line with the third-way feminist understanding of sex trafficking. As outlined earlier in the chapter, a key tenet of the third-way is to recognise that sex trafficking is a system of oppression in which women make choices.

Agency has been understood also as an individual’s ability to make life choices within the constraints or parameters of one’s life context (Elder Jr & Johnson, 2002). In
this regard, the question is not only how one is shaped by the environment, but how one intentionally makes choices that alter their life course. The human trafficking experience is certainly one in which the individual is victimised, but within that context, elements of human agency can also be shown by the victim. Benjamin Buckland (2008), author and researcher on trafficking argues that public discourse tends to portray trafficked women and children as helpless and having no ambition. This, he argues, results in victim stereotyping and inadequate anti-trafficking policies that posit women and children as victims and helpless; thus the dominant focus on the victim can result in inappropriate public policy responses and with the effect of denying agency to trafficked persons, ignoring the reasons for which many choose to leave their homes (Buckland, 2008).

The third principle, time and place, acknowledges that an individual is born at a certain time in history and within a specific geographical place. This notion of contextualisation is paramount to understanding how one experiences the life course. It is very relevant when exploring the human trafficking phenomenon because there are certain factors in time and place that make one more vulnerable to human trafficking. For example, one’s economic circumstances in childhood can impact employment opportunities in later life.

The fourth principle of the life course perspective places emphasis on timing. This is significant in that it acknowledges that the timing of events or transitions in a person’s life influences the ways they respond and develop over their life span. For example, in the case of human trafficking, the earlier that one is trafficked within their life, the more likely it is to impact on their future growth and development (Abu Ali & Al-Bahar, 2011; Finkelhor, 1995; Lehti & Aromaa, 2006; Siegel & Williams, 2003).

Finally, the life course perspective acknowledges the principle of linked lives. This principle recognises the influence of others in one’s own life course, in that what happens to others, particularly those closest to us, has an impact on our life also. For example, a mother may go overseas to work; this directly impacts on her life course and it also impacts on the life course of the children and spouse and others in direct relationship to her. In gaining insights into a woman’s trafficking story, it is important to study interpersonal relationships.

Some proponents of the life course perspective prefer to call it a paradigm because it is an evolving way of thinking about the life span. Life course analysis does not have a prescribed formula of application; rather it is an evolving paradigm in which one can gain insights into the life course and a person’s cumulative advantage or disadvantage throughout their life. In applying these five principles to the life course,
Elder (1998) defines five key concepts that highlight the unique nature of the life span: cohorts, trajectories, transitions, turning points and life events.

The concept of ‘cohorts’ relates to particular groups of individuals born at a certain time in history and within a certain place. Those born in a particular year are members of a birth cohort. A cohort has been defined as ‘a group of persons who were born at the same historical time and who experience particular social changes within a given culture in the same sequence and at the same age’ (Hutchison, 2011, p. 11). One’s cohort can help explain or give insight into a person’s life opportunities or possible disadvantages in life. Participants in my research belong to a particular cohort, which will be described in the introduction to Part Two of the thesis. Analysis of a particular cohort provides insights into possible constraints within life, but also life opportunities.

The notion of ‘life trajectories’ is another key concept within life course theory. Life trajectories refer to patterns of stability and change throughout a person’s life. These include work trajectory, education trajectory and health trajectory amongst others. Studying the trafficking trajectory within the life course offers a useful way of understanding the human trafficking phenomenon as experienced by individuals.

The concept, ‘transitions’ is also pertinent in the life course perspective. Transitions refer to changes in states that take place in short spaces throughout life (Elder Jr & Johnson, 2002). It is proposed that within the life span a woman experiences a number of transitions in roles and status, for example, the transition from being an only child to being an older sister. In the case of some of the women in my study, there were transitions from being a dependent daughter to an independent carer of siblings. Transitions are different from turning points in that they do not change the direction of one’s life.

‘Turning points’ in the life course perspective is a concept concerning a substantial change in a person’s life, whether viewed subjectively or objectively, for example, a person relocating to another household. This may have a significant impact on how they view themselves and the world from that point on. An example from this research is when a woman was told as a child that she was born out of wedlock. This was considered a turning point as the implication of this in Philippine society was a lowering of status in the eyes of the community, and a resultant, substantial change to the course of her life.

Life events is the final concept of the life course perspective and refers to significant occurrences that involve a relatively abrupt change in a person’s life that results in a change that has long lasting effects. For example, the sudden death of a parent, as experienced by more than one woman in my research cohort, may result in
long-term fears of abandonment or a desire for security. It is important to note that an individual may consider some events in their lives as insignificant whereas other events may be life-changing for them. The impact of transitions and events varies from person to person. This is where life course theory acknowledges different personal traits and characteristics, and posits that the narrative expressed by the participants will provide insights into their significant, life-changing events.

Reference to the life course paradigm in relation to sex trafficking has distinct advantages. First, it applies a multi-dimensional framework for exploring the complexity of human development. Second, it provides insight into unique issues that individuals experience within particular communities and historical periods, hence providing a context in which one may be vulnerable to human trafficking. Third, it recognises life stages, not so much in relation to age, but to the significance of events from birth to full maturation which may not fit neatly into age-graded theories of development.

To sum up the methodological underpinnings of my research: the approaches outlined above emerged from my initial experience of spending time with trafficked women in an informal capacity. During this time I came to an awareness that the telling of their stories was crucial for enhancing knowledge about sex trafficking and also for giving women the opportunity to give voice to their experience and to express their needs.

**Ethics**

Robust qualitative research is judged on its trustworthiness, at times considered the equivalent of ‘rigour’ (Liamputtong, 2013; Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2008):

> The basic issue in relation to trustworthiness is simple: how can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of? What arguments can be mounted, what criteria invoked, what question asked, that would be persuasive of this issue? (Lincoln & Guba, 1999, p. 398)

In attending to the issue of trustworthiness, I undertook to ensure researcher reflexivity throughout the whole research process and gave careful attention to the ethical dimensions of this study. The following section provides an overview of the challenging ethical journey that I undertook.

This study has raised numerous ethical issues, not the least being research about a ‘vulnerable’ population and the cross-cultural dimension to the project. I refer to the research process in this project as an ethical journey because of its iterative nature.
Prior to beginning my research I experienced three significant phases in my ethical journey. The first involved a personal interrogation of my ethical position in relation to the research; the second phase consisted of consulting the relevant national and international guidelines on ethical research with human participants; and the third phase involved the development of a strong ethical argument for my research in order to gain clearance from the RMIT University Human Research Ethics Committee.

**Ethics – Phase One**

The first phase of my ethical journey concerned a personal interrogation of my own ethical position in relation to cross-cultural research. My initial reluctance to undertake research about sex trafficking in the Philippines was on account of my position as a privileged Westerner and as a religious sister in the Catholic Church. Prior to my fieldwork, a crisis of legitimacy was brought about by my reading of post-colonial feminist writers who raise a range of ethical and methodological issues concerning power and privilege, knowledge production, data collection and dissemination of findings (Mohanty, 2003; Smith, 1999; Spivack & Harasym, 1990; Tuhiwai Smith, 2007). This crisis was further exacerbated by human trafficking literature that cautioned about research with women who had been trafficked for sex on account of their vulnerability and the dangers of misrepresentation of their situation (Agustin, 2005; Bosworth et al., 2011; Cwikel & Hoban, 2005; Doezema, 2001; Fontes, 2004; Kempadoo, 2005). Confronted with these two major issues, I deliberated over both my role in the research and the research design through a focus on post-colonial writings critiquing white privilege which also encapsulated for me the issue of privilege by virtue of being a religious sister.

With regard to post-colonial critiques, my main concern was primarily due to the fact that as an ‘outsider’ I could be seen as contributing to the oppression of participants in the research. Post-colonial theorists warn Western researchers about perpetuating the myth of white supremacy through undertaking research in the Global South. Linked to European imperialism and colonialism, the term research is considered a ‘dirty word in the indigenous [sic] world’s vocabulary’ (Smith, 1999, p. 1). Post-colonial theorists question power and privilege and how it so often goes unquestioned.

The notion of ‘unproblematised privilege’ is discussed by a number of authors who call on researchers to acknowledge white privilege and to attend to this issue throughout their research (Cousin, 2010; Milner, 2007; Pease, 2010; Quinn, 2003). In attending to my own position in terms of privilege I found the following authors reflections very helpful. Social work academic, Bob Pease (2010) draws attention to
ways that white privilege is prevalent and in most instances, unconsciously so. He encourages those of white privilege to critically reflect on their own positions. Significantly, Pease argues that one should use privilege to work toward social justice and not abuse the power of privilege:

Perhaps one of the most damaging acts of privilege is the privilege of doing nothing, or of not speaking out about injustice. Privileged group members can decide to ignore the struggles of the oppressed… which may be one of the greatest abuses of privilege (Pease, 2010, p. 31).

Likewise, educational researcher, Richard Milner (2007) highlights that ‘the dominant and oppressive perspective is that white people, their beliefs, experiences and epistemologies are often viewed as the norm’ (p. 389). He calls for a ‘racial and cultural’ consciousness whereby the researcher is aware of their racial position and cultural ways of knowing:

I do not believe that researchers must come from the racial or cultural community under study to conduct research in, with, and about that community. It seems that researchers instead should be actively engaged, thoughtful and forthright regarding tensions that can surface when conducting research where issues of race and culture are concerned (Milner, 2007, p. 388).

Similarly, political philosopher Sonia Kruks (2005) addresses the question of how socially privileged white feminists should address their privilege:

Rather than investing oneself in the more self-referential task of disclosing the subtle benefits that accrue from one’s personal privilege and struggling to renounce them, it may be preferable to acknowledge them but then to act from one’s privileged location, to deploy one’s privilege as effectively as possible, to endeavour to use it well (Kruks, 2005, p. 186).

I am encouraged by Sonia Kruks stance and that of Canadian researchers Meredith Ralston and Edna Keeble (2009) who, in undertaking research about prostitution in the Philippines, assert their position on account of their ethical responsibility to work against inequality. They argue that ‘privilege should not preclude action’ (p. 183) and contend that the theoretical positions of post-colonial and feminist writings can result in no action whatsoever. They also claim that an overarching theory that posits no form of practice culminates in ‘analysis paralyses’ (p. 23), resulting in apathy about injustice:

We point out that far too many academic feminists in the West, even those who have emigrated from the post-colonial South,
take themselves out of the possibility of creating change of any sort because of their theoretical pronouncements. Although their goals are laudable - not wanting to be “elitist” by appropriating voice or appearing to be the “expert” they inadvertently end up shunning any sort of action and thus allowing inequalities to perpetuate (Ralston & Keeble, 2009, p. 15).

Despite these criticisms, Ralston and Keeble also acknowledge the value and insights of post-colonial theorists and encourage conversation and dialogue so that those who have the resources and capacity to make a difference can work with those who experience oppression. They draw attention to the work of academic Ilan Kapoor (2004) who, in response to post-colonial critiques of development research has made suggestions for a practical research stance. These include: learning from below, unlearning one’s privilege, acknowledging complicity, and being hyper self-reflexive (Kapoor, 2004, pp. 641-643). This stance is embraced by Ralston and Keeble who call for a ‘global humanist feminism’ in which ‘we have responsibilities to others not in our own circles, by virtue of their humanity and that we respect the diversity of all peoples’ (Ralston & Keeble, 2009, p. 179). Calling for world citizenship, the authors acclaim John Tomlinson’s position, that:

### Being a citizen of the world

Being a citizen of the world means having a cultural disposition which is not limited to the concerns of the immediate locality, but which recognises global belonging, involvement and responsibility and can integrate these broader concerns into everyday life practices… the globally transformative action of individuals within their situated localities is dependent on the cultivation of a specific cultural disposition - a ‘set towards the world’… the most important change that people can make is to change their way of looking at the world (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 185).

I was encouraged by the wisdom of those quoted above to act and to speak rather than to remain silent through fear of offending.

It is within this context that I assert my own position within the research. Recognising my own position of privilege as a white, western woman who is well-educated and well-resourced to undertake the research, I am committed to reflexivity, whereby I critically reflect on my own position and where I stand in terms of class, gender and race (Pease, 2010). My desire was to pave a way in which my research was both non-imperialist and empowering for the women. I was determined to do this...
by establishing a relationship of trust with the women by a process whereby I recognised them as experts in knowledge about sex trafficking. This meant questioning my own perceptions and ideas about sex trafficking and privileging the women’s experiences and knowledge. These issues are taken up in a more detailed discussion on reflexivity later in this chapter.

**Ethics – Phase Two**

The second phase of my research journey was consulting the relevant guidelines on ethical research with human beings, and with a particular focus on trafficked women. A significant sample of literature suggested caution taken when undertaking research with women who had been trafficked, and the participants of this research have been trafficked into the sex trade and, therefore, have particular needs and vulnerabilities.

The foundational starting point for this phase of the research was to consult the principles outlined by the World Health Organisation (WHO), which provide recommendations in relation to interviewing trafficked women. These include: Do no harm, know your subject and assess the risks, prepare referral information, adequately select and prepare interpreters and co-workers, ensure anonymity and confidentiality, get informed consent, listen to and respect each woman’s assessment of her situation and the risks to her safety, do not retraumatise a woman, be prepared for emergency intervention and put information collected to good use (Zimmerman & Watts, 2003).

In response to these recommendations I devised a matrix that outlines in depth, the ways I would attend to and implement these recommendations in my research (See Appendix 5 and Appendix 6). In addition, I consulted the Australian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics (2010) and also the National Statement of Ethical Conduct in Human Research (National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Research Council, & Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee, 2007 - Updated December 2013), which focuses on four key values: respect for human beings; research merit and integrity; justice and beneficence. The more I focused on the research itself, new ethical issues continued to emerge, reminding me of the sensitivity required when working with this ‘vulnerable’ group (Beyrer & Stachowiak, 2003; Choo, Jang, & Choi, 2010; Cwikel & Hoban, 2005; Farley, 2006).

In her studies on researching the vulnerable, anthropologist and cross-cultural researcher Pranee Liamputtong (2007) points out that the definition of vulnerable is problematic due to the fact that it is socially constructed. However, in qualifying her understanding of ‘vulnerable’, she draws on several definitions that include the notions of diminished autonomy, increased susceptibility to adverse health outcomes, poverty, disenfranchisement and stigmatisation. In addition, Liamputtong (2007), drawing on the
work of Wiebel (1990), describes groups of people who are considered ‘hidden populations’ or ‘hard-to-reach’. In this group she includes drug users, gang members and, in particular, sex workers. I contend that women trafficked for sexual exploitation are a hidden population and may experience all or some of the notions of vulnerability outlined by Liamputtong (2007).

My own experience as a social worker and a Sister of Mercy also enabled me to understand the vulnerability and marginalisation of the women I met in the Philippines. My experience working in a refuge with women who were victims of family violence heightened my sensitivity to the many sources of deprivation and marginalisation that they experienced. Conscious of a socially constructed pathologising that tends to ‘blame the victim’, I wanted to ensure that I didn’t focus on the individuals shortcomings, but, on the oppression they experienced on account of their gender, class and sexual exploitation. I was also aware of the possible feelings of stigmatisation that they might have experienced as a result of that exploitation and of the economic and health deprivation that so many of these women endured throughout their lives. As a result, my research design reflects sensitivity to all of these factors.

Ethics – Phase Three
Phase three of my ethical journey involved developing a strong ethical argument for my research in order to gain ethical clearance from the RMIT University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). This was not an easy task given the sensitive nature of the research. Although my ethics application was extensive and detailed it was initially rejected. A letter in response to my first application noted that I had submitted a high-quality application and that I had made considerable effort to address complex ethical issues. It also stated that the HREC had concerns in relation to sensitive data and the possibility of participants being at risk of criminal prosecution by local law enforcement. HREC also felt that there were unresolved issues concerning: the use of focus groups; the need for explicit information to potential participants about risks as well as time investment; the use of transcribers; the use of pseudonyms; confidentiality; security issues for transcribers and translators and the qualifications of the translator.

Although at first I felt frustrated at my application being rejected, it did energise me to further develop a strong, convincing ethical argument for my research. This involved providing evidence that my study would take every measure to implement the principle of ‘do no harm’. Significantly, it appeared that HREC had been strongly influenced by the migration paradigm and made the assumption that some women were immigrants to the country. In my response to ‘unresolved issues,’ I was able to inform HREC that all the women were Filipino and had migrated internally, and that
there was no issue of law enforcement for illegal immigration.

I devised a risk matrix outlining all possible risks, including; the likelihood of the risk being actualised, strategies to address the risk and the action that would be taken should the risk actualise (See Appendix 6). In addition, I further articulated why the benefits of this research would far outweigh the risks. After resubmission of my application I was given ethical clearance.

Ethical Practice

Preliminary Considerations

My ethical practice was influenced by the process that I outline above, which concerned: interrogating my own ethical position in the research; consulting appropriate guidelines in relation to researching trafficked women and establishing a strong and convincing ethical argument for my research. Pranee Liamputtong (2013) describes a process that I replicated in preparing to undertake cross-cultural research. Thus:

In planning cross-cultural research, it is essential that researchers balance the risks against the benefits by thinking carefully, whether their research is morally justified, whether it is ethical to carry out their research, or whether their research results will further marginalise the group concerned (Liamputtong, 2013, p. 348).

This involved understanding the ethical dimensions of researching within another culture. Critiquing traditional ‘scientific’ research, cross-cultural researchers call for a more participative approach (J. M. Anderson, 2002; Liamputtong, 2010a; Scheyvens & Leslie, 2000; Vannini & Gladue, 2008). Below I discuss the strategies I adopted to ensure my ethical obligations concerning the cross-cultural dimensions of the research.

As part of the scoping of the research, I made a trip to the Philippines in November 2010. The purpose of this trip was to ensure that I had the support and full consent of both Good Shepherd agencies to undertake this research. In addition, I wanted to consult about issues of culture and language. In negotiation with the two agencies a research advisory committee based in the Philippines was established. The members of the committee, apart from the researcher, were all Filipino and comprised the program director, program coordinator, three social workers and the bi-cultural research assistant. The purpose of this committee was to ensure cultural sensitivity and to seek direction in terms of potential participants and the needs of the particular community.
As part of setting up the research I sought advice from the research advisory committee in regards to an appropriate research assistant. The importance of a bi-cultural research assistant [here after referred to as ‘research assistant’] is highlighted by Liamputtong (2008), a medical anthropologist and cross-cultural researcher. She states the importance of this role, not only for the purpose of translation and interpretation but also to advise on social and cultural aspects. The research assistant I employed was a social worker from Cebu who had not only worked extensively in a cross-cultural environment but also was aware of the trafficking situation in the Philippines and the resultant stigmatisation of the women. Her role proved to be invaluable throughout the research. She was professional, sensitive and non-judgmental, building up a good rapport with the young women being interviewed. She also worked very well with me, offering cultural advice and challenging me about preconceived ideas I might have had about the Filipino culture.

Prior to our work with the women, the research assistant and I spent many hours discussing the research and the methodology, and this ensured that the purpose, aims and objectives were clear between us (Temple & Edwards, 2002). We continued to meet prior to and after interviews and focus groups to review the process and ensure any cultural issues were attended to. I recall a conversation with her in which we discussed the notion of poverty and ‘being poor’. She alerted me to the fact that to ask someone if their family was poor, was offensive and shameful. She explained that it would be more appropriate to ask, ‘were you able to have three meals a day?’ or ‘was there enough food for all members of the family to eat?’ This helped me to ensure, that as a result of my questions, participants did not feel shamed or embarrassed about being labelled poor.

Because I do not speak the dialect of Cebuano and all of the women spoke Cebuano and English, the research assistant translated in all focus groups and every interview. I wanted the women to be able to hear and respond in their native tongue, if that was their preference. All of the women chose to have the research assistant translate for them in the interview, though they used a combination of English and Cebuano. Initially I was concerned about having a translator present as there was the risk that some women may have felt stigmatised or judged by someone conversing in their own culture (Fontes, 2004). However, this concern quickly dissipated due to the sensitivity and competence of the research assistant. Her rapport with the women in the research cohort and their trust in her was an unforeseen advantage for the research process.

The issue of informed consent is complex, especially when working with vulnerable populations as well as in a cross-cultural environment (Adams et al., 2007;
Cwikel & Hoban, 2005; Fontes, 2004; Isreal & Hay, 2006; Liamputong, 2007; Marshall & Batten, 2003). Careful consideration was given to how the research was introduced to the participants and the types of consent that needed to be obtained. Applying the ethical principle of gaining informed consent at the commencement of the research, I adopted a ‘process of informed consent’ (Fontes, 2004, p. 145) whereby I reminded the women each time we met that even though they had given informed consent at the outset, there may be moments during the interview process when that consent may need to be reaffirmed. In studying violence against women, cross-cultural researcher, Lisa Fontes (2004) affirms the importance of gaining the ongoing consent of participants as a way of maximising their ability to give and withdraw consent.

To ensure that the women were clear about what they were consenting to in the research, I first invited women to participate through a flyer posted in both the English and Cebuano language at the Good Shepherd agencies. To ensure that no woman felt obligated or even coerced into participating in the research, they were invited to register their interest with one of the workers at the agencies who agreed to briefly describe the project and explain the notion of informed consent. When the women had registered their interest they were informed by the workers that an orientation session to explain and outline the stages of the research would be run by me and the research assistant.

At the orientation session potential participants were introduced to me and the research assistant. Each woman was given an orientation booklet outlining the research objective, the risks and benefits of being part of the research, confidentiality, the modes and sequence of data collection, and the time commitment and overall logistics. This was discussed in detail and potential participants were given the opportunity to ask questions. At the conclusion of this session those interested in being participants in the research were given a ‘Plain Language Statement’ and a consent form. The Statement outlined the following: the reasons for undertaking the research; the participant’s right to withdraw from the research at any time without consequence; the assurance that the location and identity of the participant would remain confidential and an assurance that a summary of the research would be made available before publication. To ensure that informed consent was understood, all documents were translated into written Cebuano. The research assistant explained the role of the participant in this research. Some chose to be part of the research and others opted not to participate.

A further issue to be explored was compensation for time given by the women. The issue of compensation through money or gifts can be controversial because it may be seen as providing an incentive for women to participate. Feminist researchers,
however, argue that women ought to be compensated both for their time and in acknowledgement for their sharing of knowledge (Guerrero, 1997; Liamputtong, 2007). Adopting a feminist approach and wanting to compensate the women for their contribution, I sought advice directly from the research advisory committee in the Philippines, which suggested that I pay for transport costs as well as provide morning or afternoon tea for the focus groups. In the interviews they suggested that an appropriate compensation would be to give each woman a small food package after each interview. This was my practice throughout the research.

Ensuring the confidentiality of participants names and material relating to their input is important in all research with humans and considered all-the-more important for participants who are marginalised and stigmatised in society (Isreal & Hay, 2006; Liamputtong, 2013). One of the ten principles outlined by WHO in relation to ethical and safe conduct of interviews with women who have been trafficked is to ensure privacy and confidentiality so as to,

protect a respondent’s identity and confidentiality throughout the entire interview process – from the moment she is contacted through the time that details of her case are made public (Zimmerman & Watts, 2003, p. 18).

In strict keeping with these guidelines all measures to protect the identity and confidentiality of all research materials relating to the women were put into place. Participant information was coded throughout the research; a password-protected list of actual names together with their codes was accessible only to the researcher. All other documents used only codes (Cwikel & Hoban, 2005). Any personal information about the women was aggregated and audio recordings of the interview were destroyed once transcribed. Consent forms were stored in a locked cabinet and transcripts and codes used for names were stored on a password protected computer.

Particular attention was given to confidentiality for the focus groups, which was an issue raised by HREC in their response to my first ethics application. Whilst not being able to guarantee absolute confidentiality in the group session I was confident that the women in the research were familiar with issues of confidentiality. This issue was discussed during the orientation session and in the focus groups where all women were reminded of their choice in the level of their sharing. A collective confidentiality agreement was also signed by all the women. While aware of the importance of all these procedures I was confident that the women had a strong sense of solidarity and a desire to protect one another.

The management of the ethics of this research has been iterative, across several phases. Ethical practice has been a continuous process, of being attentive to
new issues and responding where appropriate. My ethical practice was demonstrated from the outset: in my extensive consultation with Filipino women through the establishment of a ‘research advisory committee’ in the Philippines, the employment of a bi-cultural research assistant, ensuring that the women understood and were engaged in a process of informed consent and attention to issues of confidentiality and privacy. All of these ethical concerns and responses formed part of my commitment to critical reflexivity.

**Reflexivity**

Widely recognised as a crucial aspect of qualitative research, reflexivity is a process whereby the researcher acknowledges the influence of one’s own experiences, values and assumptions on the research process (Ahern, 1999; Russell & Kelly, 2002; Watt, 2007). I am a Sister of Mercy, an educator and a social worker. In my practice as a social worker, and particularly as a religious sister I have always been attentive to the importance of reflective practice in which I have been able to locate presumptive positions, and challenge preconceived ideas. This has been exercised in different forms in different circumstances, for example: talking through important practice issues with a critical friend; professional individual or group supervision and journal writing.

Researchers Glenda Russell and Nancy Kelly (2002) highlight the value of reflexivity, encouraging the researcher to be attentive to both their interior and the exterior world.

Reflexivity enhances our ability to stay engaged with our own reactions and the reactions of others. It insists that we learn more about personal and intellectual strengths and limitations. It invites us to confront feelings and conflicts that we might otherwise avoid - aspects of experience that the traditional training has in fact, encouraged in us to disavow (Russell & Kelly, 2002, p. 13).

This encouraged me to identify my own values and presuppositions during the research process in order to attend to potential blind spots. Reflexive practice gave me new insights into ‘what I saw and what inhibited me from seeing’ (Russell & Kelly, 2002). For example, my own experience of secure housing, a safe home environment and the opportunity for higher education could sometimes have inhibited me from seeing the impact of multiple oppressions on young women in the Philippines. It was imperative, therefore, to attend to these potential blind spots through discussion with other Filipinos, and attentiveness to the women’s experiences.
Using the process outlined by academic Kathryn Ahern (1999) and drawing on my own experience of the process of reflexivity prior to my field work, I constructed a reflexive practice matrix, documenting my own reflexive practice during this research [See Appendix 4].

My role as a Religious Sister
The analysis of my role as a religious sister is relevant at two levels. The first level concerns my relationship to the women in the research project and the means I took on a day to day basis to address the potential power imbalance between us. The second level relates to how the issue of women’s oppression in the church is held alongside a view of myself as agentic rather than oppressed. I share a history with other women in the church who privilege reciprocal relationships over power and status.

At the first level, regarding my relationships with the women, the issue of potential role conflict is an unusual one. In the Filipino context, by virtue of their office within the Catholic Church, religious sisters are generally held in high regard. This potentially placed me in a privileged position with the trafficked women, who may have felt inhibited to share their personal stories with me and perhaps would be influenced to say what they thought I might want to hear. As a way of attending to this potential conflict, there were a number of factors both in my relating to the women and in my daily lifestyle that I believed diminished the chances of this happening. A similar dilemma was faced by another Australian religious sister who as an anthropologist was living and researching in the Philippines. She makes the following observations:

Through various strategies I tried to distance myself to some extent from automatically being accorded a privileged status in one way or another, due to the fact of being a foreigner and being a religious sister. For this reason I chose to live in a locality which was not automatically of limited access to people from low socioeconomic classes. I visited people and accepted invitations to participate in activities in all of the surrounding neighbourhoods. I utilised the ordinary jeepney and bus public transport system rather than the more usual mode of taxi and private vehicle transport of most foreigners. I chose not to wear a distinctive dress marking me out as a religious sister (Drum, 2001, p. 35)

As well as adopting these same strategies, I operated in my usual manner of doing my equal share of domestic work and living simply as most others in the Philippines do.
In my encounters with the women and the staff, my aim was to always present as sensitive and non-judgemental with a genuine interest in the women and their life journey. In the first focus group the women were invited to construct their own life histories. By way of example, I shared my own life history, highlighting significant events in my own life. This included sharing my own issue of loss as an adolescent through the sudden death of my mother. I felt that in sharing my own story, which highlighted both vulnerability and strength, the women recognised my humanness and my ability to connect with their stories, which coincidently, often involved the absence of mothers and the resultant grief. The issue of self-disclosure is a contentious one. However, many feminist researchers believe that it is an important element in research, helping to break down barriers and enhance trustworthiness ((Berger Gluck & Patai, 1991; Guerrero, 1997; Liamputtong, 2007; Reinharz, 1992). I felt that the women saw me first as a woman who had a genuine interest in them and wanted to hear their stories, and, second, wanted to give them voice through the research.

At the second level regarding my role as a religious sister, I address the issue of the operation of power and marginalisation of women within the Catholic Church. The tension lies in holding the realities of women’s marginalisation in the Church alongside my feminist stance and role as an active advocate for change. This is a role I share with many other women in the Church. Feminist historian and theologian, Katharine Massam summarises the contribution of feminist theologians in relation to roles held by women in the church.

Even while hierarchical assumptions govern much of institutional life, the central baptismal paradigm of service has allowed some Catholic women access to authority and stretched the boundaries of their leadership. Feminist theologians since the late 1960’s have critiqued the ‘texts of terror’ used to support the oppression and marginalisation of woman and raised awareness of alternative traditions in Christian Scripture emphasizing liberation, reconciliation across boundaries, and embodiment (Massam, 2014).

The opportunity for leadership within the Church has been afforded me nowhere more obviously than throughout the process of this research project. Whilst I may never be elected Pope, I certainly feel that I have been resourced to exercise my leadership within the Church to the extent that it empowers other women! For me, transformations of power structures are best generated from within the Church.

Journal keeping is recommended as a useful tool for ensuring researcher reflexivity. Academic Michelle Ortlipp (2008) asserts that the keeping of a research
journal can facilitate reflexivity whereby researchers can identify their own ‘presuppositions, choices, experiences and actions during the research process’ (p. 695). I found this process helpful for my own reflexivity. It helped me to sort through ideas and confusions. For example, when reflecting on my initial visit to the Philippines when I lived at the Welcome House I wrote:

I feel that I have been challenged on every level: physically, emotionally, psychologically, intellectually and spiritually - the stumbling blocks or the perceived threats have not been the ones that I predicted… I was surprised by my ability to adapt to my surroundings in the Philippines so easily, despite such material poverty and circumstances at the Welcome House (Researcher reflexive Journal, 28/02/09).

For many Filipino’s there is a daily struggle to make ends meet. Running water is undrinkable, and all Filipinos have been restricted to buying purified water. Living arrangements were simple; rarely did I encounter such luxuries as washing machines or dishwashers. These are just a few examples of the contrasts to my own privileged lifestyle. I kept a research journal as part of my commitment to reflexivity which reminds me that I was clearly confronted by the contrast in living conditions in Australia and those in the Philippines and equally surprised by my ability to adapt. This journal was used prior to and during the fieldwork phase and also during my analysis of the data and writing up of the research.

Another way that I practiced reflexivity came about incidentally. Each evening after interviewing a woman, I would return home and write up the transcript of the interview recording. This was an intensive time because I regularly had to stop the recording in order to transcribe accurately. This took hours because I needed to pause often in order to transcribe exactly what was said and any comments, feedback or question that I gave. I often cringed at some of my responses, recognising that my own preconceived notions about trafficking were influencing my listening. For example, in transcribing the interviews I recognised times when I wanted to reframe how a woman described her experience. One woman said, ‘I was addicted to sex’ and I said, ‘Do you mean you were addicted to sex or were you seeking love?’ The woman replied, ‘no, I was addicted to sex’. Here was a clear example of my own interventions, where I tried to make the story more palatable.

My discussions with the research assistant were an exercise in reflexivity. We always took time after the interview to talk about the process and what we had learned about the women’s experience and its links to sex trafficking. Our interpretations of
what was being said sometimes differed and we engaged in regular and sometimes
heated discussions about these differences.

Throughout the continuous process of data collection and analysis, I was
guided by four questions, as outlined by Patton (2002, p. 495). First, what do I know?
Second, how do I know what I know? Third, how do those studied know what they
know? Fourth, how do those who receive my findings make sense of what I give them?
My attentiveness to reflexivity sought to ensure that I was aware of the impact of my
own personal, cultural, and social influences. This affected my values and beliefs, of
which I had to be mindful throughout the research process. However, while every effort
was made to ensure reflexivity I also acknowledge that there were times when I failed
in that practice (such as when I found myself silently questioning a woman’s decision to
run away from home with no plan). Nonetheless, I endeavoured to be faithful to the
practice of reflexivity throughout the research process.

The Research Design
In designing my research methods, careful consideration was given to the most
appropriate way of collecting the data and engaging with the participants. Given the
‘vulnerability’ of the participants and the cross-cultural dimensions of my research it
was important to find methods that were non-threatening, data generating and
empowering for the women (Guerrero, 1997; Liamputtong, 2010a). At the core of all
decisions regarding methods was the value of respect for the participants. Through a
process of critical thinking and planning about the best way to gain insight from the
research questions, I chose to run three focus groups and to conduct a series of three
in-depth interviews with each participant. To ensure that both the participants and the
research team were safe, all focus groups and interviews were conducted at either of
the Good Shepherd agencies. There was a total of forty participants in the research
project. All forty participated in the first two focus groups. Twenty-two of those who
participated in the focus groups then volunteered to take part in the series of in-depth
interviews. In the final focus group, participants were drawn from both the interview
series and/or the first and second focus group. Data collection was ongoing
acknowledging that the process was one that developed as new insights emerged. I
began with focus groups followed by in-depth interviews and completed the process
with a final focus group to clarify and validate findings from the data collected.

Fieldwork
In my unfolding research journey I had made several trips to the Philippines between
2009 and 2014. Although I had been in Cebu twice before and had a good rapport with
the agencies and the women who used their services, I felt it important to continue to build a relationship of trust and build further rapport with the women. Research has sometimes been described as having a ‘hit and run approach or a ‘cash and grab’ mentality in that data is extracted from individuals with very little attention given to the informants and the building up of relationships. Being committed to transformative research, I chose to live in Cebu for six months in 2011, where I spent time with the women, and immersed myself in their lives and their culture. Friendly relationships are an essential component of feminist research outlined by feminist Filipino researchers:

The hierarchical relationship is eliminated; in its place is a friendly, egalitarian and connected relationship between researcher and researched. Knowledge generated through listening, dialogues, and interaction reclaim for women their legitimacy as sources of knowledge (Guerrero, 1997, p. 2).

This approach is also synonymous with research and the ‘ethics of care’ outlined by Pranee Liamputtong (2010b), which ‘emphasises care, compassion and relationships… and dictates how the researchers relate to individuals’ (p. 42), particularly in cross-cultural settings. My regular visits to both Good Shepherd agencies, facilitated a relationship of trust and familiarity with the women who participated in the research.

During that time I lived with a community of Filipino Sisters of Mercy, members of Mercy International Association, a collective of Mercy Sisters across the world. Living with these women gave me further insight into the social and cultural aspects of the Philippines. The fact that they had no contact with the women involved in my research project enabled me to keep some distance from the research project, given the very intense and private nature of the work with the women.

Focus Groups

Focus groups are considered most appropriate for feminist research (Wilkinson, 1999) because they are a means of collecting qualitative data rich in detail and reflect the collective voices of participants. Focus groups also shift the balance of power away from the researcher (Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004; Liamputtong, 2007) and the nature of the data collected through this method enables themes and issues of importance to be identified.

Sometimes referred to as group interviews they are particularly useful when collecting sensitive data such as data related to the experience of sex trafficking (Liamputtong, 2013; Zeller, 1993). What distinguishes focus groups from individual interviews, is whereas the one to one interview involves the interaction between the researcher and interviewee, in a focus group, the interaction takes place between the
participants themselves and the researcher (Wilkinson, 1999). This allows for greater breadth of knowledge and understanding. I found this most effective at the beginning of the research process as it enabled me to come to know the women at one step removed as they discussed issues with each other.

Social researchers Stewart et al (2007) draw on the work of academic and communication expert Klaus Krippendorf (2004) when discussing the nature of data collected in the focus groups. A distinction is made between data that is *emic* and data that is *etic*. *Emic* data is described as ‘data that arise in a natural or indigenous form’ whereas *etic* data is described as ‘representing the researchers imposed view of the situation’ (Stewart et al., 2007, p. 40). Hence, given this study requires data that is closer to the emic end of the continuum, focus groups are most appropriate. Stewart et al(2007) contend that data collected in focus groups is more closely associated with emic data, ‘because they allow individuals to respond in their own words using their own categorisations and perceived associations’ (2007, p. 40).

Although focus groups have many advantages, it is also important to note the limitations of using focus groups. First, responses from members of the group are not independent of one another. In addition, participants may feel the pressure to confirm to the thinking of the group and responses may therefore be less an expression of their own experience (Stewart et al., 2007). However the advantage of using this method is that participants may react to and build on responses of other group members. This is a dynamic that cannot be achieved through other methods.

All women who were clients of either GSWH or GSRC and who were eighteen years or over were invited to participate in the focus groups via a notice posted at the two Good Shepherd agencies and by invitation from the researcher. Initially, I envisaged that each focus group would have approximately ten participants, but due to practicality related to the women’s availability, some groups were larger than others. [See Appendix 1 for a schedule of questions and activities in the focus groups]. The forty women who chose to be part of the focus groups were then invited to undertake a series of three in-depth interviews with the researcher. Twenty two volunteered to participate in the in-depth interviews.

Beginning with focus groups allowed the participants to be introduced to the research in a non-threatening manner and provided an entree to further exploration through the in-depth interviews. The women who came to the Good Shepherd agencies often gathered in a group to discuss issues of health, employment and other relevant information. Some gathered weekly; others fortnightly. These gatherings took place in a safe space where the women had privacy and felt comfortable. It was within this space that women often shared their experiences, concerns and successes. In
consultation with the research advisory committee, I used this same space for the focus groups.

The purpose of the focus groups had four elements. The first element was to collect data that addressed the research questions. The second was to give participants the opportunity to engage in conversation about trafficking with other women who had experienced the same phenomenon. The third was to allow the participants to build a rapport with the researcher, shifting notions of power, and the final element was to identify key themes and concepts to draw on in the subsequent individual interviews.

During the first focus group, as a way of gaining insight into life events and transitions, participants were invited to construct their own life-history calendar according to significant events and transitions in their life. This enabled them to reflect and share with others information about their own child and adolescent years and their experiences of being trafficked. Amongst others, Freedman et al., in a retrospective study on adolescence, outline the benefits of the life-history calendar:

First, it can improve the quality of the retrospective data by helping the respondent to relate, both visually and mentally, the timing of several kinds of events. Events more readily remembered, such as marriages, births, and changes in geographical residence, provide important reference points for recalling less salient events, such as details of employment and living arrangements (Freedman, Arland, Camburn, Alwin, & Young-DeMarco, 1988, p. 41).

A further exploration of the life history then occurred in the first in-depth interviews, with the life calendars used as a stimulus for the initial discussion. Data generated in the first focus groups consisted of individual life-history graphs and statements made by participants about their life and the experience of trafficking. The life-history calendars also assisted with data analysis, which was viewed through a life course perspective. The relevance of the life course perspective is discussed in a later section of this chapter.

Interviews

In keeping with both qualitative and feminist research, I chose life-history interviews as a form of data collection, acknowledging that women who have been trafficked for sex have their own knowledge and experience about the phenomenon and that in sharing their life history, meaning making can occur. Interviewing is a particularly appropriate method for research involving sensitive issues. Researcher, Pranee Liamputtong
(2007) provides a range of examples of such an interview method undertaken effectively with vulnerable populations, including research with black South African women under apartheid, and homeless people.

In the life-history interviews, I utilised central tenets of the life course perspective. To enable ‘both the individual biography and historical processes to emerge’ (Liamputtong, 2007, p. 111), I invited women to share past experiences, including childhood and family circumstances, the trafficking experience and the meanings they had found in such experiences. This included focusing on significant events, transitions and turning points throughout their life time. Considerable time was given to the interview process, which comprised a series of three in-depth interviews of sixty to ninety minutes duration over a number of weeks and sometimes months, depending on the decisions of the woman as to their availability. Drawing on the work of Irving Seidman (2013), I adopted an interview process based on assumptions drawn from phenomenology. This involved an in-depth, open ended dialogue, in the course of which women told the story of their lives.

Therefore, a central place was allotted to understanding participants’ experience and meanings, while also being attentive to contextual factors (Clarke, 2009). Each interview had a slightly different focus. The first interview drew on the life history of the participant up to the time of being trafficked, establishing the context of her childhood environment and circumstances. A personal life calendar that participants had constructed in the first focus group depicted significant events in their lives and provided a stimulus for dialogue in this first interview.

The second interview focused on their experience of being trafficked and provided information about the human trafficking phenomenon. The third interview allowed for reflection on the experience, giving the participant the opportunity to draw meaning from the event/s in their lives [See Appendix 2 for schedules of interviews1, 2 and 3]. The interview content, as expected, proved somewhat more fluid, as conversations merged in and out of these three themes, but for the most part each interview focused on a particular theme. Seidman (2013) argues that a structure of three interviews provides for reliable data in that participants have the opportunity to provide a context for their experience and have the time to reflect on that experience over a longer period of time than a one-off interview provides. A multiple interview style also typifies feminist research as it gives the opportunity for content from earlier interviews to be explored further and to give feedback on what has been heard, and for reasons of both accuracy and clarity (Reinharz, 1992). Given the sensitive topic of the interviews, I believe that a staged process allowed participants to feel more
comfortable with me, to develop themes further and to have useful time to reflect in between the interviews.

The three in-depth interviews consisted of broad and open-ended questions, allowing participants to share their life histories and experiences through story telling:

Life-history or personal narrative techniques have considerable potential as a way of recovering hidden histories, contesting academic androcentrism, and reinstating the marginalized and dispossessed as makers of their own past (Miles & Crush, 1993, p. 84).

Reflecting my narrative approach, throughout the interview process I adopted a stance of recognising the woman story teller as the expert. In this case, narrative can be defined as:

Discourses with a clear sequential order that connect events in a meaningful way for a definite audience and thus offer insights about the world and/or people’s experience of it (Elliot, 2005, p. 3).

This involved attentive listening and keeping in mind that ‘the storytellers are the first interpreters of the stories told’ (Atkinson, 1998, p. 5). In other words, in listening and engaging with the storyteller, meaning making about sex trafficking was occurring. In this way, the woman and I were ‘collaborators in the search for knowledge (truth) and the construction of meaning’ about the sex trafficking experience (Guerrero, 1997, p. 75).

The research assistant, also a collaborator in the research process, contributed to the construction of meaning. The importance of acknowledging such roles as active in the research is highlighted by cross-cultural researchers, Temple and Edwards (2002); who claim that translators should be made visible in the research rather than ‘existing in the background and treated as irrelevant other than as transmitters of messages…a neutral mouthpiece faithfully and passively translating back and forth between languages’ (p. 4). The research assistant was present throughout all the focus groups and interviews, as both a translator and adviser on cultural content. Once again, Temple and Edwards argue for the interpreters ‘personhood and visibility in the research’:

Like researchers, interpreters bring their own assumptions and concerns to the interview and the research process. The research thus becomes subject to ‘triple subjectivity’ (the interactions between research participant, researcher and interpreter), and this needs to be made explicit. Rigorous
reflexivity in research where researchers are working with interpreters requires an exploration of the social location of the interpreter (Temple & Edwards, 2002, p. 6).

Earlier in the chapter I discussed our intensive preparation work where key research aims and objectives were discussed. These discussions gave the research assistant the opportunity to articulate her own values and understandings about trafficking and working with vulnerable people. In keeping with a feminist methodology, the research assistant formed a relationship of trust with me and the women being interviewed. Rather than a ‘conduit between the interviewer and the interviewee’ (A. Freed, 1988, p. 315) she was an integral part of the research team. As a team our stance was always one of connection, recognizing that ‘a woman listening with care and caution enables another woman to develop ideas, construct meaning and use words that say what she means’ (Reinharz, 1992, p. 24). Finally, we provided an environment in which the women’s stories were validated. This process was empowering within itself. Many of the women expressed their gratitude in being able to share their stories.

I am thankful that I am part of this research and I thought it would be something to be fearful of, but it’s not, it’s good and this is my first time in participating in a research. [Cristy]

I viewed the research assistant’s contribution as invaluable because she understood her role and was able to interpret the content of the interview culturally and linguistically. Having the same interpreter throughout the research enabled us to build up a relationship of trust and ensured that there was consistency in translation, which was necessary because otherwise there was a risk that the meaning of particular terms could be missed due to different interpretations. As the research assistant was also a trained social worker she was highly attuned to the issues of confidentiality and privacy. After each interview the research assistant and I would meet to ‘debrief’ and clarify any cultural content or language complexities (Dalla, 2000).

Due to the cross-cultural nature of the interview, transcribing the interviews was a very long process. When transcribed, I asked each participant if they would like to read the transcription, to check for accuracy or clarity. None of the women wanted to read their transcripts: some said that telling their story was enough and they did not want to reread it; others were not fluent enough in written English. As a way of countering this issue, I verbally summarised the main issues in the transcript when beginning the second and third interview so that the women could agree to the accuracy or provide further clarity about an issue. This was then translated for the women in Cebuano by the research assistant.
The research design was developed in such a way as to ensure that participants were (a) comfortable with the process and (b) trusted the researcher, and (c) that appropriate data was collected. Beginning with focus groups enabled participants to enter into the research process in a non-threatening way. Following this, the three-stage interview process allowed for participants to build up rapport with the researcher and in between interviews, to reflect on aspects of their experience and how they made sense of them. This design was time consuming but I considered it the most appropriate form of data collection for the phenomenon being studied [A summary of the research questions and the data collection process is provided at Appendix 3].

**Data Analysis and Interpretation**

In analysing the narratives of the women I found myself faced with a dilemma. On the one hand I wanted to focus on the women’s individual accounts so as to emphasise the individual experience as particular to her, which is a key aim of this research. On the other hand, I wanted to situate the women’s narratives within the context of the socio-economic and political environment in which their stories were formed. Faced with the same dilemma as researchers Acker et al. (1983) the question became, ‘how to produce an analysis which goes beyond the experience of the researched while still granting them subjectivity’ (p. 429).

From a ‘life course perspective’, making links between the personal life trajectories of the individual and the accompanying socio-historical circumstances of that particular time and place serve to bring to the fore the dynamics experienced by a person in the environment. Data analysis that explicitly makes the connection between individual circumstances and social structures is most appropriate to the aims of my research:

Since lives are lived and personal narratives based on them are constructed within specific historical contexts, analysts need to understand and take into account these larger forces whether or not narrators themselves are explicitly attentive to them in writing or talking about their lives (Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, 2008, p. 45)

Outlining a feminist approach to social research, Acker et al., (1983, p. 431) explain how they were challenged to ‘go beyond the faithful representation of their (participant’s) experience by putting those experiences into a theoretical framework that linked women’s oppression to the structure of Western capitalist society’. This partially reflects my own challenge and encouraged me to delve more deeply and make
explicit a critical feminist analysis that made connections between the individual narratives of the women and multiple, systemic oppressions.

Data analysis and interpretation was ongoing and complex and, in keeping with my commitment to critical reflexivity, it was a process of ‘continuous meaning making and progressive focusing’ (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009, p. 76). The same authors acknowledge that patterns, themes and analysis come from the data, and highlight the subjective nature of data analysis and hence the need for critical reflexivity:

They (patterns, themes and categories) are driven by what the inquirer wants to know, and how the inquirer interprets what the data are telling him or her according to subscribed theoretical frameworks, subjective perspectives, ontological and epistemological positions, and intuitive field understandings (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009, p. 77).

Seidal (1988) refers to qualitative data analysis as a process of noticing, collecting and thinking; data analysis is not a linear process but rather, it is iterative, meaning that the process is repeated over and over as new insights emerge. Whilst recognizing that qualitative data analysis is complex, Seidal uses the analogy of a jigsaw puzzle when describing the analytical process. A common strategy for solving the puzzle is to identify and sort puzzle pieces into groups, recognizing that some of the puzzle pieces will easily fit into these categories, and that others will be more difficult to categorise (Seidel, 1988, p. 3). Indeed, this was my experience of data analysis in this research process.

Drawing on a process of interpretive phenomenological analysis, I had two main aims. First, as the main purpose of my research is to give voice to trafficked women, I wanted to ensure as much as possible that the experience as articulated by the women was always at the forefront. Second, consistent with interpretive phenomenological analysis, which moves beyond the descriptive, I wanted to situate the personal experience within the wider social, cultural and political context. In other words, to ‘think about what it means for the participants to have made these claims and to have expressed these feelings and concerns in this particular situation’ (Larkin et al., 2006, p. 104). However, as expressed so succinctly by Larkin et al: ‘The analytic process cannot ever achieve a genuinely first-person account, the account is always constructed by participant and researcher’(p. 104). Thus, I acknowledge my role, the role of the research assistant and the role of participants as co-constructors of knowledge.

Given that forty participants were part of the focus groups and twenty two of these participants elected to undertake a further three in-depth interviews over several
months, there was a large amount of data. In order not to be overwhelmed I followed a clear and precise process of dealing with the data corpus. Records from the focus groups consisted of forty life graphs, plus statements made by the groups about similarities in their life graphs and categories designed by the group about their life graphs and forty descriptive sentences. All this information was analysed for themes (See appendix 1).

Likewise, the first task after undertaking the in-depth interview was to transcribe it. I did this as soon as possible after the interview. Following this, I made some initial notes about the transcription and any emerging issues that were of particular interest. On arrival back to Melbourne after the fieldwork I continued to analyse and undertook further coding, looking for patterns, sequences and themes. The transcripts were imported into the NVivo database, enabling me to organise my material according to sequences and themes.

The process of data analysis and interpretation was cyclical in nature. I initially took note of particular themes according to the focus of the interview. Interview one was focused on significant life events during childhood and up to the time of being trafficked, and data analysis paid particular attention to sequencing and prioritising of events in the life history. Interview two focused on the trafficking experience; hence I noted particular descriptions and circumstances. Interview three concerned meaning making. Analysing the data required identifying statements that were evaluative or provided insight into how participants made sense of their experience.

Part two of this thesis, entitled ‘Giving Voice to the Experience’ consists of four findings chapters. These reflect the series of three interviews concerning childhood, the trafficking experience and meaning making, with the first two chapters concerning the interview related to childhood. Throughout all the chapters, the women’s voices are heard through the use of direct quotes taken from the interviews. There is an ongoing dialogue between the women’s voices and my analysis of their stories. The life course perspective is utilised as a way of further understanding the women’s narratives.

A key concept underpinning the research methodology is the third way proposed by Shelley Cavalieri (2011). Examining shared and distinct life course dynamics formed much of the data analysis process.

Deciding which segments to analyse and putting boundaries around them are interpretive acts that are shaped in major ways by the investigators theoretical interest (Ribesman, 2013, p. 173).

As my theoretical interest is in understanding sex trafficking from a third-way feminist perspective, a key part of data analysis was giving attention to the intersectionality of
oppression. Coupled with this is my interest in the life course paradigm with its particular principles and concepts. This entailed being attentive to personal biography, alongside social, political and economic factors, recognising them as intertwined and ultimately, as affecting life trajectories.

Mindful of third-way feminism and the principle of intersectionality, I was attentive to the dynamic of individual and social factors and how they shaped the trafficking trajectory. Thus I looked for connections between personal details and structural issues across the research cohort, to illuminate the intersection of personal biography and historical, social, cultural and economic circumstances. As the narratives were reflective of the life span, extending from childhood, into adolescence and early adulthood, I located times of transition, turning points and life-changing events as expressed by the women. These significant times in the life course helped shape the data, which led to identifying life trajectories of victimisation.

Life trajectories such as educational and health trajectories brought to the fore systemic failings as cumulative disadvantage could be identified in these trajectories. For example, the lack of education from kindergarten through to high school indicated the failings of an educational system that could not cater for children living in remote areas.

The concept of resilience and standing up against intersecting oppressions also formed part of my data analysis. Conscious that in telling their stories, the women positioned themselves according to shifting roles (Riessman, 2013), I was attentive to when they positioned themselves as victims and when they positioned themselves as exercising autonomy.

To summarise, the data collection and analysis was complex. No formula existed to direct me in data analysis. Mindful of my role in analysing the data, the notion of critical reflexivity was paramount as well as acknowledging the evolving character of the process required openness to new discoveries and insights.

**Limitations**

For reasons of the time constraints and resource considerations the study was confined to interviewing women who were clients of Good Shepherd Welcome House and Good Shepherd Recovery Centre. I chose only to interview those women who identified themselves as having been trafficked. Interviews with service providers could provide other insights but the aim of this research is to give voice to trafficked women.

This research is based on a sample of women in a particular place at a particular time, and to this extent, generalisations about the trafficking experience beyond the Philippines cannot be offered. However, phenomenology is about the lived
experience and acknowledges that ‘one’s own experiences are the possible experiences of others and also that the experiences of others are the possible experiences of oneself’ (Van Manen, 1990, p. 58). Therefore, in understanding the experience of Filipino women trafficked for sex, one can recognise that it is a possible human experience elsewhere and in this sense, it has universal applicability.

Much of the research on sex trafficking has concerned international sex trafficking. My research highlights the issue of sex trafficking within a domestic setting. Therefore, it provides a different standpoint from which to understand the phenomenon. In addition, it looks at the trafficking experience within the life course, identifying a trafficking trajectory and situating each participant in a rich, multi-layered context interweaving time, place, linked lives and wider events.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I outlined the methodological underpinning of this research, which consists of qualitative, critical feminist, phenomenological and narrative approaches. Describing my approach as ‘transformative critical feminist’ I outlined the way this research has been culturally sensitive, ethical, empowering, social justice orientated and anti-oppressive. Beginning with an overview of the location of the research, I outlined the significance of undertaking the research in Cebu. Then I described my unfolding research story, with a focus on building up a relationship with participants and with the agencies of which they are clients.

Particular attention was then given to the ethical dimensions of the research divided into three phases: The first phase concerned my crisis of legitimacy at undertaking research in the global south; the second phase related to consulting the relevant ethical guidelines in researching trafficked women; and the third phase was concerned with formulating a strong ethical argument for the research in order to gain ethical approval from the RMIT University Human Research Ethics Committee.

Following this, reflexivity was presented as a key strategy for recognising and responding to values and beliefs that I brought to the research, with a number of examples given of how I practised reflexivity. An overview of the research design highlighted the need for considerable planning due to the sensitive nature of the research. A discussion of fieldwork, the use of focus groups and in-depth interviews has illustrated my methods of data collection. Data analysis and interpretation were presented as iterative and with a focus on the intersection of oppressions and the key principles, concepts and understandings of the life course perspective.

Finally, I outlined the limitations of the research and provided insight into the unique features of my research and its contribution to knowledge about trafficking.
Overall, this chapter has provided detailed information about my research stance, my relationship to the participants and the way that I addressed the research questions. This all leads to and provides a context for giving voice to the women, which is the focus of Part Two of this thesis.

In summary, Part One of this thesis, “Setting the Scene” presented an overview of the current literature on sex trafficking in order to ascertain that which is already known, both globally and locally, about sex trafficking. Situating the literature within dominant trafficking paradigms, I argued that these paradigms, while informative are located within specialised areas such as migration or economics that concern explanations about sex trafficking that are essentially theoretical. This led to a discussion on the research gap, which I identified as the lack of trafficked women’s voices.

Drawing on feminist insights and research, I then established the argument for hearing first-hand from women about their sex trafficking experience. To build on existent knowledge about sex trafficking and in order to contextualise the research in the Philippines, I then moved my focus from broad analysis of the local situation and provided a descriptive chapter on the sex industry. An important part of this chapter was naming the forces that allow sex trafficking to flourish and those working against it.

The final chapter of part one outlined the research design, situating the research within a transformative critical feminist framework. Positioning the research within a qualitative context, I illustrated the importance of adopting a phenomenological approach, allowing the lived experience of trafficked women to be explored through the methods of focus groups and in-depth interviews.
PART TWO – GIVING VOICE TO THE EXPERIENCE
Introduction

As the aim of this research is to give voice to women who have experienced sex trafficking, the first four chapters of part two represent the heart of this study. The purpose of these chapters is to outline key findings in relation to the life histories and trafficking trajectories of the women, through an interweaving of the women’s narratives and a discussion of literature related to their experiences. New insights about the sex trafficking experience are drawn from the women’s narratives, building on existing knowledge about the phenomenon, and working to influence policy and praxis.

In order to shift the focus from the ‘scene setting’ of Part One to ‘giving voice’ to the experience in this Part, I begin by providing a short profile of the twenty two women who took part in a series of three in-depth interviews. These profiles concern each woman’s life story and give context for their voice in the subsequent chapters, which focus in turn on the three in-depth interviews. Thus, presented in Chapters 4 and 5 is the exploration of women’s narratives which begins with stories of childhood and outlines significant themes related to environmental circumstances and relationships in childhood. Chapter 6 presents the sex trafficking experience as described by the women, with common themes again identified, as derived from women’s storytelling. Chapter 7, the last findings chapters, is concerned with meaning making, and the drawing of meanings from significant events and transitions over the life course.

The Research Cohort

Of the forty women who participated in the focus groups, twenty two chose to participate in the in-depth interview process. Eighteen of the women chose not to be interviewed for various reasons, including time constraints, geographical location, and personal reluctance to open themselves to the possible risk and pain of sharing their experience of being trafficked. The twenty two women who opted to participate further were representative of all the forty women who were clients of GSWH and GSRC. As such, they had all formerly been trafficked, came from similar backgrounds and were of similar age, education levels and socio economic backgrounds.

All the women in this study are Filipino whose average age at the time of interview was 21 years. One woman was aged 46 years, an extreme exception that was not included in the calculation of average age. The majority were born in the early 1990s, thus experiencing childhood and adolescence into the following decade. Most were born in regional Cebu or on the island of Mindanao. The remainder were born in Bohol and Negros Occidental in the Visayas and Manila in the North. Two did not know the place of their birth.
More than two thirds attended elementary (primary) school only, and for almost half this number, schooling was sporadic. The remainder had some high school education, with one attending university.

The average age at the time of being trafficked was 15 years and the period of time in which they were trafficked ranged from an average of 6 months to two and a half years. Just under half of the women had one or more children. Of these women, three had children living with them. The remainder of children had been left in the care of extended family, in a children’s home or were adopted out.

All of the women came directly from the trafficking experience to the Welcome House or Recovery Centre. At the time of the interview, over half of the women had been associated with the Good Shepherd programs for two years and nearly a third had been there for three to five years. Two had only been there for twelve months.

**Participant Profiles**

*Aleta*
Aleta is 21 years of age and was born in rural Cebu. She was born as the child of a mistress and, so, her father denied her existence. Due to financial difficulties her mother left her in the care of her aunt. Her aunty was a lesbian and she and her partner raised Aleta. Aleta felt very loved and cared for by her ‘lesbian parents’. When she was five she was sexually abused by neighbours while on an errand for her aunty. As a result of this incident she displayed ‘anti-social’ behaviour and struggled to make friends at school. At ten she was sexually abused again, by a relative. At thirteen she met her mother for the first time and attended school only until the end of elementary. When she was sixteen she was trafficked in Cebu City.

*Annabel*
Annabel is 20 years old and was born on a small island a few hours by boat from the island of Cebu. As a child she experienced poverty and domestic violence. Her father sexually abused her many times and at fourteen she ran away to work as a house helper in Cebu. After running away from a difficult employer she was trafficked at fourteen years of age in Cebu City.

*Belen*
Belen is 29 years old. She was born in the northern region of Cebu, approximately four hours distant from Cebu City. As a child she experienced poverty and was also sexually abused. She attended elementary school for a few years and when she was

*Note: Pseudonyms have been used throughout to ensure the privacy of the participants.*
eight years old, her parents abandoned her and she was placed in a children’s home. She ran away from that home and was trafficked in Cebu City between the ages of eleven and twelve.

*Cathy*

Cathy is 26 years old and was born in Manila. Her mother and father separated when she was born and she was left in the care of her grandmother. At age thirteen she learned that her mother had died as a result of having been battered by her live-in partner. She attended early high school but left in order to help her grandmother earn money. She worked as a waitress in a bar and was trafficked to Cebu City at age 16.

*Cristy*

Cristy is 26 years old and was born in Mindanao. Her father died when she was eleven years old and she struggled to accept it. She was educated up to early high school, but she was unhappy when her mother remarried so she ran away from home to Cebu City when she was 14 years old. She was trafficked in Cebu City at 14 years of age.

*Dulce*

Dulce is 19 years old and was born in regional Cebu. She attended school up until the final years of elementary. When she was eleven her grandmother died and she struggled to accept it. She felt that she was not wanted in her family and so she ran away to Cebu City where she was trafficked at 12 years of age.

*Emma*

Emma is 46 years old. She was born into a large family in Mindanao. The family struggled financially and she was able to attend school only until her senior years in elementary. Due to the financial situation she decided at thirteen years of age to assist her parents by seeking out employment as a house helper in Mindanao. Whilst working this job she was offered a job in Cebu City doing the same work but for a better wage. She took up this offer but found that she was treated badly in that job so she ran away. After that she was trafficked in Cebu City.

*Emerita*

Emerita is 19 years old and was born in Cebu. During childhood her parents relocated to Manila for work and she was left in the care of her grandmother. Whilst in the care of her grandmother she was sexually abused by her uncle. The abuse affected her behaviour and she found it difficult to trust anyone. She attended school up until senior elementary and then ran away when she was fourteen. She was trafficked at age 14 in Cebu City.
Ester

Ester is 18 years of age and was born in regional Cebu. Her parents were separated when she was born and she spent many years transiting from the care of her mother to her father and stepmother and then, finally, to her grandmother. Whilst living with her father and stepfamily she was sexually abused by her step brothers. She experienced poverty throughout her childhood and felt that her grandmother resented having to care for her. She was sexually abused by other male members of the family and community throughout her childhood. She attended school sporadically until middle elementary years. Seeking a better life and financial security she moved to the city where she was trafficked at the age of fourteen.

Eva

Eva is 30 years old. She was born in Cebu and experienced the death of her mother at a young age. She lived with her father and two other siblings and attended both elementary and high school. The family were living poorly as her father was sick and, so, she decided to work in a bar. It was here that she was trafficked at eighteen years of age.

Gina

Gina is 20 years old and was born in Mindanao. In her very early childhood she remembers that the family were financially comfortable as her parents ran a business. However, they became bankrupt and the family relocated to Cebu City looking for a better life. At seven years of age she was raped by a neighbour. As a result she became withdrawn and experienced behavioural problems. Her educational attainment was early high school and she was trafficked in Cebu City when she was 14 years old.

Jovie

Jovie is 32 years old and was born in a large island west of Cebu. As a baby she was abandoned and her adoptive parents rescued her. She lived in a remote rural area and most of the time her adoptive mother was away working. She lived predominantly with her adoptive father and three brothers. Her brothers were violent towards her and one brother raped her. She frequently ran away from home, seeking a better life and finally ran away to Cebu where at seventeen years of age, where she was trafficked.

Katrina

Katrina is 19 and was born on an island situated several hours by boat from Cebu City. She lived in poverty as a child and her parents left her in the care of her elder brother whilst they sought work in Cebu City. Later, whilst still a child she and her siblings transferred to Cebu City but due to poverty and abandonment by her parents they lived
at the pier of Cebu City. During this time she was sexually abused. She worked at small jobs on the pier and attended school until early high school but dropped out. She was trafficked in Cebu City when she was 17.

**Lanie**

Lanie is 18 years of age. She was born in a regional area of Cebu and left in the care of her grandmother. Her mother died of cancer not long after Lanie’s birth and her father left her with the grandmother. They lived very poorly and experienced chronic financial deprivation. At seven, she met siblings she did not know she had, and at eleven was sexually abused by her older brother. As a result of the abuse her behaviour became sexualised and she was stigmatised in the community, being labelled as the one with whom you could have sex. She attended school up until the mid-elementary years and, while seeking work in Cebu City, was trafficked at thirteen years of age.

**Leah**

Leah is 21 and was born in Mindanao. She experienced severe domestic violence in her home and her father murdered her mother when she was thirteen. She also experienced sexual abuse as a child and only completed early elementary schooling due to financial difficulties. The family experienced poverty and while working in Mindanao she was trafficked to Cebu City at fourteen.

**Raquel**

Raquel is 20 years old and was born into a large family in Cebu City. Her father died when she was five years of age and despite her mother working to make ends meet, the family lived in poverty. Raquel attained an early elementary education and while seeking work was trafficked at fourteen years of age in Cebu City.

**Riza**

Riza is 18 years old and was born on the island of Cebu. As a child she experienced domestic violence and poverty. Her mother was often absent due to domestic violence. When she was a young child she was raped by her cousin. This led to her being stigmatised and bullied in the local community. She attended high school up to the middle years, after which she dropped out of school due to the need to work and due to the influence of her peers. After leaving school she went to work as a house helper but was persuaded by her friends to run away from the job. At fifteen she was trafficked in Cebu City.
Rosanna
Rosanna is 24 years old and was born in Mindanao. Her mother, as the mistress of her father became pregnant; her father died before she was born and her mother died a few months later. She was left in the care of her father’s family and experienced stigmatisation and marginalisation. She also was sexually abused by relatives. She lived in poor conditions and attended school only up to senior elementary because of financial difficulties. She was trafficked to Cebu City when she was seventeen.

Rose
Rose is 27 years of age and was born in Cebu. She was the only child and her father died when she was twelve. Both her parents drank alcohol excessively and she remembers the house as being chaotic. Her mother remarried and her step father was also alcohol dependent. Despite this, she completed all of her elementary and high school education. In her late teens she became employed as a dancer and was trafficked in her early twenties.

Rowena
Rowena is 19 years old and was born in Cebu. She remembers being poor in childhood and being periodically sexually abused by numerous men in the community, including her own father. She attended school until early high school and at thirteen she ran away from home and then was trafficked.

Sar
Sar is 26 years of age and was born in Cebu. As a baby she was left in the care of her grandmother when her parents separated. Both parents re-partnered and started their own families. Sar felt nurtured, loved and cared for by her grandmother and her aunties and uncles. With the financial support of this extended family she was educated over many years and finally attended university. Finances were tight and in her late teens she felt that she needed to contribute financially. This led her to a marketing job in Cebu City. The job did not pay well and while she was working, an acquaintance invited her to take an opportunity to increase her earnings overseas. In her early twenties she was trafficked internationally from Cebu City.

Teresita
Teresita is 27 years old and was born on the island of Cebu. Her father was murdered when she was a child and her mother, a rampant gambler, abandoned the family, leaving Teresita to take care of her younger siblings. During childhood she was sexually abused by a relative. Teresita completed the first few years of high school.
After leaving school she was frequently approached by recruiters seeking to prostitute her.
Chapter 4
The Crisis of Childhood: Voices from the Past

I really did not experience any joyful memories even from zero to sixteen. During those years, I really can’t recall any happy memories, because when I play my mother would always beat me, anywhere on my body, sometimes it’s my head, so I don’t have good memories. Maybe now I have, but before I had none. [Teresita]

Introduction
This chapter is the first of three to focus on the fieldwork interview findings. The discussion concerns the first of the in-depth interviews with each of the women, the focus of which was on childhood. The focus of this chapter is on childhood environments and family circumstances as experienced by the women. These accounts provide key understandings about early vulnerabilities that contributed to their trafficking for sexual exploitation. In listening to the women’s stories of childhood I was overwhelmed by the deprivation, marginalisation and abuse they had experienced. I had anticipated that their stories of being trafficked for sex would be traumatic but nothing could have prepared me for the shock and anger I felt when I heard their childhood stories of abuse. Their stories highlighted my own privileged background in which I experienced childhood as a time of opportunity to grow and develop through the experience of safe, secure family, schooling and community connectedness and with financial security. In contrast, these women experienced unsafe, neglected and marginalised childhoods, with systemic abuse and deprivation, leading to their vulnerability to sex trafficking.

The next section begins with an exploration of two of four key areas that participants described as impacting on their childhood: environmental circumstances, abuse, relationships and behaviours. Beginning with an examination of childhood environments that encompassed poverty, rural isolation, educational limitations; drugs and alcohol use and community violence, I then explore the notion of abuse and the different ways this was experienced, including sexual abuse; physical abuse and emotional abuse.
Childhood Environment and Family Circumstances

Poverty

As discussed in Chapter 2, living in poverty is common among Filipinos. A very high proportion of the research cohort experienced poverty in childhood: Three quarters of the women made reference to financial difficulty and living in poverty and many participants spoke of struggles within the family; poverty was often experienced as a lack of food on the table, parental unemployment, lack of money to attend school, and the struggle to buy adequate clothing. Lanie, whose mother died of cancer soon after her birth, highlights her childhood plight as she struggles to understand whether her grandparents provided adequate care:

I was left by my father to the care of my Lola and Lolo (Grandparents). I really don’t know if they took care of me very well, but all I know is I was malnourished when I was still a child, because of inadequate care due to poverty... And during school days, 7 years old to 8, food was so scarce on our table. If we had rice, sometimes we do not have soup to go with it, so we use the salt to go with our rice and if we have no rice then we use root crop or banana. [Lanie]

Food survival strategies figured in the narrative for a number of other participants who describe the desperate measures used to obtain food by undertaking menial and difficult tasks. Thus:

We go to the dumpsite and collect these big bones and we select, we separate, we get the trash, we select if there are bones that have plenty of flesh left. We segregate those that have flesh from those that have none. So, really the bones go to the feed of the pigs, the dogs, but those bones having still flesh, we eat it... I had this activity from eight years old to eleven and the dump site was a little bit closer to our house so we could go there. [Raquel]

In order to get food we just ran errands for the market vendors and the errands were not ordinary, because our work was to collect the bedpans from the vendors. We would get rid of the waste, then clean the pans and return to the vendors and we were given five pesos for each pan. [Katrina]

Poverty was marked by a lack of food on the table. This is significant because it indicates that basic survival strategies were needed at an early age. An analysis of
enduring poverty and the conditions of childhood undertaken by childhood advocate and health researcher Caroline Harper, et al., (2003) suggests that malnutrition in early childhood is a major contributing factor to long-term and intergenerational poverty. Likewise, in a study of under nutrition in low- to middle-income countries, Victora et al., (2008) conclude that ‘the prevention of maternal and child under nutrition is a long-term investment that will benefit the present generation and their children’ (p. 340). As children, the participants were living in an impoverished environment characterised by intergenerational poverty. Further studies indicate that these early formative years have important effects on their economic life trajectory (Carba, Tan, & Adair, 2009; Harper et al., 2003; Mora & Nestel, 2000; Silva, 1996).

Poverty is a commonly cited reason for human trafficking. In discussing my research, I commonly encounter people who make a strong claim that trafficking is because of poverty and that the elimination of poverty would eradicate sex trafficking. This is a very simplistic understanding that fails to acknowledge the intersection of oppressions in the lives of these women. In fact, when I asked the participants if they believed that their being trafficked was related to poverty, they claimed that many people in the Philippines live in poverty and yet, not all are trafficked. In this regard, I felt challenged by the women to take the analysis beyond poverty. Poverty is, indeed, a contributing factor that makes a person vulnerable to trafficking and contributes to their marginalisation and oppression but it is not the sole reason for being trafficked. In addition to poverty, participants spoke about rural isolation, lack of education and community violence as part of their childhood experiences.

Rural Isolation
Chapter 2 describes the geography of the Philippines, with its extensive number of islands and the variety of terrains. This is relevant because, when describing their childhood environments, participants spoke of living in remote locations that were isolated or entirely separated from others in the community. Distance from other people resulted in a lack of social interaction with other families and the general community and in many instances, narratives highlighted social isolation and a struggle to make ends meet. Reflecting on childhood, the life course and intergenerational poverty, researcher Caroline Harper et al., (2003) claim that there is a direct correlation between social connectedness and possible ways out of poverty and that strong connections enable people to share resources in times of crisis and avoid the damaging effects of intergenerational poverty.

Similarly, when writing about the Philippine economy and the rural sector, Filipino academic, Arseneo Balisacan et al (2002) have highlighted the vulnerability of
Filipinos residing in rural areas. In terms of Asian developing countries, nearly three quarters of their poor are found in rural areas. They call for agricultural growth and rural development as a means of reducing poverty. In other writings on Philippine poverty, Balisacan (2007) emphasises the neglect of rural infrastructure and social services, particularly in the southern part of the Philippines. He asserts that the lowest level of poverty is in metropolitan Manila, while rural regions, including Mindanao and the Visayas have the highest level. Significantly, a large proportion of the research cohort was born and grew up in the central or southern parts of the Philippines, which includes the Visayas and Mindanao. Lanie expressed the difficulties of gaining access to basic services such as education. For her, it was the onerous challenges of travel to access services and the lack of food that made attending kindergarten such a struggle.

At the age of five, I can remember I went to kindergarten, but there was inadequate food and then I have to walk a very long distance and even cross rivers. [Lanie]

Those participants who remained in rural or remote areas expressed an ongoing frustration with poverty, unemployment and lack of educational opportunities. Isolation was one of the main reasons that families moved closer to the city, with a view to improving the opportunity for employment and hence food and education. However, this has often not been the case. Instead, it has produced a phenomenon of ‘urban poor’ who typically are made up of migrants from rural areas who have been living in poverty (Balisacan, 1992; Cortas, Boncan, & Jose, 2010).

The women’s accounts of rural isolation highlight that their development as children was stifled due to a lack of access to social services such as education and health and the lack of employment opportunities for their parents. Living in rural areas in the Philippines is clearly a challenge, as many of the women illustrated that, as children, they were marginalised and oppressed by an environment that could not address their basic needs. It appears that those living in remote rural areas made up the lowest class of society on account of their poverty, their lack of education and their lack of access to resources. It may be argued that this neglect left them vulnerable and, therefore, more susceptible to being trafficked for sex.

**Educational Limitations**

The educational trajectories of the women point to disadvantage. Educational standards of the participants varied but, by and large, they had a low level of education. As described earlier, over two thirds of the research cohort attended elementary (primary) school only, and for almost half of them, schooling was sporadic. This is very significant as the educational standards of Filipinos are generally quite high (Caoli-
Rodriguez, 2008), with 95.6% of Filipinos, ten years and over, basically literate (Philippine Commission on Women, 2013, p. 17).

The literature highlighting the importance of education in overcoming poverty is prolific. However, as Harper et al (2003) have shown, opportunities for education and its advantages are dependent on the socio-political circumstances in which a child is raised. For the majority of these women, the intersection of poverty and lack of access to education led to further disadvantage. On the other hand, Harper et al (2003) suggest that while an education is of great importance, in some instances it does not automatically increase job opportunities, as labour market opportunities may not be available. In this circumstance parents may see little value in educating their children. Some participants were not encouraged to go to school as education was not a priority for the parents:

Yeah, I went to school but sometimes my father would say don’t go to school you cannot find money in school, nobody ever got rich from being educated. [Katrina]

It is likely that these parents received little schooling themselves and that lack of education was intergenerational.

In a study on policy and school attainment in the Philippines and Malaysia, King and Lillard (1987) found a direct link between the educational attainment of parents and the positive effect it had on their children’s schooling. This same study highlights the tensions for families in rural areas around the children’s time spent at school and the children’s earning power. Women from poorer families, particularly farming families, were uneducated because their family depended on their working capacity as children. They found that time spent in school was often compromised by the need to care for other siblings or the need to undertake manual labour to contribute to family income. Many of the women in this study expressed their regret at not having reached a high level of education, due to difficulties in accessing school, being engaged in other work activities and in being unable to pay for school supplies. The majority of participants left school in late elementary and many experienced sporadic education due to family movements, lack of finances and lack of physical access. Some participants were high achievers at school and wanted to continue their education but the financial pressures were too great:

I went to school because of my own desire because I also supported myself, because from 1am to 5am I also worked as a vendor of the vegetables. So we packed up at 5am and at 6, I prepared myself for school. [Katrina]
Others struggled with education because of learning difficulties. Some found it difficult to concentrate and to learn due to family violence, sexual abuse or other family complications. Raquel, after experiencing the death of her father when she was five, and then feeling disconnected to her mother, indicated the effects on her schooling:

I can concentrate sometimes in school, but most of the time I can't... But I really can't focus, I really can't concentrate. So, I can really say that I am not good in school. I am dull. [Raquel]

Writing about children’s education in the Philippines, academics De Graff et al., (1996) highlight the competing uses of children’s time, with education but one of the agendas at work; the education of a child may be dependent on the family size and composition, as illustrated by Annabel:

At 13, after I graduated elementary, I worked as a babysitter. I did not continue my high school because I want to help put food on the table; my father always nags if I have nothing to contribute. [Annabel]

Alternatively, other participants chose to leave school and instead contribute financially to their families by looking further afield for better options. After beginning high school they saw moving to the city for work as a viable alternative. In many instances this is where they first became vulnerable to being trafficked. For Cristy: ‘Yeah, I went to high school but I only attended for about three months and then I ran away and came here to Cebu’ [Cristy].

Unfortunately for the majority of those participating in this research, consistent and quality schooling was unattainable, resulting in a low level of literacy and numeracy and hence a very limited education. There was, however, one exception in the research cohort. Sar, in fact, completed elementary and secondary and attended college. Her difficulty in finding financially viable employment after college contributed to her being deceived by a recruiter who offered her work overseas. This resulted in her being trafficked to a neighbouring country. When asked if she could attribute any particular reasons for having been trafficked she stated:

Nothing! Nothing I can think of in my upbringing or my childhood. I cannot find a reason as to why I was trafficked. It just happened and even my family cannot understand what happened and why I am being trafficked. Financially wise we were not very rich; we are only like if we have money then I am generally contented with my life. What I want is only what I can get. I am not a social climber, so I just give it what we have got. Maybe that happened and I was just a victim of trafficking [Sar]
Later in the interview, Sar reflects further on how she was deceived by traffickers:

Yeah, maybe one big reason at that time was my Lola [grandparent] was hospitalised and we needed big money at that time because our income at that time could not suffice for her hospitalisation. So, I grabbed the opportunity, the promise. [Sar]

Writings about childhood education in the Philippines and the life trajectory indicate that ‘one of the most important components of children’s time use is school attendance’ (DeGraff et al., 1996, p. 220) and that education is both a personal asset, for the child’s future welfare, as well as the child’s family and the nation. The importance of education as a both a communal and personal asset is aptly summed up by King and Lillard (1987) who describe education as ‘not simply a consumption activity but also an investment in a person’s human capital’ (p. 168). Education has, in fact, been a high policy priority in the Philippines but there are concerns that the Philippine government is declining in its efforts and lacks the political will to effectively support long-term education as an investment (Caoli-Rodriguez, 2008; Okabe, 2013).

**Drugs and Alcohol**

Exposure to drugs and alcohol featured prominently in a number of the women’s narratives. Many witnessed the abuse of alcohol, and sometimes drug use, by parents and other extended family members. Most participants found their parent’s use of drugs and alcohol distressing, and saw this as contributing to a disruptive and unstable environment. As children, this left them feeling insecure and uncertain about their future. Annabel narrates that during her childhood her father was unemployed and a heavy drinker. She also describes him as abusive towards herself and other siblings. Her strong memory of being physically abused by her alcohol-dependent father accentuates the psychological impact it had on her:

He started to do physical abuse on all of us, he slapped, everything, he boxes. We had bruises. And when I was in grade four, I stopped going to school so I could take care of my younger siblings. I was more being physically abused by my father. [Annabel]

Public Health Researcher, Bridget Grant (2000, p. 114), writes of the detrimental effect that substance abuse can have on children’s development and concludes that childhood development is impaired when the parents abuse alcohol. Other literature also confirms the link between parental substance abuse and childhood wellbeing (Black, Bucky, & Wilder-Padilla, 1986; Davis, 1990; Johnson & Leff, 1999;
Magura & Laudet, 1996; Sheridan, 1995). Furthermore, a study by child expert, Christine Walsh et al (2003) on the relationship between parental substance abuse and child maltreatment found that ‘parental substance abuse is associated with a more than a twofold increase in the risk of exposure to both childhood physical and sexual abuse’ (p. 1409). Those findings are confirmed by this research; many of the participants experienced parental substance abuse and the resulting developmental impacts and maltreatment.

A summary of findings about family dynamics and parental substance abuse undertaken by academic and social worker, Michael Sheridan (1995), suggests that there are often impaired dynamics resulting in dysfunctional internal and external boundaries. This is manifested in the following ways: ‘poor communication skills, low expressiveness, high family conflict, chaotic or rigid interaction patterns, role distortion and role reversal’ (Sheridan, 1995, p. 520). Many narratives by the participants indicate that the abuse of alcohol was a common occurrence in their home and community environment and this impacted negatively on their childhood development, often resulting in the communication difficulties previously described.

Katrina, who, with three other siblings was left in the full-time care of her twelve year older brother, also felt that the influence of drugs and alcohol impeded proper care from her parents and is confused about the choices her parents made about the care of her and her siblings. In this instance she attributes their lack of attention to their dependence on drugs and alcohol: ‘My father was into drugs and alcohol and my mother had a big problem with the vices of my father and so maybe they forgot us.

Similarly, Raquel refers to the impact of alcohol on her household. Describing the grief of her father dying when she was five, Raquel gives an account of her maternal grandmother being a drunkard and upsetting the family home, which was further unsettled when her own mother became dependent on alcohol. The responsibility felt by Raquel to pacify her mother is indicative of the intense emotional pressure placed on her as a child and the resultant role reversal where a child feels the need to provide emotional support to a parent. Her account also suggests the intergenerational nature of alcohol abuse:

I don't know what age, my mother became a drunkard, and when she comes home she will cry aloud and we don’t know how to pacify her. [Raquel]

Rose, an only child, in describing the family home emphasises the disruptive and turbulent nature of her parents drinking alcohol. The home is peaceful in the day but she faced a different reality at night:
In the day time, I am still peaceful, but in the night time when my Mum and Dad go out of the house and find alcohol, they go home and sometimes they quarrel, but I don’t understand why they quarrel. [Rose]

In their narratives, some women made direct links with their parent’s alcohol abuse and their childhood outcomes. This is illustrated by Annabel who believes that it was her father’s consumption of alcohol that led to her being trafficked. Like many others in this study she chose to run away from home to escape her father’s treatment and thus arrived in Cebu - a path that led her to being trafficked for sexual exploitation:

But sometimes they argue because ‘no food, no food’ because he always drink alcohol, he always. Whenever there is no alcohol, no cigarettes, he goes wild and I can say that he was the one that caused all the problems in my family. Why I am where I am right now? It’s really my father. [Annabel]

The above narratives describe an environment marked by the use of drugs and alcohol. Many participants spoke of incidences or events whereby drugs and alcohol had a detrimental effect on their general wellbeing. Importantly, such circumstances impacted, not only their childhood development, but also their further life trajectories. This consequence will be explored further in Chapter 6 where participants describe drug and alcohol usage during their trafficking experiences.

Community Violence

Notably, a proportion of participants included the prevalence of violence within the wider community as part of their narrative. These incidents included murders, threats and civil war in Mindanao, the southern island of the Philippines. The role of exposure to violence, in shaping individual life courses, has been of particular interest to researchers seeking to understand behaviours in adolescents and adulthood. A common understanding is that early exposure to violence in the home or community, or both, has an important impact on the development of the child (Finkelhor, 1995; Garbarino, Dubrow, Kostelny, & Pardo, 1992; Hindin & Gultiano, 2006).

Teresita gives voice to her experience of violence in the wider community after her father was murdered by being gunned down. She speaks about the pain and frustration of being left to care for her younger siblings. Her parents had separated prior to her father’s death and her mother had abandoned them. She later describes herself as depressed and suicidal as a result of this life-changing event for her and her siblings:
It was so difficult to accept that, because our Mum left us and then the father that we loved so much, because all of us loved him so much, he was very dear to us. And all of a sudden he was gone. We could not accept it. [Teresita]

In trying to make sense of her father’s death, Raquel, too, is left with many unanswered questions. She believes that the truth has been concealed and that her father was, in fact, murdered. Her narrative reveals her doubts about the nature of his death and her feelings of insecurity, lack of trust and uncertainty:

Yes. My father died, but we have not established whether he was murdered or not... According to the friends of my father, they said that while they were loading a very big scrap of iron, my father was accidentally or a big scrap of iron fell on to my father and that is why he died. But we think the story is not true, because why he was placed in a sack and then thrown... in a vacant lot. So somebody just retrieved his body. [Raquel]

In another account, Emerita emphasises the violent nature of relationships illustrated in her uncle’s murder. Emerita had been sexually abused by her uncle for many years since she was very young. In her narrative she describes the hatred she felt towards him and her intention to kill him:

While I am growing up the anger has been very strong, the hatred. After I had sex with my boyfriend I went to the house of my uncle because I want to kill him and I am very very mad at him. I got a small knife, an ice pick and I brought it and I really want to kill him and I think that that man is drunk and I think ‘huh!’ He will not know, because he is very weak. I tried but I am late. Because his friend with whom he had been drinking, he killed my uncle. That’s why I am very late. I was really mad. [Emerita]

Emerita told this story with such composure; it was plain to see that family and community violence was somehow an accepted reality for her. In Chapter 2 I outlined the localised paradigm and gave a short, political overview of the Philippines describing the country’s experience of colonisation, the presence of military bases and the ongoing civil war in Mindanao. These influences suggest a volatile environment in which violence was common place and perceived as normal. This normalisation of violence was powerfully evident in the women’s stories.

The intersection of multiple structural oppressions indicates that a life trajectory of marginalisation, that is, isolation from mainstream society, was developing in the
lives of these participants from a very young age. Circumstances of poverty, rural isolation, educational limitations, drugs, alcohol and community violence – all were commonly described by the women as part of their environment during their childhood. Many writings and reflections about environments characterised by such surroundings suggest a life course outcome of marginalisation and disadvantage. In sharing their stories the women were able to identify these factors as contributing to their further deprivation and social exclusion in later life, particularly through their experiences of being trafficked for sex.

**Experiences of Abuse**

The second key area emerging as impacting personally on childhood experiences is the prevalence of abuse. Sexual, physical, financial and emotional abuse was described by the women. Their stories provide a chilling insight into the deprivation and maltreatment that they experienced in childhood. The women, on the whole, placed particular emphasis on their experience of sexual abuse, indicating that it was a ‘turning point’ in their life.

In the Philippines, the prevalence of child abuse is considered a serious social problem (Samonte-Hinckley, 2004; San Diego, 2011; Ward & Roby, 2004). Most reports come from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), but some are reported through the Philippine National Police (PNP). As with most nation states, accurate numbers of victims of childhood abuse are difficult to ascertain due to underreporting and the illegal nature of abuse. However, for the purpose of this study, I present DSWD statistics related to child abuse in the year 2000. This is to reflect the time at which the majority of the research cohort experienced childhood. According to DSWD in the year 2000 there were 7,864 reported cases of childhood abuse. Of these cases 57% were cases of sexual abuse, 26% were classified as cases of neglect and 17% were considered as physical abuse cases (Santos Ocampo, 2002; Verba &

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1 The legal framework associated with child abuse is based on Republic Act 7610 ("Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act," 1992). The act recognises and describes the following types of child abuse. 1.Physical abuse includes but is not limited to lacerations, fractured bones, internal injuries, severe injuries and serious bodily harm. 2.Sexual abuse entails the use of a child to engage in sexual intercourse or lascivious conduct regardless of ‘consent’. This definition includes molestation, prostitution and incest. 3.Psychological abuse involves harm to a child’s psychological or intellectual functioning exhibited by a change in behaviour, emotional response or cognition. 4.Neglect is a failure to provide for reasons other than poverty- for example, adequate food, clothing, shelter, basic education or medical care.
Balanon, 2001) indicating that, according to reports, sexual abuse is the most prevalent.

The majority of women I interviewed were subject to one or more forms of abuse during their childhood and adolescent years. The abuse described by the participants included physical, emotional, sexual, verbal and financial. Their narratives forcibly declare that abuse was a significant experience in their childhood, altering their sense of safety and trust. When asked to recall memorable childhood events, many participants chose to highlight their abuse as a critical part of their childhood stories.

Most participants experienced multiple abuses in childhood. Where one type of abuse was present, more often than not, other forms of abuse were perpetrated, for example, if they were sexually abused it is likely that they were also physically and emotionally abused. For some children, abuse was repetitive and not just perpetrated by one person. This suggests a systemic pattern of abuse in families and the broader community. As a response to these abusive situations, many children sought safety, opting to run away in the hope of a better life, only to find that they became subject to further abuse through the experience of trafficking. It is evident in the women's narratives that the abuse they experienced in childhood left them feeling unsafe and unprotected in the world. This on-going experience made these young women more vulnerable to abuse as adolescents and adults and that the ongoing nature of the abuse meant that for many it was an accepted part of the reality of life.

In understanding childhood abuse within the life course framework it is clear from their narratives that a life course of victimisation was developing in the lives of these women. Their narratives suggest that the abuse they experienced when trafficked was not foreign to them, in that they had been used and abused from early childhood. It is very important when trying to understand the trafficking trajectory in the lives of the participants that abuse is seen as a process rather than a one-off incident. Abuse and mistreatment, experienced in the trafficking situation, were not the first experiences of exploitation; rather, a continuum of abuse occurred from a very young age. Academic and expert on violence against women, Elizabeth Kelly (1988) provides insight into this when she refers to ‘a continuum of violence’ in relation to sexual violence. The continuum is not seen as progressive in the level of violence but, rather, a continual experience of violence (pp. 74-96). This is significant because representations of trafficked victims often present the trafficking scenario as a random one-off event of a young woman taken from a safe, protective environment into an unsafe one and subsequently used for sexual exploitation. However, the stories shared by these women reflect a very different reality. In their experiences, trafficking is but one more exposure in a pattern of a life time of insecurity, abuse and exploitation.
In making this claim, it is also vital to highlight the resilience and the survival strategies that these women exhibited from childhood. I was moved by the attitude of perseverance and hope that the women displayed. On no occasion did they describe themselves solely as victims. Striking examples of human agency, resilience and survival emerge in the narratives of the participants. One of the most powerful and striking learning experiences for me was that, for the most part, the participants were women of hope, wanting to share their experiences with others as a way of illustrating that childhood abuse and disadvantage can be overcome when supportive community structures are put in place and relationships of trust are built. This is not to deny in anyway the ongoing struggle that past experiences evoke.

**Sexual Abuse**

This section on childhood abuse will focus firstly on sexual abuse because so many of the narratives began with the women stating that they were sexually abused in their early developmental years. Some two thirds of the women interviewed revealed that they had been sexually abused in childhood, some of them being as young as three years when they were first sexually abused. Sexual abuse was perpetrated by male family members, in particular by fathers, brothers and uncles, and in some instances by neighbours in the community. Participants never spoke of random acts of sexual abuse by strangers but always within the context of family or a close knit community.

Many described the experience of sexual abuse as resulting in them feeling fearful, shamed, betrayed, powerless, depressed, anxious and confused about their sexuality. Some described themselves as silent and unable to function; yet others described defiance, anger and rage. This experience of sexual abuse represented a ‘turning point’ in these women’s lives and they expressed emotional reactions that are commonly experienced by children who have been sexually abused (Kendall-Tackett, Williams, & Finkelhor, 1993; Mullen, Martin, Anderson, Romans, & Herbison, 1996). My findings indicate that sexual abuse, as experienced by the participants, was gendered and perpetuated by systemic social acceptance of sexual abuse.

Riza, when reflecting on her father’s reaction to hearing that she was raped by her cousin, gives evidence of the attitude that victims were to blame:

> After that incident my uncle informed my father about the rape, and when my father knew about it, he battered me and I don’t know why he did this but there were all blue spots over my body and I was so ashamed because I was beaten in front of many people and I just cried. And then when I was six I was already in school but I just wondered why everyone in school knew that
I was raped. And I just wondered why everyone would bully me, would tease me and say, ‘Oh, you were raped by __________,’ the name of my cousin and so I was so ashamed.

[Riza]

Community stigmatisation of a child rape victim is accepted in this account. Not only does Riza experience humiliation and physical abuse from her father but she is also shamed by her local community. Acknowledging that gendered violence is a global phenomenon, this account highlights the role of gendered violence in the Philippines and the notion of young women being responsible for their own sexual abuse. This reflects the sentiments expressed by Filipino feminist and academic, Mary John Mananzan who argues that due to the nature of the social construction of women in the Philippines, women are blamed and feel guilty even in situations of rape (Mananzan, 1991). It was clear in this example that Riza was seen to be at fault and that she experienced feelings of shame, humiliation and stigmatisation. The notion of blame and shame is further illustrated in the narrative of Aleta who felt that she was in part to blame for her abuse because she did not scream or run away:

After that rape incident I cannot look that man in the eye, I felt ashamed... I felt ashamed because I did not do something when he raped me, I did not even shout for help. [Aleta]

Childhood stigmatisation is clearly illustrated in the following narrative, which demonstrates the impact of child sexual abuse on social status in society. Lanie became the object of other people's derogatory comments and even saw herself as unlovable. She saw sexual abuse as contributing to her stigmatisation and, indeed, her objectification, in that others would seek out her sexual favours. She was given clear messages that she was not a 'good' child:

I grew to be sensitive to the bad comments about me and make quarrel with those persons. I felt nobody loved me because they knew that I had sex with my neighbour, because that neighbour told them. That knowledge about me having sex with other boys made the other people around harass me and even small boys would say to me that they wanted to have sex with me. My neighbours would tell me that I am not a good child because of those incidents. [Lanie]

The notion of a good child is highlighted by Filipino sociologist, Agnes Camacho (1999), who claims that children are socialised in such a way that they are affirmed for being a good child. This means being faithful to prescribed behaviours such as: being obedient, undertaking family responsibilities and being respectful. Lanie leaves us in no
doubt about her marginalisation by the community and in particular her subjection to name calling, even by her own grandmother:

At that time, around the age of nine, in school and in the community I was already tagged as the girl who wants sex and my Lola would not call me by my name, she would call me negative names and I felt at that time, alone. Nobody would protect me, so I want to protect myself. I went against the rules and my behaviour was not as beautiful as a little girl and my elder sister didn't care about me and so I felt so alone. [Lanie]

Lanie describes how she felt she was, somehow, different from other girls. She indicates that she did not live up to the socially and culturally expected ‘beautiful little girl’.

These accounts highlight the gendered bias against these young girls, which I discussed in detail in Chapter 2 when outlining background information about the Philippines. The women who participated in this research were aware of the impact of childhood sexual abuse on their life outcomes and particularly in relation to their trafficking experiences. Many participants articulated through their life course calendars and through their interviews that early childhood sexual abuse was a life-changing event, and contributed to their further victimisation in later years: ‘Trafficking happens because the trafficked women have been sexually abused before.’ [Katrina]

Just as Katrina makes the link between her early childhood experience of abuse and her later victimisation, scholars of early childhood sexual abuse also draw out a clear correlation between childhood sexual abuse and further sexual victimisation in adulthood (Abu Ali & Al-Bahar, 2011; Beitchman et al., 1992; Farley, 2006; Finkelhor & Browne, 1985; Flowers, 2001; Lehti & Aromaa, 2006; Siegel & Williams, 2003). In literature describing childhood victimisation there is a general view that the younger the person, the greater will be the impact on their life course. Researcher David Finkelhor (1995) asserts that the developmental nature of childhood has implications for criminal victimisation: ‘childhood is a period of enormous change in size, strength, cognitive capacities, gender differentiation, relationships and social environments - all of which affect the potential for victimisation’ (Finkelhor, 1995, p. 178).

Narratives throughout this research indicate that childhood vulnerability did increase victimisation through sexual abuse and was a factor in further abuse. In her interview on childhood, Ester expressed the circumstances of her sexual abuse as significant to her life course outcomes. She believed that as a six year old her life circumstances were being determined by the sexual abuse that she was experiencing. She says that from a very young age she was persistently sexually abused by
members of her family and step family. She also draws attention to the fact that the sexual abuse was not known to her step mother, indicating the secrecy and silence surrounding these abusive early childhood events:

When I was six years old I was already raped by my stepbrothers because I stayed with my father and stepmother. But my stepmother did not know about it and so after I was raped by my stepbrothers, I was raped by my paternal uncle, by other people also, some relatives and even when I went to my aunt’s, the husband of my aunty sexually harassed me, touched my body but he was not able to rape me. [Ester]

Ester’s story points to an environment that is unsafe and allows perpetrators of sexual abuse to violate children within the family. She may even have felt a sense of betrayal by family who were supposed to be nurturing and loving (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985). A sense of betrayal by family members and the impact of sexual abuse within the family system is articulated by Riza who also experienced poverty and chronic domestic violence in her childhood. Riza’s rape was a life-changing event and ‘turning point’, which continued to impact on her life journey and life outcomes:

When I was five years old, I was raped by my cousin. For me it was the worst thing that happened in my life... Yes, I think the biggest factor was when I was raped when I was five, because it started there, the pains and the sorrows and then when I was growing up the attempted rape by my uncle so I think these are contributing to me being trafficked.[Riza]

Annabel states that her misery began when she was raped by her father at six years of age. Annabel’s account emphasizes the traumatic impact childhood rape had on her life. Each year, her mother’s birthday is a stark reminder of when her ‘misery started’. For her, this event was life-changing:

When I was six years old, my misery started. It was the birthday of my mother, when my father raped me. Every birthday, I feel bad because I can still remember what happened and that is the beginning of my bad, bad, bad. And after I was raped by my father, I went on with my life, pretending nothing happened and feeling I am still a child. After I was raped at six years old I did not want to stay in our house. [Annabel]

Rosanna sees the sexual abuse by her godfather as a turning point for her life outcomes. She indicates that her sexual abuse somehow determined her destiny:
I felt I was bound to become prostituted because people would sexually harass me, like when I have playmates and they are boys, they just tell me sexual words and one time when I was six years old even, my godfather would give me one peso, so I could play with his penis. So, I thought that I was on the path to be prostituted. [Rosanna]

The negative effects and stigmatisation felt by victims of abuse is highlighted by Finkelhor and Browne (1985) who claim that a self-image of shame, guilt and badness contribute to a belief that they are ‘spoiled goods’ (p. 535). It is clear in the women’s stories that their low self-image as a result of the sexual abuse also made them vulnerable to further abuse, particularly in the trafficking scenario. This notion of being tarnished is further developed in Emerita’s account of her feelings when experiencing long-term sexual abuse from her uncle:

I got goose bumps. I feel so dirty, so many men, my uncles, my cousins, that’s why I feel so Argh. Yuk. And that time I already know what is sex. I am matured. While I am growing up the anger has been very strong, the hatred. [Emerita]

Emerita speaks of her resentment at having knowledge of sex at such a young age. She indicates that she was aware of issues and concepts of sex that were not ‘normal’ for a child of her age.

Many participants began to question their own role in sexual abuse; some saw themselves as ‘sex addicts’, somehow claiming responsibility for the abuse. For Katrina, who was sexually abused by a young, male babysitter in the community:

So, it started when I was eight... and when I stayed at my aunt’s place and with the babysitter and with the little baby he would abuse me and it ran for many years because I was some kind of addicted to sex.[Katrina]

In conclusion, the effects of childhood sexual abuse are varied and complex. For some, the long-term effects are more severe than for others. Given that these participants experienced sexual abuse at such a young age; it is evident that this impacted on their social, emotional and physical development. The participants themselves identified childhood sexual abuse as impacting dramatically on their lives. Many felt a great sense of abandonment and betrayal by those expected to keep them safe and secure. They also felt stigmatised by family and other members of the community. In addition, some felt depressed, anxious and confused about their sexuality. Significantly, these feelings continued into adolescence and adulthood resulting in confusion about the trustworthiness of people.
A strong link between childhood sexual abuse and being sexually exploited in later life has been made by many authors (Abu Ali & Al-Bahar, 2011; Classen, Palesh, & Aggarwal, 2005; Farley et al., 2004; Kramer & Berg, 2003; Siegel & Williams, 2003). This relates to the life course paradigm and its principle of timing, which acknowledges that the timing of events in a person’s life influence the ways that they respond and develop over the life span. Reviewing the relationship between childhood sexual abuse and victimisation, researchers Catherine Classen et al., (2005) write that ‘approximately two of three individuals who are sexually victimized are revictimized’ (p. 124). Hence, all these factors, combined, created vulnerability in later life to being trafficked for sexual exploitation. A more extensive discussion on the effects of childhood sexual abuse is given in the next chapter when discussing sexualised behaviour.

**Physical Abuse**

Other forms of abuse were evident in the research. Physical abuse was perpetrated by parents, siblings or other family members such as aunts and uncles. The physical abuse ranged from slapping to beatings, in some instances resulting in permanent physical injuries such as a limp or scars on the body. In telling her story of childhood abuse, Leah describes her father once keeping the family captive by threatening them with guns and knives. Since she was upstairs, she ran from her father, only to fall metres from the window to the ground below and damaging her leg:

When I had my leg sprain, most of our neighbours said that I cannot walk alone and I was out of school for a month...and when I went back to school I just used my left leg to walk, but it's not walking it's jumping using my left leg... So, it’s twisted, but good I can walk until I really tried my best, until I walk...My father was so abusive; all of us were physically abused by our father. When he spanked me I ran because I think running is a way of being free. [Leah]

Running away was a common response by participants in the research. They felt that their only escape from the abuse was to run away. Dulce showed me the scars on her arms as she spoke about the harsh punishment imposed upon her:

There was one time when I roamed around the city and I was late in going back to my uncle’s house, because at that time I was not very familiar with the city and that is why I came home late and then my uncle thought I ran away, so when I went home he tied me with a wire that whenever you move, the more
it will become tightened and then he also burned me here
(Points to her arm) with some acid. [Dulce]

Physical scars are reminders of the abuse experienced. However, some participants felt rejected and hurt by the physical abuse they experienced, even though they had no physical scars. Raquel was frustrated at being beaten by her mother despite her best efforts to help:

When I was thirteen we were financially hard up at that time, so I was also physically battered by my Mama, even if I take care of my younger siblings, she also battered me, physically abused me and I thought, What is this, I tried hard but then still I get some punishment, physical punishment from my mum. [Raquel]

Cathy expresses her pain and humiliation from the abuse of her father and aunty after she was unjustly accused by her auntie of not being attentive in school. Cathy’s mother had died earlier and she was left under the guardianship of her punitive aunt. Her only hope of love and care was from her father, but he, too, rejected her:

She told my father that I am not doing well in school, I am not getting to school, all the negative things, so my father was so angry that he beat me and also my aunty scolded me and spanked me. My body was inserted in the middle of the door and then I was beaten with a belt. That is how my father beat me, but also while my father was spanking me with the belt, my aunty also grabbed my hair. (laughing nervously). It was not so much the pain of the physical abuse, but that my father said to me, “I will treat you as dead. You do not have a father and mother”. That was more painful than the physical abuse. [Cathy]

These stories reveal once again the presence and acceptance of gendered violence. In these scenarios of violence experienced in the home, many young girls suffered cruel physical punishment from family members. Some of it resulted in physical scars but the emotional deprivation it represented seemed more pervasive.

**Emotional Abuse**

Experiences of emotional abuse were also described by the women, especially around the stigmatisation of children. For example, some children were left in the care of grandparents who made it known that caring for them was a burden. Others experienced stigmatisation from extended family members who regarded the child as one born out of wedlock or born from a scandalous relationship. Many children were
verbally chastised for having been left by their parents in the care of other family members and so experienced significant verbal abuse by extended family. These stories indicate intergenerational marginalisation as some of the participants related that their mothers were rejected by family and the community before them. This issue of women’s stigmatisation is discussed in Chapter 2 and illustrates how women’s status in society is influenced by a sexual morality that reflects a double standard whereby men could be sexually promiscuous while women must remain chaste. Some narratives reflected childhood emotions centred on shame and stigmatisation. Rosanna was born out of wedlock and transferred from one carer to another because her mother died soon after her birth. She experienced these ‘transitions’ as traumatic and was finally left in the care of her step-sister whom she called Mamay, and it was she who told her of her plight:

    So, at age five or six, my Mamay told me about everything about my life and then I started to feel like, shame, because I always heard people say, “Oh, it’s shameful to be a mistress” and how I was the child of a mistress. [Rosanna]

In describing her feelings retrospectively, Aleta emphasises the impact of being born out of wedlock in Philippine society, and her belief that the circumstances of her birth contributed to her feelings of being disgraced:

    After I was born, I labelled myself as a disgrace, because my mother just stayed in the house of my father, just because she has nowhere to go and nowhere to stay and she was forced to become like the wife of my father, so even when I was still inside the womb of my mother I felt I was not good because of the circumstances. [Aleta]

Emerita adds her voice: ‘I feel very ashamed because, the place of my father’s side, the place of my mother’s side, I am very bad’ [Emerita].

Rosanna articulates the impact of being stigmatised by family and by others. She feels that being labelled as a child born out of an extra-marital affair made her vulnerable. This reflects again the influence of social and cultural norms in the Philippines, which permits male promiscuity yet forbids women to exercise any sexual autonomy. Rosanna feels that this stigmatisation made her life ‘no good’. Other participants also felt that their stigmatisation had a significant impact on their emotional and psychological state:

    Whenever there were visitors in the house, they would ask the mother, the wife of my father, “Who is this child?” and she would answer, “Oh, don’t you know, she is the daughter of my
husband’s other woman. And people would start to stare and say, “Oh”. So there were many negative comments about me. The wife of my father would always tell me, “Oh you’re bad, like your mother who was a mistress and a husband snatcher.” So all these things I had placed on my head and I felt so bad about it and I think life is no good for me at that time.[Rosanna]

Stigmatisation had a huge impact on the women’s self-image. Many felt that they were worthless and wished that they had not been born. Some felt that they were destined to remain marginalised throughout their lives. The effects of stigmatisation by others in their everyday environment is discussed by Finkelhor (1985) as, ‘children may be additionally stigmatised by people in the environment who now impute other negative characteristics to the victim, for example, loose morals or spoiled goods’ (p. 533). These projected negative characteristics, combined with low self-esteem, meant that some of the participants felt that the trafficking experience was something they deserved. Their experiences of stigmatisation resulted in them moving toward further marginalisation. Finkelhor (1985) explains that a possible response by a stigmatised child is to ‘gravitate to various stigmatised levels of society. Thus, they may get involved in drug or alcohol abuse, in criminal activity or in prostitution’ (p. 535). This was, indeed, the experience of many of the participants who described themselves as rebellious or seeking out those who also felt marginalised, and thus increasing their vulnerability to being trafficked.

Financial Abuse

Some participants and their families experienced acute financial deprivation and for some of them this resulted in the exploitation of the children for financial gain. Participants spoke of having to till the soil at a very young age, working long hours and not being paid. Others described unofficial work such as caring for younger children as a daily chore and many left school at mid to late elementary level in order to help financially support themselves and their families.

Writings on child work in the Philippines are clear that it is not uncommon to find a child working at a young age. In fact, authors on working children in the Philippines claim one in six children need to work in order to help support the family (Aldaba, Lanzona, & Tamangan, 2004). Children are encouraged to fulfil a social responsibility by participating in family productivity, as long as it does not compromise their education and general wellbeing. In many instances it enables the family to survive economically (Aldaba et al., 2004; Camacho, 1999; Gunn & Ostos, 1992; Sakellariou & Lall, 2000; Sancho-Liao, 1994; Shah, 1984). However, instances described by participants are
more sinister than socially acceptable and indicate that, as children, they felt that they were used and abused financially and were deprived of educational opportunities. Some one third of the women spoke directly about the work they were expected to do in childhood, and felt that the expectations on them were not reasonable for their age.

Lanie does not feel valued for her contribution to the family income; rather she feels like a scapegoat and resents her treatment:

At the age of eleven, I stayed with my aunty again, because my aunty has a store I did house hold work and I also do work at the store and I was somewhat like an all-round helper with no compensation. And I feel what happened to me way back in the rural area, like nagging and everything came back into my life because my aunty was a big nagger and whatever happened in the store she would blame me. Like, if there was something lacking or our merchandise would vanish I would be blamed. [Lanie]

In the eyes of these participants their treatment was unfair in that they were required to work beyond their capabilities. This, somehow, contributed to their feelings of deprivation and abuse:

They treated us bad. My Lola and the other relatives blamed us, me and my siblings for being poor. They thought we brought poverty to them and that was why we were made to do the farming, till the soil. It was six, very early in the morning until night time we go to the farm and every Saturday we were paid and we were paid 100 pesos a day. So we were paid on a weekly basis, but my Lola would get everything so that she said she could have food on the table. [Ester]

Overall, the narratives of the participants demonstrate that most experienced one or more types of abuse during childhood. This abuse was the beginning of a long stream of abuses into early adulthood. Emotionally, many felt shame, despair, regret, guilt, powerlessness, sadness, betrayal, fear, anger, abandonment and stigmatisation. A number of participants responded to this childhood abuse by running away in order to seek a safer place. However, it seems that rather than finding solace and a better place, they were vulnerable to further abuse and exploitation through the experience of being trafficked for sex.
Conclusion

In conclusion, the women’s stories of their childhood are characterised by trauma, deprivation and abuse intersecting with environments of poverty, limited schooling, rural isolation and community violence. Poverty was experienced predominantly as a lack of food on the table, while educational limitations highlighted the tensions between children’s earning potential and the financial investment in their schooling. Rural isolation pointed to the substantial variation in community connectedness and infrastructure for those living in remote areas compared to their city counterparts. Finally, the presence of community violence and, in a number of instances family violence during their childhood, lays bare their vulnerability to victimisation at an early age.

The maltreatment of children was a prominent feature in the childhood narratives of the participants and once again points to a developing life trajectory of disadvantage. Young women described childhoods marred by abuse. This abuse included sexual, physical, emotional, and financial abuse. Narratives strands shared by participants indicate that these experiences of abuse were defining moments in their life course in that they shaped their future life experiences. The abuse left many participants feeling fearful, betrayed, powerless, depressed, anxious, and confused about their sexuality. In addition to the abuse, many participants felt stigmatised by family and indeed the wider community. Most felt that they were destined to live a life of poverty and disadvantage and some saw themselves as deserving of their circumstances, leading them to gravitate towards other marginalised individuals with whom they could identify. The feelings of blame and shame were key factors that inhibited the childhood growth and development of these women.

The women’s stories, no matter how difficult we may find it to hear them, provide invaluable insights into the pathways to sexual exploitation and pave the way for the next chapter, which will focus on childhood relationships and behaviours.
Chapter 5
Linked Lives: Voicing Significant Relationships and Behaviours

When I was seven years old my father left me….after a year my mother left me. [Emerita]

Introduction
The previous chapter provided a background to childhood environments as described by the participants. The circumstances, memories and events that they recall create a picture of childhoods largely marred by deprivation, stigmatisation and abuse. Emerging from these narratives is a developing life trajectory of vulnerability, which indicates intergenerational and systemic deprivation. This chapter builds on the environmental factors present in childhood and adolescence by exploring significant relationships and behaviours, as drawn from the narratives in the first in-depth interview. The focus is on how participants were influenced and affected by these relationships.

Drawing on the life course perspective I begin the chapter with a discussion on the notion of linked lives, giving particular attention to the issue of absent mothers, which was highly prevalent among the interviewees. The discussion then turns to other significant relationships and to notions of blended families. The significance and influence of peers is highlighted, followed by a conclusion outlining the impact of strained primary relationships on the women. The second part of the chapter is concerned with self-identified childhood and adolescent behaviours. The behaviours ranged from withdrawn and sullen to rebellious and aggressive, and are identified by the women as a response to their circumstances; they are also evidence of the psychological impact of childhood events and transitions on these participants.

Significant behavioural responses included the use of drugs and alcohol, self-protection through defensive mechanisms, sexualised behaviour and running away. These childhood behaviours provide an entree into understanding other behaviours and responses in adolescence and early adulthood and they offer crucial insights into the trajectories leading to sex trafficking of the participants. Throughout this chapter I draw out the complex interplay of experiences and the emotional impact that they had on the lives of these participants who described an array of emotions, ranging from deep depression to joy and elation. Agency and resilience are also discussed, highlighting the notions of dignity and self-preservation.

A key principle of life course theory is that of ‘linked lives’, which highlights the interdependent nature of relationships, particularly within families, and suggests
patterns of mutual advantage and disadvantage (Elder & Giele, 2009; Hutchison, 2005). During childhood, primary relationships are integral to the development of other relationships over the lifespan. The women’s narratives indicate that the relationships they experienced in childhood were many and varied. On the whole, primary parental roles were not fulfilled, with the participants giving a strong indication that many mothers and fathers were absent during their childhood. In the absence of parents, family members, particularly grandmothers, acted as the primary carers. Extended family such as aunts and uncles became significant figures in the lives of these children, and in some instances step parents were involved. Others were in the care of adoptive parents or extended family. All of these arrangements, whether formal or informal, impacted the family life trajectory of these women, creating a yearning for a stable family environment.

As discussed in Chapter 2, family in the Philippines is considered to be the primary place of belonging and socialisation. Typically, families have functioned within the patriarchal model, whereby the mother is considered to provide the day-to-day care for the children and undertake household tasks, whilst the father is considered to be the primary breadwinner and decision maker. However, over the past few decades, this dynamic has changed, as illustrated in the global and economic paradigms. The demand for women’s work within the ‘caring’ sector has meant that in many instances women have become the primary earners in the family and have had to migrate for work, either within the Philippines or internationally. Therefore, families have become dependent on the women’s earning for their survival (Doan & Popkin, 1993; Parreñas, 2001). This has involved change to family organisation and structure. Whilst extended families, particularly grandparents, have traditionally been involved in the care of children in the Philippines, it is now a reality that many households are headed singly by fathers or extended family members, and care of children in these types of households is generally undertaken by female relations or older female siblings (Parreñas, 2002, 2003).

Some participants in the interviews felt that as children they managed to create strong bonds with primary carers, regardless of whether or not they were their parents; others struggled greatly to find adequate emotional security in their childhood environment. A significant issue emerging during the interviews was the absence of mothers. Two thirds of the participants interviewed experienced maternal absence. Participants revealed that the absence of their mothers had a profound influence on their growth and development.
Absent Mothers

In writing about absent mothers I am mindful of a gender bias that may incline the reader to make judgements about maternal capabilities and responsibilities. This possible bias is highlighted in the writings of feminist academic Geraldine Pratt (2009), who, when reflecting on Filipino mothers and family separation claims that, ‘maternal discourse typically operates within a moralistic and polarized ethical frame, and within this framing it is difficult for absent mothers to be seen as good mothers, as capable and caring mothers who deserve empathy’ (p. 8). Likewise, feminist academic Rhacel Parrenas (2002), when writing about the ‘care crisis’ in the Philippines, states that media discourse tends to vilify and morally discipline mothers working abroad. She claims that mothers are accused by the media of abandoning their children, rather than being recognised for making a sacrifice for the financial survival of the family and the nation’s economy. In highlighting the issue of absent mothers, it is not my intention to vilify or ‘morally discipline’ Filipino mothers. Rather, I hope to reflect the experience of those participants in this study who were significantly affected by the absence of their mothers. Whilst the mothers of trafficked women were not the focus of this research, it is clear from participant narratives that mothers experienced similar personal and socio-economic trials and struggles as their daughters, indicating the inter-generational nature of the women’s burden as discussed in Chapter 2.

The circumstances of a maternal absence varied; some were due to their early death, and others were absent due to employment overseas or at a distance from their home town. Some participants described their mothers as having settled permanently elsewhere in a new family setting, whilst others were unsure of the reason for their absence. Maternal absence due to death is clearly articulated by Eva who grieved the loss of her mother, who had died when she was four. Eva emphasises how she ‘longed’ for her mother’s love despite the love she had from her father. She articulates the significance of her mother having died when she herself was so young, indicating that it was her earliest memory in life:

When I was a child I did not feel the love of a mother, of course she passed away when I was four. So now, during the childhood days I really longed for a mother’s love. Although I am very close to my father, I long for a mother’s love…My earliest memory was when I was four years old, when my mother died, I really could not accept it because I thought I was too young to have lost a mother and how could I survive. I still have my father but it’s different if your Mum is already gone. [Eva]
In describing the circumstances of her mother’s death, Lanie tends to be rather more detached than Eva:

_When I was an infant my Lola told me that my mother died when I was three months old. She said it was because of cancer but I don’t know what kind of cancer it was. So my Lola told me that right after the burial of my mom, my father left and I was put into the custody of my Lola._ [Lanie]

Two participants reported that their mothers had died a violent death. In the case of Cathy, her mother was absent soon after Cathy’s birth. This absence became permanent in her mind when as a teenager she attended the funeral of her mother who was killed brutally: ‘She was pregnant when she died. My mother was battered by her live-in partner. That’s why she died pregnant’ [Cathy]. Similarly, Leah’s mother was brutally murdered by her husband. In a graphic account, Leah gives voice to the gruelling circumstances of her mother’s death:

_But when my mother died I really had that feeling that something has happened to my family. So I went home and there I found my mother inside the coffin already and what was so painful was that he did not stop, not once, but there were plenty like chop chop and they said the cause of the conflict was that my father was jealous of my mother... that resulted in her death._ [Leah]

The above accounts give an indication of the level of violence to which some participants were exposed. It also exemplifies the role of gendered violence discussed in detail in Chapters 1 and 2. As Leah reflects on the experience of her mother’s brutal death she describes her desolation:

_I wanted to kill myself also and I blamed myself [Crying]. I blame myself. Every time before when my father and mother quarrel it’s me only among the siblings that would try to pacify them._ [Leah]

Family violence also featured in other ways whereby maternal absences were due to escaping a violent partner. Riza’s mother was repeatedly abused by her husband to such an extent that she remained separated from her children for extended periods of time. This illustrates the imbedded nature of relationships, in that, what affects the mother ultimately affects her children.

_Even with those incidents I really continued my studies, but I was sad because my father always quarrelled with my mother. And every time they quarrelled my mum would go to Lapu Lapu_
City because we had a relative there and she would not come home for two months, for a long time, so the more I hated my father because of that. [Riza]

The incidence of violence perpetrated against these women, had a deep impact on the lives of their children. Riza was so disturbed by the violence that she contemplated suicide at the age of nine:

Before, I also attempted suicide... That was the time that I was emotionally drained, I wanted to surrender already and I asked God ‘Why did you let me be born in this world, it’s full of sorrows’ but now no more. [Riza]

In many instances they grieved their mother’s absence and felt disdain towards their fathers. For all of these participants the presence of violence perpetrated against their mothers directly impacted on their own development and was a significant issue in their lives.

Economic circumstances also contributed to the absence of mothers, illustrating the personal impacts global and state economic policies have on women in particular. The need to gain an income to support the family was a reason for mothers’ absences from the family home Some travelled quite a distance to secure an income, which often resulted in long absences. Emerita clearly attributes the absence of her mother to her abuse; she feels that if her mother had been present, her life circumstances would have been different:

Yes, if my family are complete, if my mother did not go to another country for work, it would not have happened to me that my uncle would abuse me...Because I said that ‘Where were you when I was raped?’ I think she didn’t understand because I shouted at her and she cried. So I think she did not understand, she always called me, she always text me, ‘What happened? Why are you like this?’... I cried because really she don’t know. I said ‘you don’t know what happened to me when she left me and she gave me to my Lola.’ I cried because I was ashamed of myself because I cried again. For me, I am very ashamed because I don’t like them to see me crying. I ran and I did not come back to my house. [Emerita]

Writings on risk factors associated with childhood sexual abuse consider the absence of a mother during childhood as very significant. A study about potential risk factors for childhood sexual abuse made particular reference to the mother-child relationship. In their studies, the authors found that a large number of respondents who
were sexually abused in childhood also had a mother absent for extended periods of time (Fleming, Mullen, & Bammer, 1997). The principle of ‘linked lives’ is apparent in these accounts.

In other situations mothers were absent due to addictions such as gambling and/or drugs and alcohol. They might have been physically present to their daughters but they were unable to offer daily maternal care due to their addictions.

Whenever he sent money to my Mama, she would just use it in gambling, because I think that she was just so engaged in gambling that she spent most of our money on gambling. And whenever, my father would send a sack of rice, instead of eating it, my mother would sell it to have money for the gambling. [Teresita]

Abandonment of the family by some mothers due to an extramarital affair was also apparent, with the mother establishing a new relationship and family:

My worst memory was when my mum had a guy who admired her. Because I don’t like her to remarry and because of that she has left with no time for us and I think if only she had not entertained that man we would have been closer to each other. [Cristy]

Relinquishing the daughter was also evident, in one instance where a daughter was sold for profit:

When I was brought by my mother to Bantayan, I really cried a lot. I asked my mother where will she bring me and she said ‘I will sell you to anyone’ and then I said ‘I am a person, not an object to be sold’. And my mother said ‘Oh, I will sell you so that I can have money for my vices. [Belen]

For Belen, her sale by her mother was a life-changing event. In this situation, she regards her value was really only of a monetary nature and indicates that even as a child she was objectified. Belen goes on to say how it changed her life course:

I had real difficulty in thinking why my mother did that to me.

That’s why I was cared for by other persons and I was transferred from one centre to the other. [Belen]

The effects of maternal absence on those I interviewed were many and varied, though all occurrences had a significant impact on a girl’s growth and development, and many expressed their sorrow at the absence of their mothers during childhood. Some described the childhood experience as one of survival. Cathy highlights the
importance of linked lives over the life course as she grieved the absence of her mother and wondered what it would be like to 'feel her love':

I was not very sad at her death, but I pitied that we did not have much time to be with. Until even now I am looking for a mother figure. Although I was loved by my grandma, but it's not the same as the love I really wanted of a mother. If I could let time be back, I would love to have my mother, even for one month, so that I can feel her love. [Cathy]

A significant response to mother absence was anger at the mother. This became evident during the interviews when women described their feelings towards their mothers. Ester spent the first six years of her life with her father and paternal grandmother after her parents separated at the time of her birth. She expresses her frustration at not having had contact with her biological mother:

I was sad because for the six years, I only saw my Lola and father and when my father got a live-in partner I thought she was my mother. But only when I was six I knew and I met my biological mother and I cannot imagine that she was my mother and I was mad at her.[Ester]

Katrina was frustrated with her mother, who she felt had abandoned her and her siblings for an alternative life in Cebu City:

[Begins to cry] All I can say about my Mama is that she always makes promises to people, like I think she only wants to see my elder sister and she doesn't show her love to me, she doesn't even hug me and kiss and she did not tell me how she loved me and she doesn't know how to show that she loved me. But I love my mother, but at the same time I hate her, don't like her. I think she only brought me to the market because I was already big at that time and I can be utilised by her. I can run errands and anything. [Katrina]

The ambivalence expressed by Katrina is shared by others who experienced mixed emotions in relation to their mothers. Importantly, it indicates how interlinked the lives of mothers and daughters are. It is clear that for these participants the absence of their mothers was a painful reality and they expressed this during the interviews.

Some interviewees felt a great sense of abandonment at having been left by their mothers in childhood. Teresita described her feelings towards her mother who had left her and her siblings to take up residence with her partner and establish a new family:
And then I asked my mother, ‘Why did you desert us?’ She just said, ‘Why, did I desert you when you were also crawling?’ She means that she left when I was already big, but she just doesn't know all the problems I had, all the challenges I faced. Just to be rearing my younger siblings, it was so hard and I am really mad at her right now. [Teresita]

Likewise, Sar was left in the care of her grandmother, whom she loved very much, but she felt perplexed as to why her mother left and started a new family:

At five, all I can remember is that I was happy because I was with my Lola. But one to five years, although I was happy with my Lola, I still missed my mother. I have regrets about my mother having left me at that time. [Sar]

Jovie became curious about her biological mother when her adoptive parents explained to her that they had discovered her abandoned in a banana plantation:

I asked myself, ‘Why did my mother give me to another person?’ Maybe there are plenty of us, brothers and sisters and there was no money to buy milk for all of us and maybe that was why I was placed in a banana plantation. [Jovie]

Participants seemed greatly perplexed by the absence of their mothers. They questioned their own value and they tried to understand how their mothers had come to abandon them, but ultimately, they felt a great sense of sorrow. It seems that the absence of a mother was felt deeply by those interviewed. Many had experienced these effects persistently from very early childhood. Those interviewed considered that the effects of their mother being absent contributed to their subsequent circumstances, and interviewees often felt that the direction of their lives was influenced by the fact that they did not have mothers present to them in childhood. As a result, some of the girls had been expected to undertake a role transition and act as mother to younger siblings, in effect, both caring for younger siblings and managing the household:

My mother left us, but my father had already died. So, I stood as the Mama and the Papa of my siblings until the time I was sixteen or seventeen. I was so tired of having this role and I said to myself I did not enjoy being a child…The feeling that caused me to have the feeling about suicide is I was already tired both emotionally and physically. [Teresita]

To conclude, those I interviewed felt that the absence of their mothers during childhood had a significant impact on their early childhood development, and some believed it was a contributing factor to their being trafficked in their teenage years and
early adulthood. Participants in this research chose to place emphasis on this particular issue because they felt it was significant in their life course. For many of these girls, their mothers ‘choice’ to leave the family home was not a rejection of their daughters or family but a result of political and economic factors that forced them to move beyond the family setting. Poverty, the lack of local work opportunities and the demand for women’s domestic paid labour, were amongst the reasons for this separation.

Other Significant (Primary) Carers
Grandmothers formed significant primary caring roles with their grandchildren. For some, this resulted in strong bonds of love and connection, whilst others resented the relationship. Sar, who lived with her grandmother from birth, formed a significant bond with her:

My Lola and uncles and aunties treated me like family. I was very loved. I was content when I lived there and I thought it is fortunate for me to be left under the care of my Lola rather than my mother bringing me to her second family. [Sar]

Like Sar, others were left in the care of grandparents from birth, however some felt rejected by grandparents and did not have a close relationship with them.

The absence of fathers due to death or working away from the home was also significant to some participants, but did not appear to have the same impact as the absence of mothers. Emerita describes her anger at her father’s absence and neglect of her and her sister:

We were very mad with my father because we don’t have food, only rice, because we have only sacked rice. He just left. We were very confused and I cried. My sister was very mad because my father said ‘just get money from your Ate [a term describing a close older woman], I sent money to her’. My sister said bullshit it is like this. I hope that you will never come back and that we will forget each other. Forget that you have children here. And then I cried because I don’t want my father to forget us. [Emerita]

In addition there were blended families made up of step parents and step brothers and sisters. One participant experienced being raised by her devoted lesbian aunty and her partner:

And later on this aunty transferred me to another aunty who is a lesbian and then I grew up with them. This lesbian aunty has a partner, so both of them I referred as my parents... The happiest moment in my life was when I was together with my
aunty and her live-in partner because they treated me as a real daughter. [Aleta]

It seems that aside from the absence of mothers, it was not so much who was the significant childhood carer but, rather, how they were cared for. The above participant suggests that parents and parenting are about being ‘treated as a real daughter’. For Aleta her relationship with her aunty and her partner was a positive and secure experience and one that she valued.

Peers
Other relationships described by the women as significant were those with peers. Some women described their peers as the ones who understood them and shared similar experiences. Whilst they were a great source of support and fun, some participants recognised that their peers could also be a bad influence on them, as they articulated in their narrations:

High school days, it was the time that I had this trouble with a teenager. I have to stand against temptations and during my high school days, because of the influence of my peers, I knew how to utter bad words, and I was at a public high school where different kinds of school gangs go. So, I had a difficult time adjusting and controlling myself not to be influenced by them. [Sar]

The notion of gangs and camaraderie among peers was a common experience of growing up for a number of participants. Some believed this led them to ‘vices’ or bad habits and yet, Gina clearly articulates that it was with her friends that she found meaning:

During the circumstances of my being pregnant, between 11-16 these were the years that I was at the height of going always with my friends, and having these vices like going to discos and it’s because I thought, I find more meaning in my life with my friends. I feel I was happier with them, because they supported me. [Gina]

For some participants the presence of peers was their only solace and they felt supported by each other. For example, Eva states that she was happiest when she was with her friends and not attending school:

My happy memories during elementary would be cutting classes, having crushes and when I do not attend classes we would just go to malls with my friends. [Eva]
In her study on street children in the Philippines, researcher Teresita Silva (1996) observes: ‘As troubled children seek their own level they find an anchor usually among their peers, who understand their situation’ (p. 281). This camaraderie established among peers was a form of comfort to those who felt so ostracised in their own family setting.

**Childhood and Adolescent Behaviour**
Participants in this research described distinctive ways of responding to their circumstances. Some exhibited multiple behaviours, and others responded in one particular way. The most common behaviours among the participants were to: run away; use drugs and/or alcohol; rebel; and become overly sexualised in relationships.

**Running Away**
Many of the women related instances of running away as a child or adolescent. In most instances young girls were running away from an abusive family situation. Some were also escaping shame and stigmatisation from the community.

Researcher Joan Reid (2011) provides interesting insights into disadvantaged girl’s vulnerability to sexual exploitation in the United States. Drawing on the theoretical framework of General Strain Theory, she argues that strain produced by life adversity pushes young women into dysfunctional coping strategies such as running away. This results, according to Reid, in a ‘heightened vulnerability to entrapment in child sex trafficking’ (p. 147). Likewise, young girls in the Philippines who were experiencing multiple forms of oppression made the choice to escape. In the following account Leah indicates that running away was an attempt to make a new beginning:

> I ran because I think running is a way of being free and even if that was my environment I really had that dream to really sink the past and to be good later. [Leah]

Leah chose her own action in response to her oppressive circumstances, illustrating her strong sense of agency. Whilst this was risky behaviour and resulted in her becoming vulnerable to sex trafficking, she felt that it was her road to freedom. Likewise, Jovie recounts that it is when she had a problem that she ran away:

> I really don’t know what causes me to go out, but I do know that every time I have a problem I run away. So here when I have some conflicts inside I go out, just the same when I was still very young. Every time I have problem I run away. [Jovie]

In the following narrative Rosanna also seeks out new beginnings as she felt she did not belong. However, running away led to her further abuse through rape:
At fourteen after those incidents in my life, I felt that people in the community didn’t have respect for me... So I was fed up with my life in that area so I ran away and I stayed in the house of my friend and I stayed there for one year and the mother of my friend treated me very well, she even promised to send me to school, in a private school to do secondary school, which made my friend jealous of me and so again I felt that I did not belong in that family and so I ran away. And again, in running away I met a man who raped me. [Rosanna]

Feminist lawyer and academic, Michelle Oberman (2000), provides insight into behaviours such as Rosanna’s when she claims that adolescence is a time of transition, and that experimentation is part of this life stage and it is because of lack of life experience they are prone to mistakes: And ‘nowhere is this tendency toward misjudgement more pernicious than in the area of sexuality, in which an adolescents age-appropriate naiveté renders them uniquely susceptible to coercion and abuse’ (Oberman, 2000, p. 710). In her narration, Rosanna attempts to explain why she ran away and what she was seeking. Her narrative highlights her strong desire to belong somewhere and to really be loved:

When I ran away, before and until now, I really wanted to find a person who would truly understand me, who would truly love me, since birth I have not… although I was loved by my Mamay but deep inside there was someone lacking, so I am looking for a person who would love me, who would understand me, who would believe me. [Rosanna]

Cathy was seeking an alternative in running away because of her father’s rejection:

I even ran away, ran away from home from my Lola, because I thought, ‘Why is it that my father would only give money not his time for me’. [Cathy]

Some young girls ran away to neighbours or within the local community and others moved a great distance, often from country to city. Dulce, who was trafficked in Cebu when she was twelve years of age describes her first stages of running away from home, ‘At this time also I started to run away from home. First attempts were just inside our community, but later I came here to Cebu’ [Dulce].The dangers of running away are illustrated by Jovie, who ran from an abusive situation, only to find herself in yet another unsafe predicament:

When I was sixteen I also ran away from home and I remember that I went to a small hut along the sea shore and I didn’t know
that there were gangs of young boys. And there were two
gangs of boys and one gang came to the hut where I stayed.
And I was nearly raped also by them. Good that the other gang
helped me so that I was not raped. [Jovie]

In Emma's narrative she ran away because of a difficult employer and in seeking a
better employment option became easy prey to a recruiter who deceived her about the
employment conditions.

But while in Cebu City I also had a friend, a domestic helper
also and she told me to transfer to another employer, so I
transferred but I found out that they were not very good so I ran
away. When I ran away from my employer I needed money for
my own food and everything so I was able to go to a highway in
Mandaue City and I saw there a sign saying ‘wanted a
receptionist’. [Emma]

Annabel speaks of wanting to assist her family that is struggling financially.
Despite her mother’s objections, at fourteen she ran away to seek work so as to
support her family, but this made her vulnerable to deceitful employers:

…after what happened with my employer, I went home and
there my father nagged me. So I thought I had to work again.
So it was timely that my maternal aunt came there and she
asked me whether I wanted to work and I said yes and she told
me to go to another municipality in Bohol and you can meet the
daughter of the one who will bring you to Cebu. So, I went there
the following day and I was given my transport fare back to my
place and I asked my mother for permission to go to Cebu, but
my mother did not approve because she said I was too young,
‘what will happen to you, there in Cebu?’'. Despite the objection
of my mother I really decided to go, partly because I didn’t want
to stay in our house because my father was there. On the other
hand I pitied my mother so much because she did all the
responsibilities at home, but I had to go. So the following day I
went to the girl who would take me to Cebu. [Annabel]

In articulating their stories a number of the participants felt that running away
had contributed to their vulnerability to trafficking. On the other hand, many believed
the risk was worth taking. Christy defends her choice:

If I had not run away I would have finished my schooling, and
then finished a degree and worked. However, on the other
hand, because I ran away from place to place, I found out that I
can be alone and independent. [Cristy]

Aleta tells of being evicted from the home by her older sister who was her guardian. In
this instance, she felt that running away was her only option: ‘Yeah and then she told
me to get out of the house, so really at nine years old, I already ran away’ [Aleta].
Belen had been placed in a children’s home after having been abandoned by the
family. She ran away from there and as a result was trafficked: ‘I was fourteen years
old at that time and that’s the time I was recruited and then I was trafficked to the
Kamagayan’ [Belen]. Running away was the common response to situations of abuse
or neglect.

This type of response to abusive behaviour is noted in the writings of Melissa
Farley (2003), a researcher on post-traumatic stress and trafficking: ‘Migration itself is
frequently a consequence of circumstances of degradation, violence, and
dehumanization’ (Farley, 2003, p. 64). In most instances girls were seeking a safer
place and a new beginning and were seeking to forget the past. Sadly, running away
often resulted in further abuse and neglect.

The migration paradigm, as discussed in Chapter 1 posits migration as a causal
link to sex trafficking. While the women’s narratives of running away partially reflect
elements of the migration paradigm, they also suggest an alternative frame in which
they can be seen as ‘internally displaced persons’, which is commonly used to describe
people who are on the move from natural disasters or civil war. In this instance, the
mobility of these young girls was primarily the result of gender violence and exploitation
experienced in the home and the local community.

**Drugs and Alcohol**

Many narratives included reference to exploration and use of drugs and alcohol at a
young age. For many, using drugs and alcohol was a way of forgetting the abusive
family situation. This is the case for Emerita who was left in the care of her
grandmother and was raped by her uncle, but told no one:

> Because I had a classmate who was older than me and boys,
> they are using it. I asked them if I could use it and they said,
> ‘no, you are just nine years old,’ and they are laughing and then
> they said ‘okay, you try’ That time we were so close, they are
> friends and I share with them that my life is so bullshit. They are
> in the same situation like all families, but I did not tell them
> about my abuse. I just tell them about my feelings, about my
> father, my opinions of my family. We would drink. [Emerita]
Despite the abiding poverty, drugs and alcohol seemed to be accessible to young people and children. Lanie, having been sexually abused by a family member and then stigmatised by the community describes her exploration of drugs and alcohol at the age of eleven:

I already had taken marijuana because my cousin taught me and I already smoked. I already had alcohol at eleven because these were very accessible to me through the store. [Lanie]

Gina, who was raped by a neighbour, began using alcohol at a very young age: ‘The taking of drugs started when I was 16, but the smoking and taking of alcohol started at eleven years’ [Gina]. In a number of circumstances participants were introduced to drugs and alcohol by friends. For some it was a recreational activity, and yet others clearly described it as a way of numbing the pain. Rosanna, who acted as parent to her siblings, describes the process of her introduction to drugs:

So because of despair I joined my friends and then one of my friends said... because during the age of fifteen to sixteen I stood as the Mama and the Papa and it was so tiresome because I worked in the day and I worked in the night. And physically I was exhausted and also mentally, I was thinking, “Why has this happened to me, why are my parents gone, why is the responsibility of being a parent on me, so, with my peers, one said, ‘to have a remedy, to solve your tired body you take drugs’ and I experimented with drugs and true enough I felt no pain already and I was not tired anymore... At that time I had no one to tell about my frustration and sadness, even though I was with them they thought that I am happy, but I was not and every time I am hurt I would just resort to drugs so that I can pacify my feelings. [Rosanna]

Drugs and alcohol for most were used as a panacea and it seems they were readily accessible to children. Some were exposed to drugs and, in particular, alcohol from an early age. Some described their parents as being heavy drinkers or alcoholics and followed their example. Other children experimented with their peers and used alcohol as a way of blocking out their troubles and relieving themselves of the pain of their circumstances.

Rebellion

Some participants described their behaviour as rebellious. In many instances this was a form of defence and a way of protecting themselves. Lanie, who experienced abuse
and stigmatisation as a child, articulates her experience of being labelled a trouble maker.

At around ten, I was already very protective of myself because I thought I was alone and in school there was not a day that I had no conflict in school. I was tagged as a trouble maker. Little children, big children, I have conflicts, and then there was even one time when I was told by my teacher to sit on the air, but I did not. As a punishment, in school if you do something bad, my teacher would say, sit on the air, like your knees half way and its very painful. And I did not do it and my teacher was so mad at me but I got the stick and bashed up my teacher. [Lanie]

Emerita stated that her mother and her teacher did not understand her attitudes, suggesting that her behaviour was a result of things that happened to her, as well as her ill feelings towards herself and others.

Yes. I was mad with the boys, my classmates. I would fight, that’s why my mother always told my teacher I was like this… She always went like this (Indicates slapping of the face) because they did not know what happened. They did not understand my attitude. And then I would just cry because they didn’t know what happened and then when I was eight years old, it happened again. I tried to shout but for somebody to help me but they didn’t come. My father did not come, my brother did not come, my cousin did not come, no one. That time I want to die. [Emerita]

In this account, it is clear that Emerita is attributing her aggressive behaviour to the anger resulting from her sexual abuse. She further highlights the reason for her behaviour: ‘When I was 8 years old, my cousin abused me again and I became more aggressive, I always was in trouble’ [Emerita].

In accounting for her behaviour at the age of twelve, Gina clearly articulates that the reason for her smoking and drinking of alcohol was her sadness at being raped between the ages of five and twelve.

From five years to twelve I was sad, because this is the time that I was raped and also at 12 this was the time I was engaged in vices like smoking, drinking alcohol and all those things. From 12-18 there is still sadness because I got pregnant and I was beaten by my elder brother. At seventeen I came to the recovery Centre. [Gina]
Katrina highlights a need to escape the family home because of abuse and a lack of trust. As a result she often took refuge with her friends.

From then on I didn’t want to stay in my house, especially if there is another person like my cousin. And there I started to be truant with my friends. Because if there is someone in the house I got this dirty mind that maybe they would rape me or abuse me and especially when I was exposed to the sexual activities of my parents. So, I don’t trust. [Katrina]

All accounts of rebellious behaviour by the participants appear to be in response to circumstances of abuse or neglect. For many, their behaviour was an expression of their feelings about the abuse to which they had been subjected. Most sought refuge with their friends and formed a defensive camaraderie.

**Sexualised Behaviour**

As I discuss in Chapter 4, a significant response to sexual abuse is to engage in sexualised behaviour. Experts in the area of childhood sexual abuse and its impact understand sexualised behaviour as a result of boundary violations by the perpetrator (Abu Ali & Al-Bahar, 2011; Finkelhor & Browne, 1985; Fromuth, 1986). Many of the participants felt confused about their sexual feelings and behaviours. In the account below, Rowena, after having been first raped at age three, describes further abuse throughout her childhood. She attributes much of this to her own desire for sex. She also describes her sexual promiscuity as an early teenager.

And those times, I think 7-10 years old, I felt that I liked sex and that I had sex with whoever, friends of my papa, whoever comes and wants to have sex with me I just did it. And at ten (years old) I was raped by my father. The second time my father raped me I was 12. I just pretended that ah, I thought there was no penetration with my father, but when I was 12, I really wanted to go to school and so I enrolled in a public school, but then I had my friends, I started going out and then having these vices and then I had sex with boyfriends until the time that I offered sex to the taxi drivers, blow jobs and more, because I needed money. [Rowena]

Rowena attributes her rape by a neighbour when she was three to further sexual abuse in childhood. But she also expresses her own concern that she liked sex and that she was somehow complicit in her abuse.
Actually, when I was three years old I was already raped by a neighbour... And those times, I think 7-10 years old, I felt that I liked sex and that I had sex with whoever. Friends of my papa, whoever comes and wants to have sex with me I just did it. And at 10 I was raped by my father. The second time my father raped me I was 12. [Rowena]

This notion of being addicted to or liking sex has been discussed by authors and researchers studying impacts on behaviours of sexually abused children and they suggest ‘sexualised behaviour’ is a result of boundary violation by the perpetrator (Abu Ali & Al-Bahar, 2011; Finkelhor & Browne, 1985; Fromuth, 1986). Clinical psychologists, Abu Ali and Al-Bahar (2011) offer further insights claiming, ‘for children who have been sexually exploited, the definition and value of self becomes equated with sexuality. Hence child victims attempt to reengage in sexualized behaviours to validate their presence and the only self-worth with which they are familiar’ (Abu Ali & Al-Bahar, 2011). Lanie is a case in point. At seven years of age, she was sexually abused by her elder brother. In her interview she expresses that her behaviour became sexualised as a result of the abuse.

Then came a time when I was abused by my elder brother. It was so painful to me. At eight I felt weird because it’s me who will ask sex from my elder brother. I did it many times. I forgot that he is my elder brother. Then I started to utter inappropriate sexual comment [Lanie]

Rowena describes her behaviour as ‘looking for sex’. When asked to expand she stated:

I craved for it. I craved for it and it’s now that I realise that it’s craving that I had at that moment because it was explained to me that, “when you had sex early in your life, you craved for it”.

So, now I can confirm that now from seven to –nine years I was craving for sex. [Rowena]

Rowena, in trying to make sense of her behaviour, appears to make a connection between her ‘craving’ sexual behaviour and early childhood sexual abuse, but still seems to be confused by the wider meanings of the cravings. Scholarly work undertaken by Finkelhor and Browne (1985) provides insight into Rowena’s dilemma, describing her behaviour as a result of distorted boundaries. They discuss ‘Traumagenic Dynamics’ resulting from childhood sexual abuse, one of which is ‘traumatic sexualisation’ which is ‘a process in which a child’s sexuality is shaped in a developmentally inappropriate and interpersonally dysfunctional fashion’ (p. 531).
Another behaviour linked to childhood sexual assault is to engage in sexual behaviour with peers or younger children (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985; Green, 1998). Lanie makes reference to this in a latter part of her narrative, where she is further confused about her own behaviour.

There was a time when my Lola and siblings went out and my uncle he has a two year old son. I abused him because I was looking for sex and I found no one except him. I was so weird at that time between nine and ten years old. [Lanie]

Lanie highlights that this sexual behaviour was normalised through play. While engaged in ‘house play’ she re-enacted sex that she had seen and experienced.

Around that age, about eight, I also have friends, relatives, cousins, neighbours we usually play, house play and we act as couples and so I had sex with my playmates. That play was also a result of …I saw a neighbour already a couple, husband and wife having sex, so I said, “if we play house we can do it”, that’s why we had it with some cousins, some neighbours. [Lanie]

This experience was shared by a number of research participants who described themselves as engaging in sexual play with others. Aleta narrates a time when her behaviour was sexualised through the ‘abuse’ of a female classmate. Earlier, she had spoken of her own sexual abuse by two boys when she was much younger.

So when I was eleven, I was in grade four and my teacher trusted me, so I had the keys, I swept the classroom before we went home. And one time, I had a classmate, the two of us cleaned the room, but what I did was close all the windows and locked the door and I abused my female classmate. [Aleta]

Aleta may be making an attempt to take back her personal power by being controlling and dominating over one of her peers; hence, reclaiming the power she lost when sexually abused by older boys (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985). Later in her narrative Aleta tells of another incident whereby the memory of the powerlessness she felt when being sexually abused acted as a stimulus for her asserting her power and abusing younger children.

I grew up but it always came into my mind what happened to me when I was raped by the two boys. And the child of my aunty, a girl, she was six, from a baby until she was three, I was her babysitter. When she reached three years old I abused her. I taught her how to kiss me, and also the husband of my cousin
has a young sibling around six years old, who was also in the house and I also abused him when I was eleven. [Aleta]

Clinical psychiatrist, Arthur Green (1998) describes childhood responses to sexual abuse as re-enactments, as ‘these children re-enact their victimization experiences in play and in their relationship with others. They tend to either victimize others or recreate their own victimization’ (Green, 1998, p. 1334) Katrina’s account highlights the confusion and misconceptions she held about having sex with her male babysitter when she was eight years of age.

So, it (sexual abuse) started when I was 8, because my paternal aunt hired the boy (as a babysitter) and when I stayed at my aunt’s place he would abuse me and it ran for many years because I was some kind of addicted to sex, so it was only when I was twelve that I avoided him, because my mother said, If I have sex I will become pregnant, so I did not want to become pregnant so that’s why I avoided the babysitter. [Katrina]

Aleta also gives voice to the complex understandings and reactions to earlier childhood abuse. From a very young age she was repeatedly sexually abused by multiple people, including her father.

I grew up but it always came into my mind what happened to me when I was raped by the two boys. And the child of my aunty, a girl, she was six, from a baby until she was three; I was her babysitter, when she reached three years old I abused her. I taught her how to kiss me, and also the husband of my cousin has a young sibling around six years old, who was also in the house and I also abused him when I was eleven… So from then on I felt I really, I was craving for sex all the time. [Aleta]

The above narratives emphasise that some women felt highly confused and sometimes guilty about their sexualised behaviour. The issue is very complex and requires deliberation from a number of vantage points. The first is the psychological perspective, which links inappropriate sexual behaviour to early childhood abuse. As outlined above, extensive studies on the impact of sexual abuse provide insight into this behaviour. Understood as a result of sexual traumatisation, sexualised behaviour is often a complex response to earlier childhood abuse. A second vantage point is the social and cultural perspective, whereby women’s sexuality is considered a taboo subject in the Philippines, resulting in women and girls feeling confused about sexual behaviour. As outlined in Chapter 2, a cultural sexual morality, influenced by
Catholicism has resulted in women feeling guilty if they express or allude to anything sexual. Blame, shame and condemnation are commonly attributed to women who are seen to be in any way promiscuous (Mananzan, 1991). Third, a lack of education for most of the women has resulted in a limited understanding of sexual growth and development. This lack of understanding combined with a lack of healthy sexual role models meant that often those young women were left feeling confused about sexuality. As illustrated in their narratives, they repeatedly attribute their sexual feelings to prior sexual abuse and sex addictions.

*Agency and Resilience*

Despite their accounts of abuse and victimisation, participants exhibited extraordinary behaviours of resilience and agency during their childhood and adolescence. As discussed in greater detail in chapter three outlining the conceptual framework and methodology, the term ‘agency’ is a contentious term among feminists. To affirm agency could be seen to deny the overpowering oppression imposed on young women and girls. On the other hand to undermine a woman’s ability to make choices, despite her circumstances could be an even more subtle form of oppression. There is a tension inherent in any discussion concerning agency. However, a core concept of the life course paradigm posits that individuals often take ‘independent action to cope with the difficulties imposed by power arrangements’ (Hutchison, 2005, p. 148).

It is in this sense that I use the term agency. For example, in her account of a childhood trafficking experience, Rosanna challenges her recruiter, calling her to account for her dishonesty.

> So, that is what I told the recruiter, “You are good there just collecting money and you do not know what is happening to us inside, how we are treated by customers, we are treated like pigs. So how would you do that to us”. So in that quarrel with the recruiter… I was happy, another favoured me, so at least I got the attention of other people, but I was told that as a result of that quarrel my recruiter had an attack of the high blood pressure. (Laughs) [Rosanna]

In this context too, agency was sometimes expressed through ingenuity and sly humour:

> So me, I think it is very painful, but I did it in a comedy style. So if the customer would say I want to fondle your breast, I would say to the customer, “one breast 50, and two, one hundred.” So that goes to me (laughing). [Rosanna]
Agency was also characterised by running away from intolerable situations:

But while in Cebu City I also had a friend, a domestic helper also and she told me to transfer to another employer, so I transferred but I found out that they were not very good so I ran away. When I ran away from my employer I needed money for my own food and everything so I was able to go to a highway in Mandaue City and I saw there a sign saying ‘wanted a receptionist’. [Emma]

When I ran away, before and until now, I really wanted to find a person who would truly understand me, who would truly love me, since birth I have not… although I was loved by my Mamay but deep inside there was someone lacking, so I am looking for a person who would love me, who would understand me, who would believe me. [Rosanna]

Other instances of agency show constant attention to their safety and in many circumstances the safety of their siblings,

Even when I was 9 years old I grew mature because I know what is family then, how to take care of kids, how to do household work and care for others, and even if I wanted to play, when I was with my Lola or my aunty. I couldn’t. Because there were other people who would deprive me of this. [Ester]

What keeps me going and gives me strength, first it’s my thought of giving a good future for my younger siblings, because per experience, as what I have told you, our relatives in our place really put us down, they thought that we will never be good, we will never have a better future. So I told myself when I was fourteen at that time and all the relatives did not help us but instead they put us down, they told us, “Ah, you have no good future” and then I told myself at that time, “Why should I be wasting my time”, my younger siblings were still five, below ten at that time, so there was my desire to provide a good future for my younger siblings. [Leah]

Agency was also expressed through a strong desire in most of the participants to succeed in school despite their disadvantage:

If I had not run away I would have finished my schooling, and then finished a degree and worked. However, on the other
hand, because I ran away from place to place, I found out that I can be alone and independent. [Cristy] and a desire to live a prosperous life free from violence. In the future I would like to prove to the relatives of my father that I can create a good family. (cries)I can show to them a family which I can be proud of, the community will respect me for having a good family and I would tell them that the family I am forming is different from the family I came from. I would tell them that I am not like my parents, especially my mum who is marked as a ‘man grabber ‘. So I would like to show to them, that I am different that I am really having a family of my own and although this family that I will be forming is a happy one, which I did not have. [Rosanna]

The life course paradigm's principle of agency acknowledges a person's ability to make choices within the constraints of a life context. Many of the women exercised agency despite an extremely deprived environment and adverse social and personal conditions.

**Conclusion**

This chapter presented the women's insights about their relationships and behaviours experienced in childhood. Harsh living environments, coupled with chronic abuse and a series of strained relationships within the family exacerbated the vulnerability the young women faced in childhood. As a result of abusive environments and fractured relationships, many of these women found themselves, as children on the run, engaging in risk-taking behaviour that was sometimes sexualised. In addition, many were exposed to, and used drugs and alcohol at a very young age. They experienced confusion about their sexuality due to childhood abuse and cultural taboos and oftentimes felt that they were to blame. A lack of trust in others and a low self-esteem accompanied these feelings. It appears that in many instances they took steps to seek an alternative, safer environment only to experience further abuse. Such childhood experiences, coupled with the environment in which they lived, led to an accumulation of disadvantage and despair. In effect, they became highly vulnerable to recruiters and traffickers who were seeking to source them for sexual exploitation. Many participants experienced fractured relationships as children and found themselves in living environments where they were not emotionally connected to anyone. Often mothers were absent and children were left in the care of extended family who resented their presence because of the financial burdens they carried. Many participants grieved the
absence of their mothers whom they felt should have been there to protect them and care for them in their early years.

In their childhood the women responded to their circumstances in a number of ways. Many found solace amongst their peers who experienced similar conditions. In addition some chose to engage in risk taking behaviours, using drugs and alcohol as a way of easing their pain. Some became rebellious in school and became abusive towards family members and others. Many children, after struggling to survive in such adverse conditions, finally decided to seek alternatives to their environment, choosing to run away and seek a safer place and greater opportunity. Sadly, for many, this resulted in further abuse and marginalisation and made them extremely vulnerable to being trafficked for sexual exploitation.

Childhood circumstances provide great insight into the individual trafficking trajectory. For most participants, the experience of being sexually trafficked was yet another experience of exploitation and abuse. In other words, trafficking was not so much a discrete event but another abusive experience in a series of such experiences. They describe a life of systemic abuse in which they are marginalised, objectified and stigmatised, beginning in early childhood. That some participants felt suicidal and questioned their own place in the world highlights just how oppressive the environment was. They were clearly overwhelmed by their deprivation and abuse and could no longer see the value of life. It is no accident that such a child is then exploited for profit in their later years. With low self-esteem, feelings of shame and a belief that one is somehow deserving of the abuse inflicted, it is evident that these children and young adolescents then became the easy prey of traffickers.

The next chapter explores the sexual trafficking experiences of the research participants, and highlights that early childhood experiences of abuse and deprivation are replicated in the process of being trafficked.
Chapter 6
From One Crisis to Another: The Voice of the Vulnerable

There was an instance that I ran away from home and I went to another place and I found one man there who always stalked me and he touched my body. So I found places where there were plenty of people. I was so fearful at that time also. [Jovie]

Introduction
As I listened to the women’s stories, from childhood through adolescence and into early adulthood, I began to see that their life journeys resembled that of a roller coaster moving from one crisis to another. Chapters 4 and 5 explored childhood circumstances and abuse and highlighted relationships and behaviours and significant events in the life course, providing insights into vulnerabilities to being trafficked. The focus of Chapter 6 is to present the findings from the narratives shared in the second of three in-depth interviews. In this second interview, participants were invited to share circumstances, memories and events that they could recall about the human trafficking experience. In sharing their stories, new knowledge and insights emerge revealing and uncovering the complexity of the trafficking experience. Insights into sex trafficking from a third way feminist account are also explored through the juxtaposition of the accounts of their experience and the meanings they make of it. They were not destroyed by the experience. They speak of their plans and hopes for the future.

This chapter begins with the major themes that emerged after listening to women’s narratives about the sex trafficking experience: deception; captivity; violence; corruption; loss of identity and resilience. Each theme is explored throughout the chapter with reference to both individual and structural factors. Attention is drawn to the notion of rescue and how the practice of rescuing trafficked women is experienced by the women themselves, challenging an otherwise taken-for-granted assumption that women benefit from such action.

Themes in the Trafficking Experience

Deception
Deception is a means by which traffickers gain control over persons, and it is a core component of the UN trafficking definition (see Chapter 1). The experience of betrayal and loss of trust that many participants experienced during their childhood was further
instilled through the deceptive nature of trafficking. Some spoke of deception by recruiters, traffickers, managers, pimps, mama-sans and customers.

Belen was eight years of age when her parents abandoned her and she was placed in the care of a children’s home. She ran away from that home between the ages of eleven and twelve and was recruited to the Kamagayan. Belen was clearly misled about the work that this would entail and despite her objections on finding out that she was to prostitute herself, she was forced to continue. She was further deceived by being introduced to Shabu, which was used as a way of altering her mind so that all inhibitions were lost so as to undertake sexual activities for the financial benefit of the manager:

When I was outside, I was recruited to go to the Kamagayan. I was told by my recruiter that I had to become a babysitter but on the evening of my first day I was told to take a bath because I had to have a customer. I insisted that according to my recruiter my work is just to babysit and that I was a maid, so I did not take a bath. But my employer told me I had to entertain customers and she gave me Shabu which I had to pay later. There was someone else in the house who taught me how to inhale Shabu. I was still a teenager at that time. [Belen]

Emerita, who was trafficked in Cebu at the age of fourteen makes the connection between life back home and the situation she found herself in, illustrating that one lives in reference to their past:

When I was fourteen I was recruited and offered to have a job in a restaurant, but it’s not, it’s just for sex worker. I just escape from my family because they don’t understand me...That time I was just fourteen years old, I have one friend and then she had other friends who came from Cebu and I thought that she was rich because she said that her husband have his own business, a restaurant, a new opening so that they need workers, they need waiters, they need the washer, they already have a check out they said... And then she said, ‘I heard that you really need work’. ‘Yes, I really need work, but I can’t be a waitress’, ‘You can’, ‘But I am just fourteen years old’, ‘it’s okay we can lie, we can lie about your age and never say that you are fourteen years old when you come to Cebu’. [Emerita]

In the beginning of Rosanna’s narrative she describes the interaction she had with an older woman in her home town who was assessing her to see if she would
accompany her to Cebu for work. After being tricked into believing she was going to Cebu to work as a shopkeeper, she describes the deceitful way she was inducted into prostitution:

It was as if she didn’t care about how I looked, I was accepted right away. So I said, ‘Oh why?’ So deep in my mind I said, ‘Is there something fishy about this?’ But I just told myself, ‘Oh, this is good, I must be okay’. So when I went out she gave me 500 peso as a cash advance and she told me to come back in the afternoon because she will fix our tickets for Cebu. So I went back to my friend’s house [inaudible] and my friend said, [Inaudible] because I was thinking at that time, ‘Oh is this true, maybe I will be just brought to Cebu and then placed with an employer who will not give my salary, so plenty of things ran into my mind, but on the other hand I told myself, ‘oh, this is okay’ and my friend also told me ‘If you are doubtful about this, you can quit and I can help you, even if you have the five hundred already, I can help you manage it, so that if you like to quit you can’ but he also said, ‘on the other hand if you are in Cebu that will be good because you will have an employer, your life will be better than here because you are just staying on’ , because I ran away from home at that time, so he opened some possibilities for me and then after some thinking I went back to the house of the recruiter. [Rosanna]

Although Rosanna had doubts about the authenticity of the offer, she still made an active choice to take the risk, as she had when she ran away from home. Arriving in Cebu she was taken to a house where other girls were also working, still believing that she was going to work as a shopkeeper:

So I noticed that the patrons were males, so the newly found friends talked with them a little and then they would go inside the room and then for a while they come out and I thought, ‘Oh’. I didn’t understand what was happening. Then some friends of mine there told me, ‘Oh, you don’t know where you are?’ So I told them, ‘No’, they said, ‘this is Kamagayan’. [Rosanna]

Sar also experienced the deceptive nature of trafficking. Working as a sales assistant in the city of Cebu, she found that she was unable to survive financially, particularly as her grandmother was ill and needed extra medication. An offer to join a music band and travel to Malaysia on tour was appealing to her as she was told she
would earn plenty of money and be able to support her family by sending money home. So, after a number of weeks in preparation with four other women, she was transported to Malaysia. She describes her experience of entering the club where she was told she would sing:

I expected that I will be singing in a band inside a hotel in a decent place, but there, the bar we went into is very dirty, the room is very dark and the only lighted area is where the wines are placed in the bar area and when the customers come in the women who were there ahead of us will take drugs because these customers would just have sex in the area. [Sar]

This blatant act of deceit left Sar feeling angry, depressed and powerless. She and her friends managed to escape and return to the Philippines but only after several weeks of hiding, negotiation and support from family back home.

Some women were aware that they had been deceived immediately upon arriving in a new place. For others, the realisation of the deceit was gradual. Rowena, defines the moment that she realised that she had been deceived, and it was some time after she was trafficked. In terms of the life course perspective this was a ‘turning point’ for Rowena as it changed the way she saw the world around her. This was enough for her to take action and run away:

So what greatly motivated me to run away from the Kamagayan and never come back again, despite them blackmailing me about my dress? Because I realised that I was deceived by them. They make money out of me, but me, I don't have a single cent, so that was great deception and I don't want it and I realise this is the end. [Rowena]

Her leaving also highlights Rowena’s resilience and sense of agency; a common theme among the women interviewed.

At the heart of the trafficking experience is deception. Falsehoods were presented to young, vulnerable women who were lured into sexual exploitation under the pretence of working in the socially accepted roles of waitress, nanny or some other work in the domestic sphere. Their acceptance of such a proposal was due to the women’s aspirations to transform their lives, which were characterised by deprivation, violence and abuse since childhood. In a world governed by an economy dependant on supply and demand, these women were viewed as a potential commodity for profit. On account of their gender, youth, poverty and lack of education they were duped by powerful recruiters who considered them easy prey, due to their marginalisation and stigmatisation as deviant or worthless.
Recruiters created illusions of a better life in the city, creating a false sense of hope, and the women who fell prey to these falsehoods effectively were denied the opportunity to make choices about their future. With extremely limited proper employment opportunities, no financial security and lack of community infrastructure they were rendered powerless in the face of these criminal pursuits. For many women this was not the first time that they had experienced deceit, as illustrated in the prior chapter; indeed, some were deceived earlier in life by family members seeking their own sexual gratification to the detriment of young lives.

Captivity
As discussed in the introductory chapter, sensationalised accounts of trafficking often depict a woman in physical captivity. While physical captivity was the experience of some participants, the majority experienced captivity in less concrete ways. Nonetheless, it still had the powerful result of leaving them feeling trapped:

Sometimes I cried to myself and asked myself, ‘Where will this situation bring me, until when will I be like this?’ So, all those questions about my future. [Cathy]

In these narratives captivity was primarily experienced through debt bondage, drug and alcohol addiction, physical imprisonment and the fear of threats and abuse.

Kevin Bales (2000), an academic and anti-trafficking advocate, rates debt bondage as the most common form of slavery in the world, and describes it as: when ‘a person pledges him or herself against a loan of money, but the length and nature of the service is undefined, and the labour does not diminish the original debt’ (p. 463). The notion of being captive through debt bondage was expressed in a number of the narratives, where young women were enticed by traffickers with a false promise of making money. Ironically, it was lack of money and rising debts that kept them enslaved. Rowena’s account gives voice to the experience of being caught up in debt despite her understanding that she was making a good income:

I wondered, ‘Why is it that I have debts when I have plenty of customers’, the least is one, but more or less five customers in a night. So that would make... if I was to compute... But they tell me I don’t have money anymore because I have plenty of debts. [Rowena]

Similarly, Rosanna believed that she had earned a significant amount of money but once the money was distributed amongst her ‘employers’ she learnt that she had very little, and even then was given no cash because of, so-called, ‘mounting debt’:
So I think the watcher got plenty more money than I did, and also in the payment, the 50 pesos per customer per night was not given to me straight away, it would be computed weekly, so every Sunday, like for example if I have fifteen one night, the next night I have ten, the next night I have sixteen, So on Sunday if I have all computed 7500, it will be half. Half for the watchers and half for me, so if I get 7500, I only get 3250 p, but I don’t get any cash out of it because there are plenty of expenses already, debts. [Rosanna]

Cathy gives voice to a common experience among the women, of being told that they had a series of debts beginning with their travel expenses to the city. This is used as a way of keeping them captive and making the young women feel obligated to pay their debts:

They say that I have plenty of debts from them. From the very first time that I boarded the boat from Manila to Cebu, that starts the debts... Staying in the apartment, the food, the clothing, the makeup all of this was listed as my debt. So they said that all my earnings should go to them, so I was sixteen at that time and I didn’t know the procedures so I just gave in. [Cathy]

Once again, traffickers preyed on the vulnerability of young women, a key factor in being able to deceive them and trap them into debt. In her account of debt bondage, Emerita was first alerted to her debt on her arrival in Cebu. Her story highlights the deceitful way she was tricked into believing that her friend was being generous to her, only to find she was being trapped by a system of debt bondage. After having spent a day with her recruiter, unbeknown to her, she was already creating her own debt by accepting so called ‘gifts’ of transport, clothing and food:

She said, ‘Yes, the ticket, your clothes, your day. Here now, your taxi. That is why you already have a debt of 5000.’ I said ‘Huh?’ She said, ‘That is why you need to work, and if you like to use this, the drugs’. [Emerita]

Cristy expressed her anger and frustration at her employer when she recounted her story of receiving no money at all. Like other women, she was led to believe that because she had been provided with dresses and drugs she was responsible for the debt:
I did not receive even five pesos the whole time, because my employer would just give me dresses and drugs and then she would tell me I have heaping debts from her. [Cristy]

Another form of captivity was physical imprisonment. Although no women spoke of being chained or imprisoned behind bars, many experienced containment in a highly controlled and often guarded environment. Their movements were closely monitored and opportunities to freely roam were limited. Rosanna indicated that she and her peers were closely guarded mainly to ensure they had no access to money from their patrons. Once again, financial motivation was the main incentive for closely monitoring the young women:

Yes. I noticed there that the one, the woman who recruited me, has really a house there, in which I live, together with other young girls and my real employer, or the one who I really report to, is the daughter of the woman who recruited me, but they guarded us, the young girls in that house, they take turns like if the son in-law is there, then if the son-in-law of the old woman is out then the children will guard us. The siblings of my employer take turns in watching over us and the main reason is they collect the money from the patrons. [Rosanna]

In her story of physical captivity Cathy indicated that she and other young women were being 'held' for fear that they might escape and not be available to work in the bar.

So we cannot escape because there are also people who do surveillance on what we are doing... But for new entrants we cannot really go out, we are just being held in that Casa, in a van to the bar.[Cathy]

The concern that women may escape is further illustrated in Jovie’s account; the management became stricter after one of the women eloped. She was kept very strictly under lock and key unless she was engaged at the bar:

There was an instance where one of the women there eloped with a boyfriend so the more the manager was very strict with us. So, we will just take our meals up inside the house, we cannot go outside and the bar opens at six and that was the time that the house was opened. Otherwise it was always locked. [Jovie]
Gina states that the closely monitored women were the new ones, indicating that eventually these women surrender to their captors and are no longer likely to run away, a clear strategy of the traffickers (Brown, 2000).

For those who are new in the bar like me, we are heavily guarded and we have to follow the process of approval and sometimes if we go out, we just go out nearby just to buy cigarettes, but even sometimes it is only the boy who will buy cigarettes for us [Gina]

Annabel describes an environment where there was some freedom of movement but interestingly, she did not feel free because the psychological hold on her was much greater:

So there were plenty of restrictions on us we were not free, we were not free and there was one time, ah because whenever we go out there is a gate pass that would indicate what time we left and what time we come home. So if the Tita would say we would only two hours out and we get home later than two hours, then we would get a penalty. [Annabel]

All of the women’s accounts indicate that there was a lack of freedom in their movement, rendering them victims to the traffickers. Some were locked up while others were guarded and their movements closely monitored. This lack of physical freedom is a form of power and control enforced by traffickers. For many young women the lack of freedom of movement rendered it impossible to escape, and the presence of guards was an intimidating and powerful measure to ensure they remained captive.

Another form of captivity used by traffickers was to addict women to drugs. This then enabled women to stay without the risk of them running away because in that environment they were provided with drugs. The drugs were mind altering and enabled them to ‘take customers’ for sex. The clear irony is that the women, indeed, paid for their own drug habit through payments from customers, but this was only revealed to them later. Instead, the money for their drug habits was added to their list of debts, making the women all the more dependent on the person exploiting them:

But my employer told me I had to entertain customers and she gave me Shabu which I had to pay later. There was someone else in the house who taught me how to inhale Shabu. I was still a teenager at that time. [Belen]

I think in one month’s time I started to use Shabu, because some relatives of the manager showed me how to use Shabu because they said, the customers want those women who know
how to use Shabu and especially drink alcohol so that I will not be shy anymore when doing transactions, but I paid for the Shabu. [Jovie]

In the following account, Emma recalls her intentions in coming to Cebu to earn money as a domestic helper, only to be forced to stay prostituted due to her drug addiction:

The effect of the drugs on me is that I won’t be tired, I am not sleepy and I can tell my customers what I want and because I have the energy I can find more customers... Before I was prostituted I came here as a domestic helper and I worked in a bar as a server, all my hopes and my plans was to make money and go home. And it was lost when I met ________. (Names the boyfriend) and had a baby. Coming here in Colon my mind revolved around having Shabu. [Emma]

For Rosanna, too, making women dependent on drugs was a strategy that traffickers used in order to maintain control over their lives. Taking drugs meant that the women experienced a mind altering state which freed up any inhibitions, gave them energy and in many instances suppressed their true feelings, and veiled their true identity:

What prevented me not to give up? During the trafficking days there were times when I wanted to commit suicide, people put me down, I was so discouraged about life and during those days what helped me was taking Shabu, just to make me forget about all those problems. [Rosanna]

When I have too much alcohol, too much drugs, I feel I am already dead. [Katrina]

Given the social and economic validation of women’s roles in the ‘hospitality industry’, as discussed in Chapter 2, the control and captivity of trafficked women was largely overlooked; their roles as guest relations officers were considered to be women’s work and, therefore, were not open to public scrutiny. The women’s narratives illustrate that they experienced captivity in the form of restricted movements, close surveillance and debt bondage. In addition their captivity created further vulnerability and dependence on the perpetrator due to the purposeful strategy of addicting women to drugs so that they would remain loyal and submissive. This blatant abuse of power and control illustrates the sinister way that traffickers build on young women’s vulnerability and marginalisation.
Violence

Violence featured in many of the trafficking narratives. As discussed in Chapter 4, violence is often a precondition to trafficking. For many women the experience of violence replicated childhood experiences, but in the trafficking situation, they encountered violence from both the men who used them for sex and by their traffickers, managers and pimps. In the following account Raquel relates her reaction to a very violent man. She retaliated when confronted with violence; ultimately it was the reason she could no longer endure the conditions in which she found herself:

The reason why I left the work after more or less six months was that I was traumatised by my experiences with my customers. I had customers who were foreigners who demand so much, who ask to do something which I feel I was already treated like a pig and my last customer was a Filipino but he was worse than a foreigner. He did not pay me. I was treated like a real pig, he would demand all of the positions and I feel that I was not respected as a human being then and it was the only time that I fought for myself. I had this bottle inside the room and I broke it and I threatened him that I will kill him with that bottle and he also threatened to kill me because he had a gun and so we had squabble in the room and then I called up the room boy to open the door for us because the room was locked from the outside. And so I was really very mad and I was determined to fight and then upon seeing my face, the Filipino customer said, ‘okay, go out’ and he did not even pay me even a single centavo. So that is the time when I went home and I said to myself, ‘I cannot endure all the pain that I have had with these customers,’ so that made me decide to discontinue my work. [Raquel]

For Raquel this was a major ‘turning point’ in her life. The violence she experienced caused her to ‘fight’ for her life and ultimately exit her oppressive circumstances.

Some women spoke of the fear of violence they experienced as teenagers when confronted with an abusive customer or a group of such men.

The foreigner would inflict pain on me first, before he would have sex with me [Cristy]

I just give my body so that I will not be abused physically... I was afraid that the customer would abuse me that is why I give
my body…Yeah, I was a little bit drowned for some seconds
and then he pulled me up and he made sex to me in several
style and there was a moment after the bath tub we were also
bathing under the shower and then he bumped his head
because he was so drunk and also he bumped my head against
the wall because he said, I was hurt, you also must be hurt and
I told myself yes he has given me 3000p plus another 1000p,
that is 4000p but I am so abused physically and sexually and so
he said, we will have sex again? [Ester]

We were taken to a small hut and there I saw there were plenty
of rifles and guns and then the target of the men to be killed
was our manager because he was the one responsible for
bringing the girls to them, but the decision was changed after
some negotiations and all of the girls that were brought were
made to dance in front of plenty of men and we were made like
toys, like while we were dancing anyone can kiss us anywhere
on our body. Because if we will not dance in front of them,
especially me because I think they like me so I have to dance,
because if we will not dance they will physically hit us. [Lanie
I experienced a customer who when he bar fined me, at first he
looked very good, very kind, but when we reached outside the
bar I knew that he was a sadist because he would slap me
many times until my mouth bleed… He was so violent that I
wanted to get help, I called the management of the hotel, but I
was not able to do it because he grabbed me and then punched
me on my stomach, so I felt dizzy and I could not do anything
about it. (Begins to cry)... I can say that he was a sadist. He
enjoys looking at a woman being in pain before having sex.
[Gina]

Katrina, who was trafficked in Cebu City when seventeen years of age
described a situation in which a man had engaged three women to have sex with him.
He became very threatening:

I was very angry, and I told him, “Oh, what kind is this”? He was
very angry also and he said, “I will kill you, if you will complain”.
So I was very angry and I said some words, and then he said,
“If you keep on complaining I will kill you” and he showed me
his gun, so now I whispered to the other girls, “Now, it is time for
us to go out”. We were so scared that we did not demand any more. [Katrina]

Rowena also speaks of her submissive stance when faced with fear of violence:
I experienced a lot of time being fearful, especially when my customers seem to be a bad guy. There was even one experience that I had … The regulation is only one round, but because I thought that guy was very bad I just submit all the way with no complaints. I feel so very submissive to guys or to men who are bad looking or if I see that there temperaments are bad. So I only submit I do not have power to say no. [Rowena]

While many of the women spoke about violence experienced from customers they also expressed a fear of violence from those who had power over them, especially pimps. When writing about violence and its impact on prostituted women, Melissa Farley (2003) notes, ‘the systematic violence of pimps against prostituted women is aimed not only at control, but also emphasizes the victim’s powerlessness, worthlessness and invisibility, except in her role as prostitute’ (p. 36). The use of threats and intimidation is a powerful form of violence used by traffickers to instil fear and doubt in the minds of the women and to keep them captive. As stated earlier in the chapter, one does not have to be in chains or be physically locked away to feel imprisoned. Instilling fear and doubt in the minds of these women was enough for them to be emotionally trapped.

Many of the participants did not speak overtly about the kind of treatment they received from traffickers, recruiters, mama-sans, managers, watchers and pimps. However, they inadvertently made reference to the control and power experienced. I found this significant, because it revealed to me that the power that these figures had in their life still existed in some way. The fact that they did not speak of them unless prompted suggested that they still felt confined to secrecy and protection of the perpetrators. Loyalty, allegiance or, in some instances, silence about these figures is central to the power, control and manipulation exercised by traffickers. This dynamic of connection or loyalty to the one exploiting has been referred to in other contexts as ‘Stockholm Syndrome’ named because of a hostage situation in Sweden. For some of the women, the notion of secrecy and silence had been firmly instilled in them as children, as illustrated in the previous two chapters and the women’s descriptions of childhood abuse and the silence surrounding it.

Many of the participants experienced fear and intimidation through threats utilised in the penalty system that managers used to control the young women and keep them entrapped:
So one thing as a result of a girlfriend/boyfriend relationship is we will be penalised by our manager and the penalty is 10,000 pesos. It’s very high, because it’s the woman who pays the penalty because one of the regulations in the Casa is not to involve yourself with a customer. So, even if he is my boyfriend, my managers would still see that guy as a customer... our managers would place penalties on us, so we cannot escape because there are also people who do surveillance on what we are doing. [Cathy]

And penalties, we get penalised if we find customers on our own. It should be the customer that we go with, should be from the bar. We are penalised 10,000 pesos if we get our own customers. It is very dangerous. [Gina]

Rosanna offers further insight into the penalty system when she explains her loss of income:

I am also penalised by them, because if I quarrel with a customer I am penalised, so everything that I do with the customer they know and they penalise me. The penalty would come in the form of, the customer would tell the watcher that, ‘Oh, she is not doing good service to me’, so I am penalised 500 for that. So everything is 500, if I quarrel with a customer that is 500 and that is the main reason and that is one of the reasons why there are watchers, because they will watch us and if we don’t display ourselves very well then that is penalised. [Rosanna]

Another form of coercion was to threaten the young women with violence. Emerita explains her fear of being murdered by hired killers:

Then my Mama-san visited me, she called me bullshit, bad words, ‘if you don’t work you cannot stay here, you cannot eat here, you cannot sleep here you will go to outside’ she said. Because they have vigilantes here and they will kill you, it’s a group that if you will pay, they will kill you. Hired killers! [Emerita]

Many of the young women kept their feelings to themselves as they were uncertain about whom to trust. Cathy gives voice to this fear:

I interact with my co-workers, but about my true feelings I have no trust of anyone because I don’t know if I tell them my real
feelings they would tell my managers and that would create conflict. So, I just kept to myself what I felt at that time. [Cathy]

Women were disciplined if they displayed any behaviour that did not conform to the managers’ expectations. Annabel provides an example of when she expressed disdain at having to be with a customer:

And I was reprimanded by the manager because I can’t take what he did to me (the customer), like kissing and then very wild on my lips. It was my first experience and it was very weird to me and I walked out. So, my supervisor or my manager reprimanded me about my behaviour. [Annabel]

The women described violence or fear of violence as a routine part of being trafficked. Violence was used as a form of power and control, often leading women to submit to men who used force to gain control over them. As has previously been discussed, gendered violence is both a local and global phenomenon. For many of the women, the experience of violence was normalised in the sense that violence had been present throughout their lives. The women had experienced multiple forms of violence and had learned in many instances to submit in order to protect themselves.

**Corruption**

The organised crime and corruption paradigm was outlined in Chapter 1, and the notion of gender-based corruption within the Philippines was discussed in Chapter 2. Some participants identified corruption as a key element in the trafficking experience, and felt that it existed at a number of levels. At one level corruption was played out by managers and pimps, and at another level by police and government. Kevin Bales (2002) highlights the impact that corruption has on slavery: ‘the key factor in the persistence of slavery is the weak rule of law in many regions. Widespread corruption of government and police allows violence to be used with impunity even when slavery is nominally illegal’ (Bales, 2002, p. 86).

When Cathy reflects on the causes of trafficking, she believes that the government is complicit: ‘Also trafficking happens because the government condones the activity like very specific example is, the bars, the Karaoke bars are not very good, they (the police) know’ [Cathy]. Teresita has ideas about the way she thinks trafficking can be eliminated: ‘I think trafficking will not come to an end unless the biggest, biggest person or organisation, unless they will be toppled down, trafficking will always be here’ [Teresita]. Emerita blames the corrupt political system for social problems:

Because for me, now the world is very, not so nice, because what happen now, somewhere you can see drug addicts, on the
roads you can see prostitution, there are robbers, thieves, everything and then meanness to children. And then why? Because our political system is corrupt, that is why our country now is very difficult. [Emerita]

Teresita sees that there is an inherent problem with rescuing young women and incarcerating the pimps. She recognises that in a complex system of corruption, these approaches do not achieve a great deal:

I really don’t know how to stop this. However, my thinking is, if there is a rescue operation, it’s only the girls who will be rescued and maybe the pimps will be incarcerated or being in jail, but the big, big people on the back of the trafficking business are protected by the police officers, and some connections they will be informed, ‘Ah, there is a raid now, don’t go there’ so I think this is a big problem, I really don’t know how to stop it. [Teresita]

Cathy reflects on the corrupt nature of government officials:

Also trafficking happens because the government condones the activity like very specific example is, the bars, the Karaoke bars are not very good, they know, some government officials know there are, these bars are hiring minors but they instead give protection.[Cathy]

A prime example of the corrupt nature of the police can be found in Rosanna’s account of being in a brothel, partly owned and operated by a policeman:

So, that is what I told the recruiter, ‘You are good there just collecting money and you do not know what is happening to us inside, how we are treated by customers, we are treated like pigs. So how would you do that to us?’ So, in that quarrel with the recruiter, the husband, who was a Barangay captain, meaning a local policeman, intervened favouring me (Laughs). [Rosanna]

That law enforcement officials are complicit in women’s exploitation illustrates the institutionalised acceptance of women’s subordinate status in the Philippines. Despite laws condemning the practice of sex trafficking, it exists with virtual impunity. As discussed in Chapter 2, and in the organised crime and corruption paradigm, until there is a combined law enforcement and criminal justice response to sex trafficking, women will continue to be exploited.
Loss of Identity

Loss of identity was a common theme among the participants’ reflections on their experiences of trafficking, and it was experienced through; their objectification, their drug induced state, their being viewed as an economic transaction and their social stigmatisation. In describing specific trafficking tactics, Louise Brown (2000), a researcher on sex trafficking in Asia affirms loss of identity as key to understanding the dynamics of sex trafficking. For Brown, the previous identities of prostituted women are stripped when they are given new names and denied access to families. Such depersonalising creates an illusion that the object, in this instance the person, is there solely for the satisfaction of the user. Young women who are trafficked for sex are objectified and considered as objects of the money-making activity by the traffickers and objects of play for the gratification of the buyers of sex:

I hated them [the customers] because they made young girls like me their toys and objects of their desires for sex. [Lanie]

And I thought we are just a recipient for something, where they can throw their garbage. And then we can be paid after they throw their garbage, to me it is just garbage and after that we will just be paid and nothing else, so we are like objects whatever, I think we are not like human beings. [Rosanna]

The notion of being treated as something other than human is a strong theme in many of the narratives. Melissa Farley (2003), a long-term anti-trafficking advocate and academic highlights the objectification of women in sex trafficking: ‘in prostitution, she is depersonalised; her name and identity disappear. She shuts down her feelings to protect herself. She becomes something for him to empty himself into, acting as a kind of human toilet’ (Farley, 2003, p. xiii). Lanie further articulates her feelings about being viewed as an object:

If the Papa-san was here now, I would tell him that they won’t do that anymore, because girls or women are not objects to be sold and me, I am a human being, not just an object to be sold to men. [Lanie]

Annabel also asserts her right to have control over her body, indicating that she has to fight for this basic right. She describes her first night at the club where she was put to work as an entertainer:

I have to fight for my rights, the important one is I have a right over my body so I have a decision over what to do with my body. So, I have to fight for those rights... So my first experience, first night at the club I was not a dancer, I was not
hired as a dancer but to entertain customers at the table, having chit chat and I had this customer, a foreigner, and when you entertain a customer at the table, it’s as if the customer has every right to hold all parts of your body, so that customer held all of my parts, just as if I’m just a free toy. [Annabel]

The notion of being used as a toy was raised by a number of women. They saw themselves as objects of play for the gratification of the customers. The experience of being objectified made them feel degraded, useless and ashamed, as many of the women’s stories powerfully reveal. In narrating her experience of being a ‘pick up girl’, Ester expresses the shame she felt:

If you are a pick up girl it’s not very good because you have to stand on the street, and there are plenty of you who are standing on the streets and the customer will select from among you and then there are other customers who would berate or make bad comments about you and it’s shameful to stand on the street and wait for customers. [Ester]

Loss of Identity is also characterised by the alias given to each woman who is prostituted. Cathy highlights the loss of identity she experienced when she was being prostituted under a different name:

In the trafficking experience I was _____[states her alias]and I am proud that I am able to transform myself into the Cathy, into the real Cathy, so I have that capacity, strength and positive determination to really get out of that situation, of that trafficking situation.[Cathy]

The forced adoption of working names and new identities effectively denied them their right to be free, to be themselves, to be called by their birth name.

The women also spoke about their loss of identity through the use of drugs. In many instances they were introduced to drugs in the trafficking situation, with some becoming highly addicted: ‘It’s tiresome, so all the time I use Shabu to ease my emotional pain, it’s not only physical but emotional because I feel very degraded’ [Rosanna]. For many, taking drugs allowed them to behave in ways in which they would normally not feel comfortable. When speaking about her three months of being prostituted in the red light district of Cebu, Rowena asserts that drugs altered her true self:

During those three months there, I had regular duty and not a single day I did not use Shabu because it was a way of protecting myself from shame... When I take drugs it makes me
high, so it makes me stronger and I am not ashamed to entertain my customers and it gives me strength, even if I have plenty of customers I will not be tired. But when I do not take the drug, I am shy; I do not want to have sex. [Rowena]

In a study on emotional experiences of performing prostitution, researcher Lisa Kramer (2004) surveyed 119 women who were being prostituted in Arizona, USA. A significant finding was that while some women used drugs prior to being prostituted, many women used illicit substances, once in prostitution, as a way ‘to detach emotionally and to cope with fears of being hurt in prostitution’ (Kramer, 2004, p. 187). This typifies the experience of many of the women whom I interviewed. In speaking of their experiences of being prostituted, many women described their altered selves after taking drugs:

When I took drugs I felt like I had no problems, I had a light disposition and from then on my body always craved for drugs...

I lost my shyness. [Lanie]

After taking Shabu, it was as if all my shame was lost. I can dance on the stage. It is as if I am just flying and also I am very talkative. [Cathy]

Cathy’s description of feeling as if she was flying is a clear indicator of the mind altering nature of the drugs. In a study of sexual slavery in Asia, Scholar Louise Brown (2000) describes the use of drugs and alcohol in the Philippines as palliative, claiming that prostituted women use them in order to manage their emotional and psychological distress.

Participants spoke of other factors that they believe contributed to the loss of identity: the practice of being lined up and chosen by a ‘customer’, the bar fine system, whereby women are bought at the bar for a certain period of time, and the parading on stage with numbers attached in order to be picked out by a buyer. Cathy’s description of being inducted into a strip club indicates the level of anxiety that she experienced:

The practice that they are saying is about doing the dirty dance and I said at that time I was not familiar with actions. So I said, “No, I do not know how to do dance” but in the evening we took a bath and then we were made to get into the van and we were brought to a club. The ________,[Names the club] a popular nightclub here in Cebu. So when we entered the club, it was big and dark but I knew it was a club because there were lights there flickering and when I entered the centre, there were plenty of women and all of them were wearing heavy makeup. So someone told me that I should wear makeup also, so somebody
put make up on me. I was jittery at that moment and I did not know what to do and I was, ah, I was not feeling good at that time and especially when I had already the heavy makeup and they made me put on shorts which are very transparent, where my undies can be seen and I have to wear boots. So we were given numbers and I think my number was _____[states the number] and we were called one after the other to dance on the stage... My heart was pumping very fast and I was perspiring and I really don't know about what is happening... I was sixteen and I was given another name, ______________[states the name she was given]... I was numb. [Cathy]

When Gina came to Cebu from rural southern Philippines she was trafficked into a bar where she encountered the bar fine system. She emphasizes the commercial nature of her existence. In one transaction over the bar she became a ‘three day package’ to be used in whatever way the buyer wanted. At the end of this arrangement she was then required to return with the money only to be traded once again on her next shift:

If we are bar fined that is 7000p and if the customer requests that I will be out with him for two or three days, another payment of 3 or 4 thousand and so the customer would give me the 4000p because the bar fine was already paid in the bar, but the payment for me, we call it ‘three day package” it will be given to me, so when I get back to the bar I will remit the money. [Gina]

Annabel emphasizes the commercial nature of sex trafficking, stressing the impersonal nature of her encounters in the bar:

Because in the bar there is this, the style of the bar is, the ground is the space where people are gathered with tables and then a stage for dancing and then a little down, a level down is the dressing room and down is the underground where we have the dormitory that we have. So it is like, the bar, the dressing room and then the dormitory. So, our signal that we have to go to the showroom… in the dressing room there is another room which is called a VIP showroom where if the bell rings that means, all the girls in the dressing room would run to the VIP room because there are customers who would want to see us, but the VIP room is…made of mirrors, but we cannot see who is outside, so it is like a one way mirror so once the bell rings and
we go to the VIP room we take our own poses like, different poses to allure the men (laughs). [Annabel]

Annabel unknowingly provides an exemplary example of the economic paradigm and sex trafficking. Viewed in commercial terms, the women are supplied for the gratification of the customer. Rosanna speaks of the loss of identity she experienced while being pack-raped by a group of men in a brothel:

And another time, six of them wanted to come inside, so the watcher approved, so, maybe a big tip was given to the watcher and that is why. It was only the older man who did sex to me but everyone was watching and my hand was pulled so I could hold another one’s penis, I don’t know what and then someone is touching me, so I really don’t know who am I at that time.[Rosanna]

Melissa Farley (2003) claims that prostituted women experience not only physical harm but also psychological harm as they are defined as ‘object, as degraded, as ‘cunt’, as ‘filthy whore’. Her selfhood, her individuality, her humanness is systemically attacked and destroyed in prostitution. She is reduced to vagina, anus, breasts and mouth. She acts the part of the thing men want her to be’ (Farley, 2003, p. xiv). This notion is backed up with powerful simplicity by Aleta:

Also, this part was so weird for me. I felt that I am out of the world, my dignity was gone and I felt that my soul is out of me. People around me don’t have respect. I work in Kamagayan. This is the place where I am working. I feel Dirty, when I started to sell my body and all part of my inspirations of my life was gone. Empty. [Aleta]

Another aspect of lost identity is the experience of being stigmatised. Author and researcher on sex trafficking, Louise Brown (2000) draws attention to the irony of women in the sex trade as viewed with such disdain: while they are despised publicly, they are seen as an essential service privately – ‘paradoxically, far from being outside society they are at its very core. They are not peripheral to the social system because they are vital to its functioning.’ (Brown, 2000, p. 7). A number of women spoke about the shame and humiliation at being viewed as ‘a prostitute’. Philippine society shuns the ‘prostitute’ but she is, in fact, meeting a demand for sex services within the local and global community. In other words, it is a socially accepted practice but one that remains hidden and underexposed. In the following heart wrenching story, Emerita described her shame at the prospect of being branded ‘a prostitute’:
And I cried a lot, I really, really cried, because they forced me to go to the hotel. I was being threatened to be killed if I will not follow, because if I am very useless they need to kill me that is why I cry. That's why I dress sexy and I am very ashamed because the... I thought all the people know about I am a prostitute... She is a prostitute. She said, ‘When you go to the hotel don’t cry and say anything’. She said my name is ________ [States her new name]. [Emerita]

Others also expressed their feelings of being stigmatised and judged:

So, I was sad because I thought at that time that I had no hope already, I had no future and people would sneer at me. I could feel it; they did not respect me anymore. So, I even said to myself at that time, ‘I can die anytime, it doesn’t matter’. [Ester]

No. I did not really want that people would label me a prostitute. Yeah, really I did not have a plan to be prostituted. I only was influenced by that guy in that bar, that wanted me to come here and take drugs. [Emma]

It is clear that Emma suffered from very low self-esteem and believed prostitution to be the most degrading of all roles, so much so that she considered herself as ‘bad and not a good woman’. She made every effort to disguise her identity as a ‘prostitute’, preferring, instead, to be known as a scavenger:

I thought I was bad, not a good woman. I have no guts to face other people because I thought they would know about me. Since I think of myself as bad, not a good woman, and not having the guts to face other people. Since you observe me when I go out, I don’t dress up because I don’t want people to see me as prostituted and I do not intentionally clean my body so that other people would see me as a scavenger, rather than as a prostitute. And there was a time when I stopped being prostituted and really went into scavenging and the money I got out of the scavenging I bought my Shabu. [Emma]

As Farley et al. (2004) assert, ‘existing in a state of social death, the prostitute is an outsider who is seen as having no honour or public worth' (p. 58). This is, indeed, the experience of many of the women who participated in this research. They felt that they were no longer respected within the community. Many found it very difficult to socialise in mainstream places such as shopping centres, cafes and supermarkets.
Even after exiting the trafficking situation many of the women chose to mix only with those who had previously been prostituted.

Significantly, for most of these women the experience of being stigmatised was not new. Many had been stigmatised from a very young age. As indicated in the previous two chapters, many young women were branded as ‘whores’ or ‘rebels’ when they were younger. This was often the result of their having been sexually abused by family members or others in the community, as well as the cultural and social constructs that view women as responsible for their own sexual abuse and degradation. This stigmatisation caused them to feel depressed, anxious and isolated.

It is evident that the young women who were trafficked for sex suffered a loss of identity. They were objectified by traffickers, their associates and the buyers of sex. These women experienced human degradation and humiliation. In some instances they considered that death was a better option. Many women were introduced to drugs as a form of control and to stop any inhibitions they may have had in their encounters with clients. Thus most women lived in a drug-induced state, which altered their sense of reality and left them feeling depressed and often addicted to drugs. Moreover, women were identified by an alias that was given to them by their managers and were forced to wear numbers in order for the customers to identify them. Stripped of their true identity they were considered, both within the workplace and more widely, as occupying the lowest rung of society. Stigmatised by all, many considered themselves worthless and trapped in an environment into which they had been forced. Once again these women’s life stories reflected a life trajectory of victimisation, characterised by abuse and stigmatisation.

Raid or Rescue? Who benefits?

Women involved in this research shared their experiences about rescue operations. Rescue operations are primarily concerned with releasing women held captive in the sex industry. However, as I discuss in Chapter 2, in the Philippines, rescue operations are often ‘staged’ to satisfy the general public that police and federal investigators are doing their job.

The women’s narratives indicated that experiences of rescue operations were predominantly negative; rather than seeing them as rescues, they view them as raids, which many experienced as exposing their vulnerability, re-traumatising them and holding them in a remand environment against their will. Some of the women ‘rescued’ were still children at that time. Within hours of their rescue they were required to have dental x-rays and other medical tests to ascertain their age. In addition, they were
forced to make statements to police, and were sent to a rescue centre where often they felt the conditions were worse than the environments from which they were rescued.

Rescue operations varied in size and approach. Some were major, with police and other personnel raiding a club. Such raids were most often accompanied by the media. Women were exposed to the public and lost any remaining sense of power over their circumstances they might have held. Another factor that complicated matters for the women was the arrest of their club managers, mama sans and other workers. In many instances, those rescued and those arrested were transported together in one van. This enabled traffickers to direct the young women as to what they should or should not say. Many of the women did not want their managers to be prosecuted on account of them and were filled with anxiety. While some women were pleased to be out of the trafficking situation, they also expressed their dislike for the way that they were rescued.

In the following account, Lanie expresses the reality of a rescue operation. She stresses hiding, being pursued and then processed, indicating that a rescue operation is more like an arrest:

During the raid, I wasn’t affected, to me it is nothing because I was very high on drugs at that time, but my manager asked me to hide from the agents because I was the youngest and they were afraid that I would be in prison, so I hid but nevertheless the raiding team still found me and we were brought to DSWD [Department of Social Welfare] and in the next morning I just know what happened really because the drugs wore off and after that we were a little bit processed and brought to a DSWD facility. [Lanie]

Lanie further articulates her experience of the raid as instilling fear and forcing her to testify against her traffickers:

At first, I was afraid of the raid because we were made to sign some documents and I thought that it was like making the manager be in prison and I don’t like the manager to be in prison but the workers there explained to us that the managers there who are responsible for the trafficking should be in prison because they committed some mistake and they should pay for those mistakes. And after some time when I stayed at the DSWD facility I understand why. [Lanie]

In Cathy’s account of ‘rescue’ she highlights the shock at being awakened and exposed. This particular operation was highly publicised, with many media accounts
and photographs. Ninety women were ‘freed’ in an operation that was highly traumatising for Cathy and many of her friends:

Our Casa, the apartment was raided at dawn and we were so shocked because we were only used to sleeping in our bra and undies and when we opened our eyes there were lights from the camera and we were told to get dressed and they raided three casas simultaneously...NBI [National Bureau of Investigation] and some people from DSWD and from NGO's. I don't know who they were at that time. And we were told to dress up and we were brought to one room in that casa, because there were three casas in that compound... During the raid I was very shocked and afraid. I even hid behind the door because there were plenty of cameras and we were soon on TV's and the news. [Cathy]

Cristy, after being rescued in similar circumstances, highlights the ambiguity she felt at being rescued:

After the rescue we were placed in DSWD and there were plenty of us girls there who wanted to escape from the facility and I said to myself ‘Why should I, I have nothing for myself outside and maybe I can go out and take drugs again and go back to the Kamagayan. And that would ruin my future,’ so I just stayed. [Cristy]

Annabel expresses the emotional torment she felt at her rescue, before which a ‘customer’ at the club had befriended her. He came regularly to the club and she shared with him her story of being trapped. Over time, Annabel felt that this customer became more like a boyfriend and she dreamt of the day that he would come and take her away and perhaps marry her. In reality, this customer was an NBI agent. On the night of the raid she saw him directing police and staff and felt that he ignored her. She felt she had been betrayed once again:

But it was to our surprise when we got out of the CR (bathroom) all the lights were on, the dancing stopped and there were plenty of people already. And once we got out of the CR, cameras were on and our faces were taken on the camera. So we don’t know what is happening, so we were very innocent and we did not cover our faces, while other girls covered their faces, so we smiled but then I think we were fortunate enough that we.... But there were plenty of people, plenty of customers,
and then I saw that man who I had a crush on. Ah, he was an NBI agent so I know he was an NBI agent and I felt like down. I felt I was betrayed. I was frustrated. [Annabel]

When asked about the overall impact of the rescue Annabel responded:

The impact on me about the rescue, it was not very good on me because I was very worried because I felt the rescue downgraded my self-esteem because what if I will go home and the people have heard about it, they saw me on TV. [Annabel]

Annabel, while acknowledging that the rescue indeed enabled her escape from her traffickers and begin a process of recovery, also stressed four points that she wanted relayed to the authorities. First, that the practice of NBI agents working undercover in bars should be stopped. She believes that it plays on the emotions of young women, making them feel further deceived and betrayed. The second point concerns the separation of bar personnel from trafficked women. She argues that they should be separated immediately after the rescue, to ensure that there is no interference on the part of the traffickers. Third, there should be no media coverage so that the privacy of trafficked women is maintained. The fourth point concerns the care program after rescue. She argues that social workers should have specialised training and understand the needs and complexities of the situation.

Sar, who was trafficked to Malaysia, encountered a customer who did, in fact, rescue her and her friends. The customer was highly anxious but enabled the young women to return to the Philippines. As illustrated, her rescue was very different to the large-scale rescue operations experienced by others:

Actually on the second night at the bar, there was a customer who was Dutch, and I think he was a seaman and just being there because the ship was docked. And then I told him everything about my apprehension and so he offered help and on the third night he gave me the key to his hotel so that I can go there but I said, ‘I have also some friends’, but he said, ‘Why, I thought you were alone’. But anyway on the night of the escape, we were five who went to the hotel and he was very mad at me because we were plenty and he was also afraid. He was afraid that he will be caught or implicated. [Sar]

Dulce also experienced a different type of rescue. First trafficked at the age of twelve, she was wandering around in the Kamagayan (Red Light District) when she was approached by nuns. They spoke with her about the option to come with them,
and left her to decide, thereby enabling Dulce to have some control over her own
destiny:

When I was fourteen there were nuns and they distributed
rosary beads and I was one who was given and then there was
small talk, so at the end they invited me to go to their centre.
The centre was called____ [states the name]. So the following
day they text me, what's my decision, so automatically I said
yes, because I thought maybe they have plenty of food there.
[Dulce]

The women’s stories about rescues give great insight into the complexity of
such endeavours. Often in the media, rescuers are portrayed as heroes who release
women from their captivity, which serves to reinforce sensationalised media accounts
of trafficking. These women’s accounts draw attention to the fact that rescues are not
always experienced in this light by those who are supposedly freed.

Feminist and legal researcher, Shelley Cavalieri (2011, p. 1411) draws on the
issue of brothel rescues to illustrate the opposing positions of dominance and liberal
feminists. Drawing on the example of Burmese women and girls rescued by NGO’s
from a Thai brothel, she outlines the ‘human rights debacle’ that resulted from different
feminist responses to the rescue. Cavalieri gives a more detailed account of the
circumstances of the women in the brothel than needs to be outlined here. However,
her example illustrates the ideological conflict that continues to stifle practical
responses to sex trafficking. Abolitionists, she argues, influenced by dominance
feminism, believed that the rescue was an essential act in which the authorities
responded to sexual exploitation and abuse, especially of children. Abolitionists argued
that the women had been trafficked and needed to be rescued as they could not be
there voluntarily. On the other hand, sex worker advocates influenced by liberal
feminism argue that these women should be given a choice about their circumstances,
and, given their plight in Burma, may have chosen to sell sex in Thailand rather than be
raped by the Burmese Junta. In this way, the sex worker advocates believed that the
women were exercising agency within the constraints of their environment.

Neither of these positions closely reflects the experiences of the women that I
interviewed. Highlighting the complexity of the issue of rescue, some women I
interviewed who were ‘rescued’, viewed it as traumatic and felt that it replicated the
feelings experienced in the initial trafficking scenario. For example, the experience of
betrayal by the recruiter was replicated by the rescuers who often tricked the women
into believing that they were potential customers. Others felt that they were further
exposed to risk by being rescued and experienced it as a dangerous raid. On the other
hand, some women experienced choice in their rescue, whereby they could articulate their needs and concerns and feel heard.

The gain from listening to the stories of the women is an understanding that the experience of rescue cannot be generalised. Not all believe that rescue in the form of grand operations such as brothel raids are beneficial to women, even if they do feel they want to escape. At the same time, support from outsiders to make decisions about exiting brothel situations can be positive and leaving women to exercise their own agency on the assumption that they have made their own choice about sex work runs the risk of abandoning those in need. The women’s accounts of rescue provide key insights for law enforcers, policy makers and practitioners seeking to assist women who have been trafficked for sex. Importantly, the women indicate that the experience of rescue cannot be generalised and that women’s needs vary according to their circumstances.

**Agency**

At the heart of the women’s stories is their great display and appreciation of resilience and survival. In speaking of their experiences of being trafficked, many of the women discussed their strategies for survival, highlighting their sense of agency in situations often viewed solely as victimisation. Reflecting a key argument of the gender paradigm, Jennifer Lobasz (2009), a feminist and academic claims that women’s agency is often concealed in stories of trafficking and that, ‘representations of trafficking based upon women’s assumed lack of agency conflict with how many trafficked women perceive themselves’ (p. 339). This was certainly the case with many of the women interviewed in this research. All the women identified as victims of sex trafficking; however, they also wanted to stress their individual agency, the fact of their survival and their acts of resilience.

I want to reiterate here my particular use of ‘agency’, a term whose use in relation to sex trafficking and prostitution has been contentious amongst feminists, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 3. In using the term ‘agency’, I embrace the position outlined by Elizabeth Hutchison (2011, p. 27), whereby agency is understood as ‘independent action to cope with difficulties imposed by the rich and the powerful’. Whilst recognising people’s constrained social and structural choices, Hutchinson focuses on their strengths and resilience, arguing that they exercise agency when they show ingenuity in coping and when they resist oppression. This understanding of agency is also in line with the third way feminist account of understanding sex trafficking. As outlined in Chapter 3 a key tenet of the third way is to recognise that sex trafficking is a system of oppression in which women make choices.
The idea that trafficked women are falsely represented as lacking in agency is taken up by a number of authors who stress that whilst women are victims they can also exercise human agency (Buckland, 2008; Cavalieri, 2011; Lobasz, 2009; O’Connell Davidson, 2013; Tyldum, 2013; Vijeyarasa, 2013). The two concepts are not mutually exclusive. Guri Tyldum (2013), researcher and expert on women and migration states that ‘the trafficking concept is criticized for under-communicating female agency, presenting mobility as a problem that should be controlled or even stopped, leading to policies further inhibiting in particular women and youths from acting to change their lives’ (p. 106).

Often women are active in changing their lives, and sometimes they migrate within their country or beyond the borders of their country. Their right to freedom of movement and to make choices, they believe, will enhance their life should not be inhibited by laws or controls that see them as potential victims of exploitation. In asserting women’s capacity to make decisions for themselves, researcher Ramona Vijeyarasa (2013) argues persuasively for an authentic representation of women: ‘trafficking is viewed as something that happens to women, as opposed to exploitation experienced by women who make a concerted and legitimate attempt to change their lives’ (p. 2).

Many of the women in this study showed initiative and demonstrated clearly that despite their feelings of entrapment and deprivation they still had the capacity to make choices and behave in ways that protected their own sense of self. Many had indeed made the ‘choice’, albeit from very limited options, to migrate within the Philippines from rural areas to the city. Many were seeking work that would enable them to gain a livelihood and their own independence. Even while in the trafficking situation, the women’s stories illustrated that they exercised agency. In an account of being with a very violent customer, Ester describes her ability to ‘save herself’ from further abuse by drugging her client. Without a doubt she is victim to this man’s violence, but she displays her agency in preventing herself from further abuse:

So I made some techniques just to save myself, because I saw on the table plenty of pills and saw there on the table labelled ‘Sleeping pills’. So when he got his phone, his butt was on me, I got the sleeping pills and put them in the juice and then I told him later, ‘Yeah, I will make sex with you again, but take this juice so you will have more energy’. So he took the juice and after some seconds he was asleep and I had to dress up and go out. And when I was outside of the hotel I was like I didn't
have energy anymore and I just stood against the wall and dropped. [Ester]

Gina also illustrates how she protected herself from being harmed by potentially violent ‘customers’:

Yes, I am scared of customers, especially if I am being barred fined. So I had that style that I make friends with the customers before we go to the hotel, like I will tell them that I am only forced to be in this work, so I make some small talk to let them feel that this is only work I have a family to provide food and I hope that after this bar fine I can come home still intact. [Gina]

Emma showed signs of resilience and agency when she felt she was being used by a man.

I had a customer, he refused to pay for services even if we had already had sex, so I was so mad that I broke a bottle and hit him, because I thought he wouldn’t pay me, I have to pay for the room, I have to buy drugs, so I hit him and it was really a big incident in the lodging house and police were there to settle…I was detained in the police station, but I was released because the customer did not proceed with filing the case. [Emma]

Rosanna, who experienced sexual abuse from multiple customers, displays her agency in gaining access to money. She is proud of her shrewdness in getting money out of her customers and laughs at her own ‘trade tricks’:

As I work in that area for a longer time, I learned trade tricks, like when I have customers who are… Because I have customers who are students from universities, so when I can sense that they have money, so I said to them, “Oh, your payment is only good down” So I have my t-shirt on and if they ask me, “Why?” And I would say, “Yeah, because you only paid this one, if you want it up you have to pay 500 and if I am the one leading, another 500 (laughs). [Rosanna]

Cathy also asserts her own authority with ‘customers’ despite the fact that she is trapped in the trafficking scenario:

Yeah, there were clients who refused to use condom, but I will say to them, Oh, if you won’t use a condom then you can get back your money, I won’t sleep with you. .. So, there were times when there were stubborn customers who would really insist no
condom but I said, if you don’t then I won’t. And there were customers who also threatened me and I said, oh, if you threaten me, then you will be the one who will be in shame. And I pretended to be strong, even if inside I was really afraid... I was fearful most of the time, but I just acted as if I am tough, because that is survival. The more you show your fear to the customer, the more they would take advantage of that fear. I felt fearful but I had to pretend I was tough and there were customers who would demand different positions and then I would say, No, you paid for only this one. [Cathy]

Gina highlights her astuteness when discerning which ‘customers’ are generous and which are not:

Because, we receive only a small share from the bar, when we are bar fined from the customer, I have my own way of making money, especially those customers who are misers. So if I have a customer who seems to be a miser then I will get money directly from his pocket. [Gina]

Ester also creates her own way of obtaining money directly from customers. This is a risky practice as being caught by her traffickers would entail penalties but she takes the risk in order to be better off financially:

So later on, I already maintained regular customers because they have my number already and even if I don’t go to the disco bar with the pimp, I will just stay in my house and the customer will just text me. “Where are you, can I pick you up at this time”...so the money goes to me 100 per cent (smiles). [Ester]

Likewise, Cristy displays creativity and ingenuity in being able to obtain her own funds: I was clever, because my customer would pay to my employer for a short time. But if my customer would say he needs me for about 2 or 3 days. I would just tell my employer, Oh I have to go home to my cousin and then I would go and take the money. [Cristy]

In the following account, Rosanna shows that she not only stands up to her customers but also to her recruiters. Her declaration to her recruiter underscores Rosanna’s own sense of self-worth and sense of justice:

So there was even one time when I quarrelled with my recruiter because when a customer tells them. “Oh your girl did not perform very well. And they tend, the recruiter tends to favour
the customer. So I told her, “How come you favour your customer when we are making you live, we are your source of money, it’s good that you get half of the share and you are not being prostituted, I am doing the service and I also got you your share. So, if we do not work, you cannot eat” and I said, “If I have some responsibilities to you, you have also some responsibilities to me, because you said when you recruited me I will work in a decent place but you deceived me and brought me here. [Rosanna]

There were several examples of escape that demonstrate the women’s use of their personal agency. For example, in seeking out support, Dulce is able to exit her trafficking situation:

After eight or nine months in Colon I asked the help from the social worker of the Welcome House to help me. [Dulce]

Sar, who was trafficked to Malaysia on the false promise that she would be singing in a band, describes her active attempts at escape:

And actually I really planned to escape since the first night we observed the bar. I really planned how to escape... It’s different from what I expected, so that is why I really planned to escape from the very first night. [Sar]

In addition to exercising their agency, I must stress that the women I interviewed showed marked resilience. Each characterised their resilience in different ways. At the heart of many narratives was the notion of survival. The women’s reflections indicate that despite their experiences they had a desire to live and to move beyond being a victim:

I am proud of myself because despite of the many problems I have been through, I am still standing with still dreams and hopes. I am a survivor; I survived every trial in my life. [Annabel]

Although I don’t know the many challenges to come, I know that I will fall, but I will rise, I will fall, I will rise. [Teresita]

I was fearful most of the time, but I just acted as if I am tough, because that is survival. The more you show your fear to the customer, the more they would take advantage of that fear. I felt fearful but I had to pretend I was tough. [Cathy]

Many of the women told of how their belief in God helped them to cope with their circumstances. As discussed in Chapter 2, religion in the Philippines is predominantly Catholic. Families have strongly integrated religious practices into their
daily lives, such as attending mass, fiestas and novenas. In this way religion is very much part of the cultural experience of being a Filipino. For many of the women, their faith and spirituality provided them with some solace and strength: ‘What prevented me not to give up? ...it is my faith in God that really held me on, not to give up’ [Rosanna]. Lanie also states, ‘I realise that I survived because of my faith in God’ [Lanie]. Annabel stressed the importance of the centrality of God in her life:

What I learnt, what I have in me to keep me going is first, I have faith in God, because with all the problems and I surrendered I don’t know where I am now without God being in the centre of my life. [Annabel]

**Conclusion**

The core aim of this research is to bring to light first-hand accounts of the experiences of young women trafficked for sex in Cebu, Philippines. The women’s accounts illuminate the trafficking experience as isolating, degrading, controlling and imposing on their personal freedom. Stripped of their true identity and stigmatised by their society, they were considered by many to be the least acceptable and some of them considered themselves worthless and no longer of any value to society. Loss of identity was experienced through objectification, drug inducement, being viewed as an economic transaction and their stigmatisation. They experienced feelings of fear, shame, despair, shock, sadness and in some instances, self-blame. Significantly, these were also feelings that many experienced in childhood indicating a life course of marginalisation on account of their class, gender and stigmatisation as among the lowest in the social order. Despite these feelings, many maintained their hope that someday they would not be subjected to such base and oftentimes brutal exploitation. Some of the women described how they held on to their dignity by believing that they deserved better than the way they were treated in their current circumstances. They drew strength from their strong desire to live a life free of violence and commodification. Major themes in their narratives included loss of identity, captivity, violence, corruption, deception, agency and resilience.

Captivity was primarily experienced through debt bondage, drug and alcohol addiction, physical imprisonment and fear as a result of threats and abuse. The women’s stories highlight the lack of freedom of mobility. Some were at times locked up in confined spaces, while others were guarded and their movements closely monitored. This lack of physical freedom was a powerful form of control by traffickers. A lack of freedom to move meant that for many young women it was impossible to escape and the presence of guards was intimidating, a powerful measure to ensure
they remained captive. A particularly sinister aspect of this form of captivity was the fact there was so much focus on the newcomers. Traffickers and managers appeared to be less restrictive of those who had been working for some time, indicating that the women had been successfully ‘groomed’ by their traffickers; the likelihood of their escape had diminished.

Violence was experienced in many ways. As clearly established in the early interviews, many women had encountered violence prior to being trafficked, which was a core issue of discussions in Chapters 4 and 5, which focus on childhood experiences. Public health researchers Mazeda Hossain et al., (2010) undertook a study in which they looked at the association of experiences prior to being trafficked with those during the trafficking experience: many women who are sexually exploited have experienced violence prior to being trafficked. The violence experienced prior to being trafficked contributes to their vulnerability. A very high level of violence was experienced in the trafficking situation. Some women spoke of being physically and verbally abused by their managers. Some experienced physical violence by customers and one woman described one of her customers as a ‘sadist’. All of the women experienced sexual abuse at the hands of their customers. Fear of violence was a powerful way of ensuring the women were controlled and subservient. Many shared stories of being docile or passive for fear of being physically mistreated by their managers or customers.

Corruption also figured dominantly in the narratives, and at a number of levels. It featured in the local and regional settings but also in the way the government was complicit in the commodification of women. Women described police, doctors and other ‘socially upright’ citizens as part of the trafficking web.

Finally the women displayed agency and resilience within the constraints of their environment. Despite their experiences of horrific abuse and systemic violence along with degradation and its accompanying social stigmatisation, many of the women held onto their dignity and belief in themselves. They showed their resilience through their survival tactics. Most displayed a hopeful outlook, believing that this was yet another setback in their life but one that they would overcome and be free of in the future.
Chapter 7
Lives Making Links: Women Voice a Future

We started again but for me the pain is still here inside my heart, just like a tattoo. Even if you erase it, it will leave a scar. We were happy, even if we are not complete. [Emerita]

Introduction
The trafficking experience leaves an indelible mark on the lives of those affected by it. The prior chapter illustrated the exploitative and dehumanising character of the experience of sex trafficking. It highlighted deception, captivity, violence, corruption and loss of identity. Women often felt depressed and deep feelings of worthlessness; some even indicated suicidal inclinations, echoing emotional states that they had experienced in childhood. Yet, their stories show that despite the experienced deprivation, abuse and objectification, they showed great resilience, concentrated on their survival and maintained an attitude of hope that someday they would live a different life.

This chapter draws on participant reflections from the third and final interview, that focus on meaning making. This includes an exploration of how women define sex trafficking, a focus on women’s perceptions about themselves in the aftermath of their being trafficked for sex, and a focus on issues that the women viewed as important to their recovery.

I begin this chapter with a brief discussion on the notion of meaning making followed by an exploration of the women’s definitions of sex trafficking, including their insights into their understandings of the causes of trafficking and ways that it can be prevented. The discussion then turns to recovery programs and their effectiveness, with particular focus on the effectiveness of the Good Shepherd Programs. Finally, I present the women’s future hopes and dreams that they consider to be essential for their ultimate recovery.

The notion of Meaning Making
A crucial aspect of recovery from any traumatic experience is to look for underlying explanations in order to construct meaning from the event (Liamputtong, Haritavorn, & Kiatying-Angsulee, 2012). The aim of this research is to elicit a transformative experience for the women.

I would like to add also that during the interviews that you have done, it helped me and I learned from the interviews that money is not very important in life, but what you have, I realised that
what I should have is, I have to love myself, to respect myself,
to gain my dignity [Lanie]

Meaning making is not a static process, it can ‘change over time and differs inter-
individually, depending on a person’s broad orientation towards life in general and the
personal significance an event has for someone’ (Plattner & Meiring, 2006, p. 242). It is
a key understanding within the life course paradigm, that the significance of an event is
determined by the individual. In the case of the women interviewed, all of them
considered that the experience of sex trafficking had been a life-changing event,
altering their life course and impacting on them physically, psychologically and
emotionally.

Although many of the women experienced sex trafficking as both personal and
structural oppression, their interpretations and meanings about the event differ,
reflecting multiple understandings of the experience. The interviews were structured
such that space was provided for individual women to narrate their own trafficking
story, name their own experience of oppression and thus challenge stereotypical
accounts, reflecting key tenets of a third-way feminist account of sex trafficking.
Women have their own personal life story beginning in childhood, with its own
particular events, transitions and turning points and significance and ‘meaning is built
through an accumulation of life experiences’ (Park & Folkman, 1997, p. 119).

**Meaning Making and defining Sex Trafficking**

Participants’ reflections on their perceptions and understandings of sex trafficking have
significant implications for social workers, service providers and others seeking to
assist them. Thus, for example, if a woman believes that trafficking is ‘selling one’s
flesh’, she may believe that she was complicit in her own exploitation. Such a belief has
important implications for those assisting her recovery from trafficking, for example, in
social work, strength-based practice would entail working with her in ways that affirm
her strengths, build self-esteem and a sense of self determination.

As I outlined in Chapter 1, the United Nations’ particular definition of trafficking
is widely adopted in the international community. However, women in this research
who identified themselves as having been trafficked had various understandings of the
concept and their definitions were many and varied and did not always reflect the terms
of the UN definition. Worth noting here is the fact that it took many years for the UN
definition of human trafficking to be agreed upon. As discussed in Chapter 1, there was
a constant battle over words and concepts, particularly in relation to prostitution. It is
little wonder then that the women in this study grappled with its definition. Some
women defined it in simple terms and others in a more complex manner. Their words
are more of a description; they are a search to frame their understanding in a coherent framework, if not a polished definition.

The women define trafficking as they understand it, first, in the context of having previously been trafficked and second as participants in an NGO whose focus is on recovery and counter trafficking initiatives. Their understanding of trafficking is not static and their conceptualisations have developed over a number of years while they have been in recovery and have reflected on their own experience of trafficking. Input from others such as case workers, peers and in some instances legal representatives have also contributed to their understandings.

Women’s definitions of trafficking reference: recruitment, deception, victimisation, the illegal nature of trafficking, sexual exploitation, the gendered nature of trafficking, voluntary and non-voluntary prostitution and violence against women. Notably, all of these notions formed part of the discussion and debate when formulating the UN definition. When the women were asked to define what they understood by the term human trafficking, the majority chose to place emphasis on recruitment. They generally describe the recruitment phase of trafficking as one in which a woman’s vulnerability is exploited, and she is given false promises and deceived. Hence their focus was on the means and act of trafficking as well as its exploitative nature:

I think trafficking is using women and girls to make money… the word use refers to exploiting the bodies of women and children. Their vulnerability is being used to utilise or to exploit them. [Annabel]

Trafficking is like the girl goes to a place or is being recruited to go to a place and she is promised a job, but when she is there it is not the promised job, it’s not what she thinks about. So that’s trafficking for me. [Sar]

So trafficking to me is like, I can cite my experience, like I was recruited. I was told by my recruiter that work in the area where he will bring me is very good. I will get a high pay and I have only just to entertain customers in a videoke store. So that is trafficking for me. [Lanie]

Their focus on the exploitative nature of trafficking emphasises that the women felt their vulnerability was exploited in order for traffickers to profit from them. In hindsight they recognise that they were victims of gender and class oppression.

Many young women described broken promises as being at the heart of trafficking and the notion of deception was at the core of their definitions:
Trafficking, it is only now that I know about trafficking, before I don’t know what is trafficking. Trafficking is illegal and it’s like being, deceiving a person, like deceiving that you are brought to a place that you are promised, but it’s not the same job as promised. So that is just deception. [Rosanna]

To me trafficking is you are being deceived, you are a victim of deception, good things will happen to you, but it’s not. [Rowena]

Other women felt that victimisation and innocence were closely associated with being recruited:

Yes, I was trafficked… because I was only fourteen at the time [Annabel]

For me, trafficking is a person is being sold and the victim is in a very pitiful situation. [Riza]

It is clear from their comments that some women associated victimisation with age and vulnerability. Another aspect stressed was that trafficking was for the purpose of prostitution. None of the women made reference to trafficking for other purposes. While one woman described trafficking as a normalised labour opportunity, others described it as being sold, victimised, and marketed for sex. Some perceived themselves as complicit in the trafficking process, indicating the ambiguity felt between victimisation and agency:

Trafficking for me is just like working, so that you have money and it’s like working in a mall. [Dulce]

Trafficking for me is selling my flesh. [Emma]

Yet, other women expressed their confusion about trafficking and voluntary prostitution. Some were clearly grappling with the notion of voluntary and non-voluntary prostitution. They struggled to articulate why they identify as trafficked women and highlight the ambiguity they feel about the forced nature of trafficking:

For me, I really don’t know I was motivated to go into, I call it voluntary prostitution because nobody recruited me; I just said ‘Yes’. [Gina]

My thinking about trafficking is when you work for taxi drivers, all for sexual services. But I think also, my experience was of my own volition, so I did it voluntarily. [Raquel]

Trafficking to me is, as I understand it, is that I sell my body to make money. So, I didn’t know that it is trafficking but when I was in my place, I know other people who were prostituted, but
when I came here in Cebu, I had no idea that I would also be prostituted. [Ester]

The ambiguity these women expressed can be understood with reference to the concept of ‘consent’, another matter of contention amongst feminists. Associated with this concept are the notions of autonomy and coercion. Liberal feminists would argue that in simply making a choice the woman is exercising autonomy. On the other hand, abolitionists would argue that autonomy can be threatened by interference such as playing on vulnerability (Cavalieri, 2011). The women’s narratives, above indicate that they feel that they are somehow complicit in their trafficking experience. Shelley Cavalieri aptly describes the position with which I concur as a result of listening to the women’s narratives:

The individual may have the complete personal ability for autonomous decision making including the capacity for self-reflection and bargaining, which are pivotal elements of the liberal definition of autonomy. Yet in the face of only unappealing options, a woman’s choice to engage in sex work cannot be termed a truly autonomous one… although it may be the best option from the available array of choices. A strict definition of coercion cannot always capture the nuances of the softly coercive elements within the lives of women who seemingly autonomously choose to migrate for sex work.

Contrary to some women’s accounts, many women made it clear that they perceive trafficking as being about sexual exploitation and that the person being trafficked is a victim:

First, just an illegal recruiter, they will recruit you for… a good job…and if you will arrive at that place, the work is not the one that they will offer you. It is a prostitute and they will sell you. [Emerita]

Trafficking for me is a situation where a girl or a woman is put into a situation where their future is not secured because there are no services, no interventions to help them get over the sexual exploitation being done to them. [Leah]

To be trafficked there is abuse; they use the term ‘use’ meaning sexual exploitation and then the girl was being paid in return for her sexual services. [Katrina]
In the instances, above, the women clearly identify as trafficked victims because of the forceful and deceptive nature of their recruitment. In representing trafficking in these ways it seems that the women are influenced by the ‘deserving-undeserving victim’ dichotomy. Shelley Cavalieri (2011, p. 1436) outlines the way that such a mentality is played out, whereby a deserving victim is seen as ‘one who lacked knowledge about the work she would do, while the undeserving victim chose to do sex work and therefore “asked for” any mistreatment that followed’.

Researchers Annette Brunovskis and Rebecca Surtees (2008) point to the tendency to pathologise women in organisations set up to assist them. They provide a strong argument in which they claim that victims are viewed as passive and vulnerable and in need of rehabilitation, suggesting that the women are in need of reform. In my time spent at the Welcome House, I did not experience such a blatant distinction applied by the support workers, but that is not to suggest that there was not an unconscious distinction that played out in less overt ways. All women who sought assistance to exit prostitution were assisted regardless of how they came to be engaged in it. However, I found myself at times grappling with the distinction, as if there were, somehow, a legitimate or illegitimate victim of trafficking. I suspect that this was stimulated by my own privileged position; I have many and varied choices about how I engage in employment and community. The challenge for me was to listen and understand the experience of the woman who was sharing her story in all its complexity.

The personal impacts of trafficking were also emphasised when the women defined trafficking. Many spoke about neglect, vulnerability, despair, hopelessness, self-blame and loneliness:

Trafficing for me is a situation where a girl or a woman is put into a situation where their future is not secured because there are no services; no interventions to help them to get over the sexual exploitation being done to them. Just like me. [Leah]

Their vulnerability is being used to utilise or exploit them.

[Annabel]

A number of women made reference to the context in which they understood trafficking taking place, including a context of illegality, violence against women, and a violation of women’s rights:

Trafficing is illegal. [Rosanna]

Trafficing to me is...the victim is being sold and also another, the parents sold their children to traffickers and violence against women, stepping on the rights of women and also for me it was
like, in my own experience I was told that I would have a good job here but then I landed in another job. [Cathy]
I think trafficking is using women and girls to make money….exploiting the bodies of women and children. [Annabel]

In defining the trafficking phenomenon, the women’s reflections indicate multiple understandings of sex trafficking, with some emphasising its effects and others its nature. Many of these women expressed an ambiguity between forced and unforced prostitution. Some believed that they were complicit in their own trafficking; yet others were very clear that it is an act of deception and that they were victims of exploitation. Further insight can be gained by reflecting on the women’s beliefs as to the causes of sex trafficking.

**Meaning Making and Causal Factors in Sex Trafficking**
Assigning causality to a traumatic event assists in meaning making: ‘Thus individuals actively engage in the ‘creation of reality’ in their tellings and retellings, constructing their worlds and themselves through interpretation’ (Riessman, 1989, p. 744). When asked to reflect on the cause of trafficking, the women referred to multiple factors. For many it was about a young women’s vulnerability, for example, having a lack of money or a limited education, reflecting the intersectional nature of oppression. They thought that traffickers were also seeking money. Others referred to childhood circumstances and lack of parental responsibility. Some made reference to poverty and others to a corrupt government. Reference was also made to the greed of traffickers.

These insights reflect aspects of each of the dominant paradigms about sex trafficking presented in Chapter 1:

And to me trafficking happens because there are people who are so selfish, who are so mean, I don’t like them, they use the women just for their own purposes and I really don’t, I am angry at them. [Teresita]
I think trafficking happens mainly because of poverty, and there are people because they are so poor, in need of money, even if the women think that the work offer is not very good, but they have to cling to this work. Also trafficking happens because the government condones the activity like very specific example is, the bars, the Karaoke bars are not very good, they know, some government officials know these bars are hiring miners but they instead give protection. [Cathy]
Trafficking happens for me because I think it's because of necessity. People need something to eat, something to wear and the government is not taking good care of these people, so that is why they, most girls resorted to trafficking. And also those people who are traffickers they are also motivated by money. [Gina]

Many attributed financial incentives for both the woman and the recruiter as key causes. These causes relate to the economic paradigm I present in Chapter 1, and the dynamics of supply and demand:

I think there are people who recruit women, for the sake of money, and also the women give in for the sake of money. [Riza]

I think trafficking happens because of people who want money and they want to make money, big money. [Rowena]

Trafficking happens because first there are people who want to make themselves very rich, at the expense of young women and trafficking also happens because, meaning the first one, it's the traffickers, there are people who are traffickers who wanted to be rich at the expense of young women, making them rich without doing hard work. [Annabel]

For me, trafficking happens because girls think that it is, especially those girls who have low education, they think that it is the only way to get money to provide for themselves. [Raquel]

Some were very insistent that the cause of trafficking was associated with family problems. This links to the gender and human rights paradigms as well as making links with the life course trajectory of victimisation:

I think trafficking happens because of the many problems of the women, family problems that they do not want to go home. And they just decide to stay here and like in my case, I think I will not go back to my hometown because of my problems with my family. I can't be at peace with my brother and my father has already died and my mother is sick, so I think that I will just stay here in Cebu forever. [Jovie]

On the other hand trafficking happens also because there are, because of family problems, they are promised with good jobs and they want to take the good jobs because of family
problems, family financial problems and also there are people who deceive women, so that is why these women are being trafficked. [Teresita]

Significantly customer demand was referred to by only one woman:

I think there is trafficking because on the side of the woman, most of the women need money to survive. While on the side of the user, the customers, they need women to comply their happenings outside of the home. [Emma]

In describing the gender paradigm in Chapter 1, I discuss the position of prostitution abolitionists. Client demand is one of the key factors that anti-trafficking prostitution abolitionist’s focus on eradicating. Participants’ lack of discussion of customer demand may be attributed to their socialisation in a society where the myth of the predominance of male sexuality and sexual needs is generally accepted as the norm.

In attributing the cause of trafficking to prior sexual abuse, Katrina places emphasis on the life experiences of the women. She clearly makes a connection between being trafficked for sex and previous sexual abuse; this insight is also related to the gender paradigm and significantly correlates with the life course paradigm: “Trafficking happens because the trafficked women have been sexually abused before.” [Katrina].

The women differed in their beliefs as to the causes of sex trafficking. However, their reflections provide deep insight into the trafficking phenomenon as they understood it from their own experience. Causes discussed by the women included: poverty; family problems; corrupt government; lack of parental guidance; greed on the part of traffickers; demand from customers; a history of sexual abuse on the part of those trafficked; vulnerability of the woman on account of lack of education; naivety; and financial desperation. These reflections reiterate that the causes of sex trafficking are complex and that for those who have been trafficked, attributing causes is not a simple task.

**Meaning Making and Trafficking Prevention**

Prevention of trafficking has formed a key part of the work of a number of government and non-government organisations. In Chapter 2 I discuss forces working against sexual exploitation in the Philippines. Here I present the ways that participants in this research reflect on what they believe will help to prevent sex trafficking. Many of their ideas and suggestions are in keeping with those recommended by interested organisations and include community education, warnings, stopping the demand, parental education and community vigilance.
In talking about trafficking prevention, community education is emphasised, particularly by those who live at a distance from the city. Both local schools and communities are seen as effective avenues for engaging preventative measures. Thus:

To prevent I would give awareness sessions or it’s like community education about trafficking, especially those places which are very rural, very far from the city, because the women and the girls in those very far places are more vulnerable for trafficking. [Annabel]

To help those who could potentially be trafficked I would have community education and hire community educators to inform them what are the dangers if you are being trafficked. So all about trafficking I would educate the community. [Gina]

So it’s awareness for those children who could be potentially trafficked. So those who are not in school, in the community, there is a meeting in the community where trafficking also is being explained to them. [Rowena]

Whilst community education was seen as a priority, many women also emphasised the need for warnings. They felt that by speaking about their own experience they could provide warnings to potential victims:

And also for those people who are not being trafficked yet but are potentials, I would like to say to them that “Do not be deceived by anyone, even if you are offered money or some materials, don’t waste your life with being a trafficked victim. It’s not good. [Lanie]

If you are girl and new to the city, you should be careful and you should not go to disco bars and also the second is, you should choose your friends because there are plenty who are snatchers, who (inaudible) who sweet talk you, and then bring you to a place that is not good.[Cristy]

If there is someone who would offer you something good, do not prance or do not dip immediately, do not take the offer immediately, you have to discern whether this offer is really good or not, because sometimes there are people who would take advantage of you.[Cathy]
Parental education also featured as a preventative measure.

What I can think of as a preventive measure, I really acknowledge that parents have a big role to supervise their children not to be in that road of danger and because I think parents should be having that parental responsibility over their children, like, they should know their responsibilities, like, how to deal with children. [Cathy]

The issue of demand, rarely raised by the women when discussing causes of trafficking, was referred to directly only by Jovie when discussing prevention:

I would like also to address the people, the general people. That they should not go to the Kamagayan, especially the males. So that there will be no demand and they refrain, or for those parents they should guide their children so that these children will not go to Kamagayan [Jovie]

A number of women’s stories inadvertently made reference to the lack of community vigilance. I found it illuminating that the women’s suggestions for prevention were largely concerned with community education and warnings about deception by traffickers and recruiters. Although they shared their childhood stories of poverty and abuse and told stories that indicate a life trajectory of victimisation, they barely mentioned the relevance of adequate childhood care in the prevention of trafficking. Perhaps the women were drawing on prevention strategies that they already knew were in existence. For example, the Good Shepherd Welcome House engages in community education and encourages the women to share their stories in order to warn other potential victims about sex trafficking.

The effectiveness of such preventative measures are questioned by researcher Sallie Yea (2004c) who conducted research in South Korea with trafficked Filipino women. She argues that despite the media, NGO’s and government factual warnings about the danger and exploitation of some job prospects, women still proceed because of ‘idealised images of their futures as migrants’ and most importantly because of ‘longer term patterns of abuse or lack of family anchoring’ (Yea, 2004c, p. 81). My research, which considers that circumstances in the life course, particularly childhood abuse, contribute to women’s vulnerability to sex trafficking, concurs with Yea’s findings. Hence, prevention must consider early childhood development education and support.
On the Road to Recovery– Post Trafficking Support Services

The programs and services are good, but I think the prime factor or the prime person who can really help us is ourselves, because no matter how plenty are the services, laid out for us;..., but if we don’t want to avail of those or be rehabilitated or recovered it’s nothing. [Sar]

Sar stresses the importance of self-motivation for recovery. All of the women in this research project were supported by either the Good Shepherd Recovery Centre and Good Shepherd Welcome House, or both, at some point in their recovery. (See Chapter 4 outlining these services). The majority of these women have been part of a trafficking recovery program for more than four years. Since the 1990’s and the drawing up of the UN definition of trafficking, recovery programs aimed at trafficked women have begun to emerge and exist in a number of different settings and reflect various models of care and recovery.

As I discuss in Chapter 1, recovery programs for trafficked women in an international context have often entailed a requirement on them to assist law enforcers in legal proceedings. Reviews of recovery programs indicate that such requirements can, in fact, impede rather than assist the victim. To date, there are internationally accepted guidelines on the care and support of trafficked victims, for example, ‘Caring for Trafficked Persons: Guidance for Health Providers’, which was developed by the International Organisation for Migration (Zimmerman & Borland, 2009). Within the Philippines there are very few recovery programs aimed specifically at trafficked women. Most are combined with care programs, catering for multiple needs, such as to homeless youth and street kids, orphaned children and single mothers.

When sharing their experiences of recovery programs the women stressed that the following were of greatest value: safe accommodation; emotional support; income generation projects; education; family reunion; community engagement; and peer support. In terms of the life course paradigm, being part of the Good Shepherd recovery program represented a ‘turning point’ for the women. It gave them the opportunity to reclaim their identity, undertake further education and embark in job skills training.

*Emotional Support*

The women in this study valued the home-like atmosphere created in the two Good Shepherd centres, an atmosphere that was characterised by warm and accepting staff who offered encouragement:
And I now live at the Welcome House even if I don’t have a relative. But there are people who love me like a family in the centre. [Jovie]

So what makes me strong is the Welcome House, the treatment they gave me, they treated me as a family member, so that is why I did not surrender. [Jovie]

What I appreciate most at the Welcome House is their good treatment of the women. They treat us as if we are their family and they can even sacrifice their own just to give the best service for us and helping the women, us, to recover. [Emma]

The importance of family-like support in assisting women’s recovery is considered by researcher and mental health counsellor Joan Reid (2011) to be paramount in that it has ‘the potential to provide places where these young women can be welcomed, and where effective psychological healing can take place and social injustices and human rights violations can be effectively addressed’ (Reid, 2011, p. 91)

In addition to a family environment, women described the importance of emotional support during the recovery time:

There are plenty of things that the Recovery Centre has done for me. First is, they were able to guide me on how to face my own self, to discover myself, what are my dreams and what are the things that I have to improve on and little by little in that centre I tried to open up my story, open up about understanding my own self, understanding my own dynamics...And all I can say is they tried hard, they tried hard to make me believe in myself again. [Raquel]

They give us the opportunity to decide for ourselves, like some activities, they, because they want us, the staff at the Recovery Centre want us to really find our own selves, so we had this swimming therapy so that we can really show our own personalities, our own attitudes. [Leah]

Good Shepherd, I learnt here to be open, to trust again, through the therapy to share and then to forgive. And then I learned here also to be mature, to be strong, not easily to give up... I learned to be strong, not to be ashamed. [Emerita]

Psychological healing is an important process in the recovery from sex trafficking (Abu Ali & Al-Bahar, 2011; Chung, 2009; Reid & Sullivan, 2009). For many of the women, this healing involved recovery not only from the trafficking situation but also
from pain associated with childhood abuse and trauma. Although the majority of women valued the opportunity to explore their feelings and emotions, one woman questioned its value:

The seminars that I attended along with the other girls were on, the effects of trafficking, why we were trafficked, and then self-awareness, knowing ourselves. Others cried but I did not cry because I thought “Why should I cry and then the next day we will still be the same”. And I really don’t know what that in-depth intervention for emotional support is…My only dream is to have a stable income; I do not care if I will not be having very high wages but a stable income. As long as it can support the needs of my son that is all I want, I even don’t dream to get married.

[Sar]

Sar’s reflection illustrates the dilemma that is often raised by NGO’s in terms of how best to offer assistance (Brunovskis & Surtees, 2008). Whilst women in recovery have basic needs such as food, safety and accommodation they also need emotional and psychological support, as well as skills to generate some income for their livelihood, and that of their children: The dilemma for service providers lies in how to prioritise resources in relation to these competing strands of support.

The women at the two Good Shepherd agencies valued the opportunity, during recovery, for further education. Many were undertaking accelerated school programs in order to move into vocational training. For most, this was the first opportunity they had to focus on educational achievements. Some opportunities for income generation were offered at the agencies providing the women with a small income, for example, beading and lanyard making. The need for some kind of financial support was seen as very important to the women. Thus:

And another challenge that I can think of is financial. Though we are planning now, though we cannot avoid that there will be financial problems. We have to deal with those realities on financial matters. [Cathy]

As of now, that is the main thing, financial independence. [Sar]

We have beading that gives us money also and we visit other centres and we go outside for outdoor activities. That’s why we have plenty of activities here which I like. [Jovie]
**Peer Education and Support**

The involvement of formerly trafficked women in the outreach program at the Welcome House was considered by many women to be a vital part of recovery. They explained that mentoring their peers, gave them great satisfaction. For Ester:

> The first thing that I will do if I had the chance, I will make myself as a witness, that they can change, they can leave the work if they are already in the trafficking situation, they can leave that situation just like me. I will tell them about my story, how I survived, and how I am now recovering and healed. And so... because I think there is no need of big money to do that. I only have to show that I was in that, and I survived and I will make myself as a model. [Ester]

Teresita, formally trafficked, became an outreach worker whilst in recovery at the Welcome House. She describes her motivation for outreach in the Kamagayan:

> What motivated me to help these girls is every time I go out; I really go out with a purpose. I want to help these girls find other ways, alternative ways to make money, not to be on the streets all the time. So, if I want to help them I tell them the truth, what will happen. I tell them other ways, like I can share my life to them and .... but if along my outreach, the girls will not believe me, will not come to the Welcome House, I will not force them, I will just tell them, "Okay, I will just come back if you want", so that is how I give my true self when I do the outreach. [Teresita]

The approach of the outreach program, so aptly described by Teresita, indicates that young women were given some control over their own lives. They were assured of a visit from the team each evening and could determine their future based on what they knew about their situation. This is in stark contrast to the experience of rescue through raids as outlined in Chapter 6. Some young women were able to make a plan for safely exiting their situation:

> I can also say that just like the Welcome House there are people who are going out, dedicating their time, doing the outreach, influencing the women to come and there is a shelter where the women can go for. [Teresita]

**Women of Dignity – Worthy of Respect**

In the final interview many of the women shared their desire to be recognised as women of dignity and worthy of respect. The majority had experienced stigmatisation.
and were put down in both childhood and later in the trafficking scenario. After the trafficking experience and during their time of recovery many were able to acknowledge for the first time their own value and self-worth:

Before, in the situation that I was trafficked, I thought I was stripped of all my dignity, but now I learn that no, my dignity is still here with me and I have to fight so that to raise my dignity which I thought was lost but it is not. [Annabel]

I want to tell the world that I was once a rape victim, a trafficked victim, but I want to be respected, I want that nobody will make fun of me. [Riza]

Before I would say in my mind, “Oh, the trafficked girls they are flirts, that’s why they were trafficked” but now I realise that they were trafficked, these girls were not trafficked because they were flirts. I know because I was trafficked already. [Rowena]

The importance of reframing the concept of self is highlighted by researcher Joan Reid (2011): ‘treatment for abused and neglected minors may need to include strategies centred on reprocessing cognitions of not being deserving of healthy relationships and shaping new beliefs of worthiness in relation to others’ (Reid, 2011, p. 154). Likewise, clinical psychologists Abu Ali and Al-Bahar (2011) state the importance of a therapeutic program that builds on identity as creating ‘reassurance, safety and a solid therapeutic alliance’ (p. 795). The building of relationships with significant trusting figures was something the women valued. This relates to the life course paradigm and the principle of linked lives wherein providing a developmental context where women are exposed to positive relationships can offset negative relationships (Elder Jr & Johnson, 2002).

Some women’s reflections indicate that whilst they had moved on from the trafficking experience, they still felt that they were complicit or responsible for their trafficking circumstances:

So, I want to tell the whole world that even if I am a victim of trafficking, I still have the desire to change. I still have the desire that I will become a good person, that I can be transformed to a better citizen. To be a better woman whose dreams are also good for myself. Even if I am a trafficked victim I know I still have a chance to get out. [Ester]

What I learned about myself is before I was not a good girl, I was not good, I can say I was bad. But now I am already
recovered, I can say that my life now is beautiful, it's comfortable. I don't have to sell my body to be addicted to buy drugs, so I now learned that I am okay. [Emma]

The notion of transforming into a ‘better person’ after having been trafficked was a common view held by the women. This indicates that the women’s self-esteem was often low and the experience of being trafficked and objectified left many of them questioning their own self-worth. It is also indicative of the effects of the dominant Filipino sexual morality, as outlined in Chapter 2, which questions a woman’s sexual behaviour and deems her worthless if she does not remain a virgin prior to marrying or is seen to be in anyway sexually promiscuous. It could also be a consequence of unconscious messages given to women when in recovery.

Researchers Anette Brunovskis and Rebecca Surtees (2008) draw attention to how recovery programs for assisting trafficked women are conceptualised and implemented. In interviewing women who had formerly been trafficked and then were part of an assistance program, they argue that while there is much good will, there is a tendency for programs to ‘pathologise’ women and to ‘rehabilitate’ them, understanding them as somehow in need of reform. They argue that such an approach can be detrimental to the recovery of victims:

Commonly, victims are seen as girls and women whose poor decisions led to their victimization and much energy and effort is spent to correct this, to bring about a change in thinking and to reorient their plans and behaviours. Victims are, at times, treated as worrying autonomous agents requiring resources and guidance to change their decisions and behaviours to more palatable ones. The focus of therapy in many cases, then, is on reconstituting subjects who autonomously make ‘appropriate’ decisions from the point of view of the assisting organization (Brunovskis & Surtees, 2008)

This has implications for all who are seeking to assist women who have been trafficked. Therefore, it is imperative that in recovery, relationships of trust are built up with the women and that through these relationships a ‘reparative and alternative frame of interpersonal reference’ begins to develop (Abu Ali & Al-Bahar, 2011, p. 795).

The women in this study viewed their time in recovery as beneficial. They considered that significant bonds were built up with the staff and that they were part of a family, were enabled to further their education and develop skills for job acquisition. However, some did state that at times they felt restricted and confined and lacking in
personal autonomy. For those assisting women in recovery, a fine balance is needed between the needs and safety protocols of organisations and the needs and desires of those they assist. Given the demanding nature of support in terms of time and finance, organisations that assist formerly trafficked women have to play a difficult balancing act.

**Holding on to a Dream – Moving Beyond the Trafficking Experience**

I think I was born as a dreamer. I have plenty of dreams in life which those dreams gave me strength to go on in life. [Annabel]

Throughout the interviews, the participants were keen to share with me their hopes and dreams about the future. They expressed that, whilst they had experienced sex trafficking, it was something from which they wanted to move on. I was challenged by this attitude which seemed to me overly optimistic and I wondered whether it was truly possible to ‘sink the past’ as one of the women expressed. A key understanding within the life course paradigm is that one does not live without reference to earlier contexts. I wondered if it was possible to recover from the traumatic events that the women had experienced in their lives. Many celebrated the fact that they had survived difficult times, including the trafficking experience. They shared their dreams for their future and the hopes they had for the rest of their lives.

A number of women shared hopes of having their own family, where they could nurture their children and provide a safe home. For many of the women their dream of a happy family was in direct contrast to their own childhood environment:

And when I have a good husband we will have a good family, we will be very happy. I imagine that I will have a very satisfying life with my whole family. We will have good bonding. [Ester]

I want a family who can care for me and I can care for them also and a small family and if I can establish a family of my own I will be happy. [Jovie]

Some reflected with sadness on their future. One moment in my third interview with Rosanna brought home to me the uncertainty that lies below the surface of these women’s expressions of hope:

In the future I would like to prove to the relatives of my father that I can create a good family (cries). I can show to them a family which I can be proud of, the community will respect me for having a good family and I would tell them that the family I am forming is different from the family I came from…this family...
that I will be forming is a happy one, which I did not have. ... Ten years from now, I really don’t know but I imagine myself having a stable job and creating a family. A good family, a happy family, a very different one from the family that I came from (Begins to cry). [Rosanna]

[Interview question: And I can see when you are telling me that you have tears. What are the tears about do you think?]
The tears, I really don’t know it just come out, but when I imagine it, it’s painful, it’s hard because I think it’s not possible. [Rosanna]

This was a poignant moment; I think deep down both of us knew that the complexity of recovering from a lifetime of victimisation and abuse would continue to be an on-going struggle throughout her life.

Other women made reference to the difficulties they believed they would encounter later in life, particularly around forming relationships with men. Gina’s nervous laughter is perhaps a clue to how the pain of being tricked and deceived persists in spite of optimism and determination to move on:

Men! [laughs] they are a pain in my head. (Laughs) because of their attitudes, they are deceitful, they don’t tell you what is the real situation and they make promises and they will not fulfil. Promises are made to be broken and there is misunderstanding. That’s why I don’t believe in their promises. [Gina]

What I think would obstruct me in achieving those dreams are men. Men who make promises to me, which I am the type of person who easily gives in to promises. And they will trick on me, so maybe that is one biggest obstacle that I have to handle so that I can reach my dream. [Raquel]

Many of the women spoke about the establishment of their own families; some also had a strong desire to be reunited with their parents and siblings:

I want that my father will join me also, ten years from now. [Cathy]

So what makes me survive is I set goals for my life, I have dreams. My dream, I wanted to reach my dream and my dream is to have my whole family intact, meaning I have all my family together again. [Raquel]
I would like to see my son, having his own family and raise his children and I will have grandchildren who will call me Lola and I can die peacefully and happy. That is only my dream when I am fifty six. [Emma] 
In ten years from now I will be in my house together with my Mama and helping her earn a living. [Katrina] 

Alongside dreams of happy families, the women also aspired to have work opportunities such as sewing, having a boutique or running a bakery or small businesses so they could support their families. Others believed it was a way of showing their independence and talent and that they were not afraid to ‘reach for the sky’. At the same time, some of the women were mindful of the challenges such a pursuit would entail, juggling both hope and reality:

I will own a big restaurant and hotel…One of my trials or problems that I will meet is, I will be stuck to the thinking that…or I am afraid that I cannot reach all my goals because I am stuck to that thinking still that I cannot do it. Because when I was still a child, everyone told me that I am not intelligent, I am dull, I cannot do anything well and even now I am trying to fight back that precondition in my mind. [Lanie]

I see myself as a very promising wife and entrepreneur, because we planned together with my husband now that we will set up a bakery and now we are in the process of saving money for that dream…And another challenge that I can think of is financial. Though we are planning now, though we cannot avoid that there will be financial problems. We have to deal with those realities on financial matters. [Cathy]. 

Ten years from now I hope that I can show to the people who put me down, who despised me that I am the new Gina I have dignity, I am a respected person already, I have my own business so that I can prove to them all that I can rebuild my life… My downfall would be my family, family problems, health problems and of course men [laughs]. [Gina]

Women viewed education as an important endeavour. They considered that further education would enable them to secure a better future:

Yes I want to go to university to take up social work because I really see myself ten years from now a social worker. [Rowena]
I am enrolled at ALS [Alternative Learning System] now and then coming October, I will take the A and E (the exam of the ALS) and I hope I can pass... If I pass this, I will go to secondary school... And then after secondary I will do the hotel management. [Lanie]

I want educational support. I want to study so that I can get a good job later. [Katrina]

Through opportunities provided by the recovery program, women’s educational experiences were able to move from being limited and sporadic to focused and supported.

As I listened to these women speak of their hopes and dreams for the future, I could not help but be touched by their courage and optimism. They expressed a desire to move on from adverse experiences, and especially those of childhood and in the trafficking situation, and expressed a profound hope in a future where they would have happy, stable families and financial independence.

**Conclusion**

I am confused right now because I am still adapting to my present life, where to place myself. [Katrina]

Katrina expresses a common dilemma as experienced by so many of the women who formed part of this study. The trafficking experience displaces a person so greatly that recovering from such an ordeal takes an extended period of time, often many years.

In this chapter I have explored how formerly trafficked women make meaning from their experiences. While there is no doubt that women suffered physically and financially, it is clear that the emotional impact on women was significant. For many of them, the experience of being trafficked struck the core of their identity. Some were able to affirm their self-worth, but they also indicated self-doubt and uncertainty. Sometimes they appeared confident and ready to take on any challenge, and at other times they showed signs of insecurity and lack of confidence; for many, this dynamic was ever present. Despite this insecurity, the women exhibited extraordinary resilience, expressing their hopes for a happy and prosperous future, in which they might live securely in a loving family environment. Alongside their dreams for a happy family, they expressed a desire for education in order to secure a job leading to financial independence.

Reflecting on recovery programs, women affirmed the value of safe accommodation, emotional support, educational opportunities and income generating
projects. They viewed both the Welcome House and Recovery Centre as places where they could come to know themselves through reflecting on their life journeys. They valued the fact that the staff believed in them and did not give up on them. For many, the opportunity to experience further education was seen as a great opportunity. Many valued the family-like atmosphere created in the two Good Shepherd agencies. Importantly, some women took up the opportunity to be part of a peer support outreach team, visiting women and girls in the red light district of Cebu. The chance to share their experiences with others and make a difference to their lives was profoundly transformative for many of the women in recovery.

I have indicated that recovery is a long-term process and that while the women were able to name elements of the recovery program that they found valuable, they were aware of the ongoing nature of their healing. At the beginning of this chapter, Emerita so aptly expressed the way the trafficking experience had left her feeling ‘incomplete’. This notion of feeling incomplete is key to understanding the impact of trafficking.
Chapter 8
Towards a New Understanding of Sex Trafficking

I want that my experience before would not just only be an experience. I would like to use my experience as a testimony, so that other people will be helped, because out of the experience that I had, I was made a stronger person... my experience, I own it, I am in the best position to share my experiences with others and I want my experience to be a positive factor for other people, to inspire their lives also. [Annabel]

Introduction
Throughout my research project I sought to bring to the fore the lived experience of young Filipino women trafficked to Cebu for sex. In listening to their stories through a series of focus groups and interviews, and by immersing myself in their environments I have struggled with the harsh reality of their experiences and have been powerfully moved by their resilience. I have felt anger and compassion in equal measure and have inwardly railed against the injustices perpetrated against them. I have grappled with the concept of trafficking and have been challenged to broaden my thinking and perspectives beyond my own knowledge and experience, privileging instead the experiences, understandings and knowledge that trafficked women themselves have communicated. Their accounts cast new ideas and provide new insights about sex trafficking, adding a unique thread to the understanding of trafficking as a phenomenon that is all-too-common. Through listening to their accounts, transcribing their stories and analysing them in the light of the dominant, prevailing paradigms on sex trafficking in scholarly literature, as well as engaging in reflexive practice, including conversations with my trusted bi-cultural research assistant, I am convinced that sex trafficking in the Philippines is a complex phenomenon that cannot be presented effectively in simple, populist terms.

In the Philippines, the market for cheap sex is an exploitative one, preying on vulnerable young women. Largely constructed out of male sexual privilege and dominance, it exploits young and disadvantaged women and reaps large profits for those who invest in the industry. It is clear that these women were born into, and lived in poverty and were unwitting victims of globalisation. Most of them also experienced family violence and sexual abuse, and some of them from a very early age. Many had migrated in order to flee their impoverishment and oppression and to seek out new alternatives for their futures. Some were victims of petty criminals, themselves caught on the bottom rungs of national and global crime networks. They all were born into a
culture that has oppressed women, imposed on them a double standard of morality, used them for pleasure and condemned them for failing to match the idealised, perfect-wife/mother/Madonna archetype. Their human rights were denied at every level of their existence. At the same time, how does one explain that countless other young Filipino women have experienced similar deprivation, the same familial, local and global forces at work on and in their lives – and they have not been trafficked for sex? I assert that sex trafficking occurs with the confluence of factors, where global and local forces intersect with individual vulnerability.

I have argued throughout this thesis that representations of women trafficked for sex all-too-often present stereotypes; their experiences are sensationalised, leaving the impression that at the core of trafficked women’s experience are random acts of victimisation. Life course trajectories leading to sex trafficking suggest the rather more complex dynamics that are the case; simple conclusions that universalize or essentialise the sex trafficking experience serve to continue the misrepresentation of those affected by the phenomenon.

One major outcome of this research has been the demonstrable usefulness of a third-way feminist account for understanding sex trafficking. From this vantage point, the best elements of both dominance and liberal feminism can be integrated, making for a middle ground where feminists may agree. In promoting the third-way feminist understanding, as Cavalieri states:

> If reconciled, the liberal appreciation of individual experience and the poststructuralist awareness of the need for individualised intervention can resolve the flaws of dominance feminism’s universalised account. Similarly, reconciling aspects of liberalism and dominance theory permits the use of the class-based analysis of dominance feminism to overcome the liberal failure to provide a cogent description of the social nature of the oppressions that cause trafficking (Cavalieri, 2011, p. 1409)

This approach breaks the feminist theoretical impasse over the aetiology of sex trafficking and allows for practical action and responses by and for, those most affected by the phenomenon.

In this concluding chapter of the thesis I draw upon and illustrate how the four central tenets of a third-way feminist approach as outlined by Shelley Cavalieri (2011) are in congruence with the women’s accounts of sex trafficking. Relatedly, I discuss the compatibilities between the life course paradigm and a third-way feminist account of sex trafficking. I outline the limitations of the study, concluding with summative recommendations and key insights from the research project.
Understanding Sex Trafficking through a Third-Way Feminist Account

The ‘third way’, which reflects a critical feminist methodology, offers a useful approach to understanding and conceptualising prostitution and its relationship to sex trafficking. It also accords with my own world view stemming from a strong and motivating interest in and commitment to social justice. The women’s accounts align closely with the four central tenets of Third-Way Feminism as outlined by Shelley Cavalieri (2011). To reiterate, the tenets are: (1) Sex Trafficking is a system of oppression in which individuals make choices (2) The third-way feminist approach explains and attempts to counteract multiple forms of oppression without subsuming particularised experiences of individual women (3) Space is provided for individual women to narrate their own trafficking story, name their own experience of oppression and thus challenge stereotypical accounts. (4) This feminist account allows for ‘agentic’ action even under oppression, asserting women’s ability to ‘stand in opposition to oppression’ (Cavalieri, 2011, p. 1447).

The first tenet was exemplified in the narratives of the women. Beginning in childhood and moving into adolescence and then early adulthood, these women experienced multiple oppressions within their home and community environments as well as within the wider socio-cultural context of the Philippines. Reflective of a key principle of the life course paradigm, the women’s individual life stories were influenced by the wider socio-historical context in which they lived.

The women’s accounts and insights illustrate that women trafficked for sex have unique stories that highlight oppressive environments, systemic abuse and violence from their early, formative years into early adulthood. Drawing on the life course paradigm, my findings highlight the relationship between early childhood events and later events in life, as well as both individual and structural factors leading to sex trafficking. Factors that pointed to an emergent life trajectory of struggle and disadvantage included an environment characterised by poverty, educational struggles, rural isolation, exposure to drugs and alcohol and violence, each of which are personal but also political in that they represent failures of economic, political and social systems in the Philippines.

The oppressive nature of abuse formed a significant part of the childhood narratives, and it included physical, emotional, sexual, verbal and financial abuse. Narratives shared by participants indicate that many of these experiences were defining moments in their life course. Abuse left many feeling fearful, betrayed, powerless, depressed, anxious and confused about their sexuality. Accompanying these feelings was a sense of stigmatisation by family and, indeed, the wider community, highlighting the social and cultural oppression of those considered to be on
the outer margins of Filipino society. Many of the participants felt that they were destined to live lives of poverty and disadvantage – some saw themselves as deserving of their circumstances - and this led them to make the ‘constrained’ choice to gravitate towards other marginalised individuals such as street children and others who found themselves rejected by family or community. It was with these marginalised individuals and groups that many of the participants felt they could identify. Blame and shame were key factors inhibiting the growth and development of these children.

In terms of their relationships, many participants described family relationships that were fractured or had entirely disintegrated. Often they found themselves in living environments where they were not emotionally connected to anyone, mothers were absent and children were left in the care of extended family who resented their presence due to the financial burden they brought. Such maternal absences reflect the ‘feminisation of labour’ or the ‘feminisation of survival’ (Sassen, 2000, p. 258) in the Philippines, as many of the mothers were absent for work: the demand for domestic work teams with a women’s need to migrate to earn an income for the family. Many participants grieved the absence of their mothers whom they felt should have been there to protect them and care for them in their early years. In this respect, social and economic forces pushed women away from their families, reflecting both the global and local economic environments, and impacting on all members of the family.

As adolescents, the women responded to their circumstances in a variety of ways. As well as seeking solace from their associations with peers, some chose to engage in risk taking behaviours, using drugs and alcohol as a way to ease their pain. Some became rebellious in school and were abusive towards family members and others. After struggling to survive in such adverse conditions, many decided to seek alternative environments by running away and seeking a safer place while looking for work opportunities. However, for most, this resulted in further abuse and marginalisation and made them extremely vulnerable to being trafficked for sexual exploitation.

Having been drawn into sex trafficking through the oppressive systems that blighted their childhoods, the women gave graphic accounts of and further insights into the trafficking experience. They spoke of loss of identity, of captivity, violence, corruption, deception and a loss of their own agency. Their narratives illustrate clearly the loss of identity experienced through their objectification, the disassociation when in a drug induced state, their being viewed merely as an economic transaction and their stigmatisation from wider society as stripped of their true identity, they were considered to be the least socially acceptable. Stigmatised by many, they often considered
themselves worthless and many considered that they could no longer be of value to society.

Women across the whole cohort consistently described the trafficking experience as isolating, degrading, controlling and as imposing on their personal freedom. This resulted in feelings of fear, shame, despair, shock, sadness and self-blame. At the same time, as their stories unfolded across the three stages of the interview process, they described forces at work that were ‘bigger’ than their individual experiences and feelings. In an attempt to stand up for their right to live free from oppression, they found ways to continue, despite their feelings of subjection. Many maintained a sense of hope that someday they would be freed from brutal exploitation. They upheld their dignity through a belief in their own self-worth and a strong desire to live a life free from violence and commodification. In a very restrictive and violent environment they exhibited extraordinary human resilience and hope that enabled them to survive their ordeals.

The second tenet of Third-Way Feminism both explains and attempts to counteract multiple forms of oppression. Vulnerability to sex trafficking is a complex phenomenon. The interplay between personal and structural factors, as narrated by women, provides great insight into the human trafficking trajectory. Across the research cohort, the experience of being sexually trafficked was yet another experience of exploitation and abuse. In this sense, trafficking was not so much an event but another abusive experience along a continuum of violence and abuse at the intersection of multiple oppressions. The women describe a life of systemic abuse in which they were marginalised, objectified and stigmatised beginning in early childhood. That some women felt suicidal and questioned their own place in the world highlights the oppressive nature of their personal and wider circumstances.

Women’s accounts of sex trafficking give credence to, and further expand on the dominant sex trafficking paradigms. In terms of the global and economic paradigms, women’s narratives affirm the dire circumstances of poverty that many Filipino families faced, particularly those in rural areas. Their narratives also confirm that opportunities for work in the local environment were rare and that the provision of adequate food and clothing was difficult in light of the fact that many families were struggling to maintain a basic livelihood. Lack of government social and economic infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, was highlighted, indicating that the burden of national debt that served to curtail government infrastructure investment was taking its toll on the people.

In terms of the migration paradigm, the women’s narratives affirmed that there was a need to move from rural to city areas or even abroad to obtain work. Their
accounts indicate that the demand for domestic labour in the city and abroad was a key factor in their migration trajectories. Their stories also brought to the fore the risks involved for young women migrating for work. This migration is not only linked to factors such as escaping poverty, the need for work, or the demand for domestic labour in the city and internationally: their migration stories were predominantly about escaping family violence and community stigmatisation, placing a different emphasis on the need to migrate.

The criminalisation paradigm was also relevant to the women’s stories. Many of them revealed that corruption permeated every level of society, from the local recruiter, to high-level government officials, with profits made at the expense of women. Organised crime in the form of criminal syndicates did not feature in the women’s stories; however, the notion of ‘disorganised crime’ proposed by Feingold (2010) and as outlined in Chapter 1, appeared to figure more within the women’s reality.

Women’s accounts also affirmed the assumptions of the gender paradigm. Their stories illustrated the social and sexual dominance of men in the Philippines. Their vivid accounts of family violence and sexual abuse in childhood, followed by the sex trafficking experience are testimony to rampant gender oppression.

Human rights violations permeated the stories of the women, emphasising the lack of respect for the rights of women to live free from harm. Women’s general wellbeing was often compromised and their stories reflected a life trajectory of victimisation, highlighting the relevance of the human rights paradigm.

In exploring the second tenet of Third-Way Feminism I have illustrated the relevance of the broad sex trafficking paradigms outlined in Chapter 1, how the women’s narratives give credence to those paradigms and how they can offer a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon.

The third tenet for understanding sex trafficking from a third-way perspective is to provide the space for individual women to narrate their own trafficking story, name their own oppression and thereby challenge stereotypical accounts. My findings illustrate that women’s accounts of the trafficking trajectory offer new insights and knowledge about sex trafficking that are not captured in the dominant paradigms as presented in the literature. The dominant paradigms are rather more abstract and theoretical whereas giving expression to trafficked women’s accounts grounds us in the reality of the experience and provides further insight into each of the paradigms. The women’s stories provide new insights into the notion of victim and agency, the individual and structural circumstances that lead to sex trafficking, migration trajectories and the importance of hearing women’s voices. The approach of a third way in understanding sex trafficking provides a much more nuanced understanding of sex
trafficking. For too long, simple dichotomies that have created ideological clashes amongst feminists have resulted in very little progress for women who have been trafficked.

In sharing their narratives, these young women have contributed to a knowledge base that, previously, has largely been theoretical. Within the human trafficking paradigms, the voices of women trafficked for sex has been largely absent. As discussed in Chapter 1 this is because the paradigms for understanding sex trafficking have largely been theorised within the international migration, criminalisation and economic realms. This, coupled with the fact that women trafficked for sex are a ‘hidden population’ and, therefore, difficult to access has meant that those most closely affected by this phenomenon have been at worst excluded from the discussion or at the least left silent.

Throughout the focus groups and the series of in-depth interviews, the women were able to draw meaning from their trafficking experience. This assisted them in the process of recovery and in this way was transformative (Plattner & Meiring, 2006). Providing an opportunity for young trafficked women to give voice to this experience has not only been transformative for the women themselves through the validation of their stories, but it also provides deep insights into the phenomenon for those seeking to provide effective responses to this human rights violation.

In choosing to be participants in the research these young women identified themselves as women who had been trafficked to Cebu for sexual exploitation. In identifying themselves thus, they set parameters for the phenomenon; they set the terms on which sex trafficking is to be understood. The women’s narratives reveal that sex trafficking is not an experience that can be recounted universally. No single account captures all aspects of the complex dimensions of human trafficking for sexual exploitation. While their narratives do reveal some commonalities, each participant’s story has its unique features.

The fourth and last tenet outlined in the third-way account allows for ‘agentic’ action even under oppression. My research has contributed to a knowledge base for sex trafficking that has often dichotomised the issue of victimisation and agency. This study highlights the limits that such a conceptualisation places on young women trafficked for sex. Their accounts provide meaningful anecdotes of their experiences and they illuminate both the issues of victimisation and human agency. I have argued that a false dichotomy of victim and agency has dominated the discussion on sex trafficking and that a third way approach acknowledges the complexity and particularity of each woman’s story.
The women's childhoods were predominantly characterised by marginalisation, deprivation, abuse and neglect, highlighting vulnerability leading to victimisation. On the other hand, as children, these women displayed enormous resilience. Against adverse conditions and circumstances, they were able to survive and improvise and make decisions about their life within the limiting constraints of their environment, highlighting their sense of agency. Likewise, in the trafficking scenario they experienced abuse, deception and at times felt despair and hopelessness. Yet, at other times, these young women showed their resilience, drawing on a belief that this time in their life would pass. Despite their vulnerability they were able to find ways to survive their ordeal, through retaining some of their financial tips, and by seeking ways to be free from their confined environment.

Finally, despite the accounts of abuse and systemic violence along with degradation and its accompanying stigmatisation, many of the women held fast to their dignity and belief in themselves. They showed resilience through their survival tactics. Some employed humour to manage often very degrading and humiliating circumstances. Others believed in a God that would someday free them from this debasing life. Most displayed a hopeful demeanour, believing that this was yet another setback in their life, but one that they would overcome and be free of in the future.

In summary, understanding the women’s narratives through the central tenets of a third-way feminist account allows for diversity of experiences, whilst at the same time recognising common factors that allow the phenomenon of sex trafficking to flourish. Understanding sex trafficking by utilising the four central tenets outlined above allows for practical responses and action and ties in with a key notion of the life course paradigm, which is to understand the individual life course within the context of the socio-historical, economic and political arena.

**Understanding Sex Trafficking through the Life Course Paradigm**

From the literature, I identified seven sex trafficking paradigms and proposed the life course paradigm as an eighth. As discussed extensively in Chapter 3, the life course paradigm adds to the knowledge base about sex trafficking as it highlights the personal experiences within the life course alongside social, cultural, economic and political elements.

I argue throughout the thesis that the sex trafficking experience sits within a life course trajectory of structural deprivation and personal abuse and victimisation. My study is both notable and distinguishable from other sex trafficking research in that it considers the human trafficking experience within the life course paradigm. A focus on the life course paradigm meant that participants shared narratives of childhood, the
trafficking experience and post trafficking scenarios. In sharing these stories, women emphasized significant events, turning points and transitions throughout their lives.

This life course approach to understanding the phenomenon of sex trafficking has resulted in new understandings. First, trafficking is viewed as an ongoing process of victimisation in the lives of young women, rather than a random, one-off event. The close attention given to the narratives of childhood and to the experience of sex trafficking often revealed parallel experiences, of violence and victimisation. Second, alongside their personal biographies, the research situates women trafficked for sex within the context of their social, political and economic environments, emphasising the concept of ‘person in environment’ a key understanding of critical social work (Simmons, 2012). Hence, the intersection of the ‘personal and political’ is paramount to understanding the sex trafficking phenomena.

**Recommendations and Key Implications**

This research project would have less meaning without recommendations and key implications. I am a research practitioner whose research is based on principles of social justice and couched within a critical feminist transformative framework. This impels me to make recommendations to improve the lives of trafficked women and women who are vulnerable to trafficking.

Filipino women’s accounts unveil the reality of the sex trafficking experience in a way that theoretical analysis has not. In their accounts, which indicate multiple oppressions, including poverty, rural isolation, limited educational opportunities and family disintegration, the women challenge the view that sex trafficking is a one-off event in a woman’s life and draw attention to systemic oppression across the life trajectory. Drawing on the women’s experience and expertise, outlined below are the recommendations and key implications for policy makers and support services.

The women’s narratives are significant to numerous individuals and organisations. First and foremost, for other women who have been trafficked for sex, these stories may provide a sense of consolation. Women in this research expressed that they often felt alone and marginalised. Finding solidarity with other survivors can be a helpful support in the recovery process shared by a number of participants in this study. Having access to other’s stories of survival can be beneficial in the healing process as it can help other women to share their own stories. Therefore, making spaces for trafficked women to share their stories with one another should be a priority. In addition, spaces should be made available for women’s stories to be disseminated amongst the wider community so that a more nuanced understanding of the issue can
be more widely known, to avoid further generalisation-making or essentialising of the sex trafficking experience.

The findings from this research also provide key understandings with implications for policymakers. Policies must reflect the interests of those most affected by sex trafficking. It is, therefore, imperative that policy makers understand both the individual and structural factors that contribute to the sex trafficking phenomenon. This means that global, national and local government policies must reflect the experience of women trafficked for sex.

Gendered Violence was powerfully portrayed through the women’s stories of family violence and sexual abuse in childhood. Protective measures must be put in place at the local level to ensure that all children are enabled to live free from harm and protected from such abuse. Programs that challenge the sexual and social dominance of men in families and communities would assist in breaking down long-term cultural and social practices that marginalise women.

Poverty continues to be an overwhelming factor in the lives of women who are trafficked. Programs and policies that prioritise health and nutrition in childhood would be highly beneficial developments in ensuring better health and wellbeing outcomes for women.

Programs and policies that give priority to education are paramount to ending sex trafficking. Women’s narratives indicated the lack of opportunity for education in childhood. Education is a powerful tool for providing women with real choices for their future. With limited education their choices are highly constrained.

In their narratives the women spoke of corruption involving both police and government officials, hence there must be a focus on police and government reform in terms of treatment of women and criminalisation. Shelley Cavalieri (2011) provides insight into this strategy in outlining third-way sociological interventions, including reform of police investigation and prosecution, and police officers working with service agencies to best serve the needs of the women.

Service providers seeking to assist the recovery of women will gain much from the insights shared by the participants of this research as they provide reflective accounts of services that have been found to be most conducive to recovery. Many women valued the long-term supportive relationships developed over a number of years with support workers in the agencies. The women felt that these relationships were critical to building up trust and increasing their self-esteem. Many believed that without these supportive relationships they may well have returned to being prostituted for sex.
Services providing accommodation with opportunities for education and work skills were seen as highly effective in supporting recovery. This factor alone has key implications for policy makers and, indeed, service providers evaluating and planning for services to those trafficked for sex. Also, women named factors that impeded their recovery, for example, highly directive approaches that do not allow for women to make decisions for themselves. Many described ‘rescue operations’ as traumatising and unhelpful: careful deliberation must be given to how women involved in sex trafficking are best assisted.

Summary

Sex trafficking is a global phenomenon; it is not unique to the Philippines. However, women from the global south are the predominant victims of sex trafficking, whether it occurs within their own country or internationally. I chose to research sex trafficking within the Philippines because it exemplifies a sex trafficking source country. At the same time, sex trafficking in the Philippines cannot be understood in isolation from the rest of the world: it is a global human rights issue that must be addressed at global, state and local levels.

Overall I have illuminated, in this research, the complexity of individual circumstances that lead to being trafficked for sex, along with the multifaceted wider circumstances of being trafficked. Without a doubt, the ongoing demand for sex through sex tourism, street prostitution, brothels, and ‘girlie bars’ will continue to prey upon the vulnerability of young women whose life trajectories reflect early exploitation and abuse.

In order to truly respond to the needs of women trafficked for sex, greater emphasis must be placed on the diverse experiences of women. Stories that continue to sensationalise the sex trafficking experience will serve to further marginalise and relegate women who do not happen to fit the criteria of the case being publicised. Furthermore, domestic sex trafficking must be acknowledged as being as rampant, if not more so, than international sex trafficking.

Women in this research project have highlighted that being trafficked for sex is more commonplace than sensationalised accounts would have us believe. No woman whom I interviewed experienced a random act of victimisation, such as being kidnapped and chained up in a brothel. Instead, the women reveal a slow process of victimisation from childhood to early adulthood in which a young woman is further victimised, making her easy prey to traffickers, reflecting a more sinister and structural oppression of young women.
This is not to deny in any way the resilience and sense of self determination that gave strength to many of these women in their lives. However, it does paint a picture of a rather more routine and systemic violation of these women than much of the trafficking discourse in general would have us believe. The aim of this research was to give voice to trafficked women about their experience. In doing that, the structural and ideological barriers were exposed. Key to a transformative feminist critical framework is the notion that feminist research contributes to the liberation and transformation of marginalised and oppressed women. As cited in Chapter 3, Patricia Maguire says (1987 p. 121) ‘to generate knowledge about women… will contribute to their liberation and empowerment. Research from this perspective becomes an instrument for improving women’s daily lives and influencing public policies and opinion’. This research is such an instrument of transformation, speaking directly to oppressive structures and ideologies, be they economic, church or socio political oppressions. It is fitting that I conclude this thesis by leaving the last words to a woman who knows best the experience of being trafficked for sex.

My life was so uneasy, it’s just like a jungle, you survive, it’s very difficult but you are still there to fight, to learn every day, to stand every day. My life is very amazing because not everyone has experienced my experience when I was a teenager… I am a survivor. [Emerita]
References


Djurunic, I. (2009). *A Study of women that were trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation in India.* (Professional Degree in Social Work), Gothenberg University, Sweden.


Wiebel, W. (1990). Identifying and gaining access to hidden populations. In E. Lambert (Ed.), *The collection and interpretation of data from hidden populations* (pp. 4-12). USA: NIDA.


Appendices

Appendix 1  Schedule of Questions and Activities in Focus Groups 1, 2 and 3 and a summary of their data

Focus Group 1

Focus Group Title: Our Stories are Unique

Purpose: To seek out information in relation to research question 1.

RQ1. What circumstances contribute to the trafficking of women for sexual exploitation?

Data Collection

Life Graphs

Statements of similarity

Lists of Categories

Audio of interview

Time Allocation: Two Hours

Moderator: The Researcher (with translator in attendance)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time (Mins)</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Role of Researcher</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5           | 1. Introduction  
             2. Outline the ground rules for the session. | Make participants comfortable. | To create an atmosphere of trust and openness among the researcher and the participants.  
                                                          To reassure anonymity.  
                                                          To highlight the value of all opinions. |
| 5   | 3. Set out the Agenda of the focus group  
4. Explain the research. | To be clear about the purpose of the focus group | To ensure that participants are familiar with the purpose of the focus groups and the research question.  
To ensure that data collected is relevant to the research question. |
<table>
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<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5. Warm up activity.</td>
<td>To promote interaction.</td>
<td>To build rapport amongst the participants.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 10  | 6. Introduce the topic for discussion – Life Graphs.  
Researcher will model a life graph for the participants using her own life events. | To help participants feel comfortable about constructing their own life graph.  
To identify, through a life graph the kinds of circumstances that may contribute to the trafficking of women.  
To give participants the opportunity to see what a life graph may look like. | |
| 10  | 7. Invite participants to write down approx. 15 significant life events | To encourage participants to reflect.             | This will give participants the opportunity to reflect on significant life events before constructing their life graph. |
| 30  | 8. Participants create their own life maps.                         | Encourage participants to only share what they are comfortable with.  
To plot on a map significant life events. These events may have contributed to the participant being trafficked. | |
| 20  | 9. Form groups of three and share your life maps.  
Discuss similarities and differences of life maps.  
On strips of paper write up any similarities.  
(e.g. all left school early) | Encourage discussion.  
Possible probes to some similarities. | To give participants the opportunity to share in a small group as the information is very personal.  
To give participants the opportunity to give voice to their experience.  
To allow participants the opportunity to see similarities in their story and other trafficked women’s stories. |
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>10. Each group will post up their strips and share with whole group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>11. As a whole group form categories for statements. E.g. all those statements are about family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>12. Place stories in the centre of the group and end with an uplifting song in celebration of our unique stories.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Focus Group 2

Focus Group Title: Describing our Experiences

Purpose: To seek out information in relation to research question 2.

RQ2. How do trafficked women conceptualise being trafficked for sexual exploitation?

Data Collection: Audio transcript

Descriptive Sentences

Time Allocation: Two and a half hours

Moderator: The Researcher (with research assistant in attendance)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Min.</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Role of Researcher</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2         | 1. Introduction  
2. Outline the ground rules for the session. | Make participants comfortable. | To create an atmosphere of trust and openness among the researcher and the participants.  
To reassure anonymity.  
To highlight the value of all opinions. |
| 2         | 3. Set out the Agenda of the focus group.  
4. Explain the research. | To be clear about the purpose of the focus group. | To ensure that participants are familiar with the purpose of the focus groups and the research question.  
To ensure that data collected is relevant to the research question. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3</th>
<th>5. Warm up activity.</th>
<th>To promote interaction.</th>
<th>To build rapport amongst the participants.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>89</td>
<td>6. Watch the film “The Jammed”(^2).</td>
<td>To ensure that participants are comfortable.</td>
<td>To provide a stimulus for discussion about the experience of human trafficking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>To be aware of any signs of participant distress and respond if necessary.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>7. Individually participants will be invited to complete the following sentences.(^3) (translated into Cebuano)</td>
<td>To encourage participant to reflect.</td>
<td>The purpose of the unfinished sentences is to enable each participant to reflect on their reaction to the film. Some things may resonate with them and not others. The opportunity to reflect on these aspects prior to group work will give participants opportunity to think and reflect. The sentence endings can often bring out things that may otherwise be left unsaid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a) After viewing this film I feel ...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) I was surprised that ...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) I felt uncomfortable when ...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) I think that trafficking ...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e) The men in the film were ...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^2\) *The Jammed.* Dir. McLachlan, D. Titan, 2007. Film. The Jammed is an Australian made film about women being trafficked into Australia for sexual exploitation. It is based on actual court transcripts and vividly shows the experience of trafficking. Themes covered include, deception, violence, denial of freedom, secrecy, greed, etc.

\(^3\) This activity is suggested by Stewart (2007) for working with focus groups in which the topic is sensitive and may assist in participants feeling more comfortable about talking about the issue.
<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>8. Participants will be invited to join in groups of four and share their sentence endings.</td>
<td>Encourage sharing and dialogue amongst participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>9. As a group, discuss the responses by participants.</td>
<td>To encourage dialogue and probe when necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>10. Allow the group to lead on topic of discussion.</td>
<td>To help extend the discussion beyond the characters in the film</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>11. Finish with an uplifting song.</td>
<td>To provide a positive, safe and caring environment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

f) It was scary to watch ...
Focus Group 3

Focus Group Title: Reflecting on the data

Purpose:
- To build on data analysis from earlier focus groups and in-depth interviews
- To validate data
- To explore some of the responses to all the research questions
- To celebrate the role of the participants in the focus groups

Data Collection: Audio transcript
- True or False questionnaire

Time Allocation: Two and a half hours

Moderator: The Researcher (with translator in attendance)

This focus group is run slightly differently from the previous two as it concerns the validation of data and confirming or negating research findings, which are yet to be determined; therefore, I outline the focus group agenda in a more general way.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Min.</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Role of Researcher</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2         | 1. Introduction  
2. Outline the ground rules for the session. | Make participants comfortable. | To create an atmosphere of trust and openness among the researcher and the participants.  
To reassure anonymity.  
To highlight the value of all opinions. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2    | 3. Set out the Agenda of the focus group  
4. Explain the research. | To be clear about the purpose of the focus group.  
To ensure that participants are familiar with the purpose of the focus groups and the research question.  
To ensure that data collected is relevant to the research question. |
| 3    | 5. Warm up activity | To promote interaction.  
To build rapport amongst the participants. |
| 20   | 6. Participants will be invited to respond individually to statements by answering true or false. | The statements will reflect significant themes from the research. The purpose will be to validate these themes or to build on them. |
| 30   | 7. Group responses to the questionnaire will be shared. Discuss reasons for true or false. | To help gain further insight into the themes.  
To possibly establish new themes. |
| 3    | 8. Participants will be asked to stand in different parts of the room to indicate their level of comfortableness throughout the research project. | To have participants express their feelings about the research process |
| 60   | 9. Celebrate the contribution of all the participants through song, dance and food. | To celebrate the contribution of the participants to the research. |
### Modes and Sequence of data collection

#### Focus Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Series of two focus groups</th>
<th>Group A</th>
<th>Group B</th>
<th>Group C</th>
<th>Data collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Focus Group</td>
<td>10-15 participants 1A</td>
<td>10-15 participants 1B</td>
<td>10-15 participants 1C</td>
<td>Focus Group 1A, 1B, 1C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial exploration of Trafficking Issues</td>
<td>2A</td>
<td>2B</td>
<td>2C</td>
<td>Focus Group 2A, 2B, 2C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of participants: 40

#### In-depth Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Series of In-depth Interviews</th>
<th>Data collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22 participants in total drawn from Group A, B and C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview A</td>
<td>Participant 1A represents the first participant in the first interview of the series. 1a-22a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview B</td>
<td>Participant 1B represents the first participant in the second interview of the series. 1b-22b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview C</td>
<td>Participant 1C represents the first participant in the third interview of the series. 1c-22c</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Focus Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Third Focus Group</th>
<th>Group A</th>
<th>Group B</th>
<th>Group C</th>
<th>Data collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Validation and exploration of findings</td>
<td>3A</td>
<td>3B</td>
<td>3C</td>
<td>Focus Group 3A, 3B, 3C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Insights and Observations from Focus Groups

Insights and Observations from Focus Groups a, b, c, d – Researcher and Bi-Cultural Research Assistant

June 8, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Insights</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Description of Focus Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Many of the participants in the focus groups were keen to tell their stories.</td>
<td>The focus groups served as an avenue for the girls to express their true feelings.</td>
<td>Absent mothers</td>
<td>Our fear that they would be afraid to share was not a reality. In fact the time was extended, they really wanted to share their experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In their stories, the absence of mothers was very prominent.</td>
<td>Storytelling is a useful and non-threatening way of sharing life events.</td>
<td>Drugs</td>
<td>Even if they remembered painful experiences they showed no sign of trauma, perhaps they had already undergone plenty of debriefing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The girls appeared to be comfortable sharing their stories with one another.</td>
<td>Many of the participants showed Resilience which makes them a survivor.</td>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>Accepting reality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Many of the participants showed interest in the film ‘the jammed’ and expressed some identification with the story.</td>
<td>The use of the film ‘the jammed’ was a powerful tool in helping the girls to express their thoughts without having the burden of owning these feelings.</td>
<td>Peer group Pressure</td>
<td>Their life graphs – They are hoping for a better life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Though the girls stories revolved more on sadness, e.g. being poor, sexual abuse, raped, they still were able to see the brighter side.</td>
<td>The use of the seven universal pictorial emotions was useful for facilitating the identification of the participant’s feelings in specific situations.</td>
<td>Sexual Abuse</td>
<td>As they were preparing their life graphs they were fully engaged and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The girls responded well.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Incest</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Poverty</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Culture of Silence</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Violence</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Running away</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vulnerability</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Low self esteem</td>
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<td>Self-blame</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Blaming God</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Deception by friends</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Child labour</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Positive Outlook (There is life after trafficking)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Self-preservation</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- The process was participant driven, because the facilitators did not limit the opportunity to share, just to get the information, but the pace of the participants was respected.
- The methodology used was participative and liberating for the girls to express their feelings and thoughts.
- From the sharing there were some participants who appeared to be at different stages in coming to terms with their experiences. For example, some expressed their stories very intensely, while others more objectively.
- The following use of ritual such as the use of song, the rolling up of the scrolls, the lighting of candles, the receiving of rosary bracelets and blessings, the symbols of the heart all contributed to a respectful and self-reflective environment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shame</th>
<th>Claiming self-respect and dignity through helping others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everyone was accepting of everyone’s experience.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Despite their experiences the participants are</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

| they wanted to give voice to their experience |
| Recognition by one participant that a crime has been committed against her – trafficking |
| Despite the sad stories of these women they have an incredible resilience and sense of hope. |

| Everyone was accepting of everyone’s experience. |
| Despite their experiences the participants are |
incredibly trusting
• The participants were generous in sharing their stories, so that others may be prevented from experiencing similar events.
• Because of the experience of intervention the women appear free to tell their stories.
• Recognition that they are at a different level. The trafficking experience happened a number of years before and so they are willing to share e.g. the notion of experiential advocates.
• The first focus group should have been more than two hours.
• The timing of the focus groups was made according to
the availability of the participants, rather than imposing the researcher’s time.

- The recognition that the preparation of food by the Welcome House enabled the smooth running of the focus group.

Questions

Would a change of the environment, change the outcome of the focus groups?

Would a change in group composition change the outcomes e.g. age groups?
Appendix 2 Schedule of Interview questions 1, 2 and 3

Interview Guide

**Interview 1 - Personal Life History**

I: During our last focus group session you were invited to construct a life-history graph, plotting important events in your life. Could you please share with me your graph and tell me a little bit about these significant events in your life?

(I will listen for and possibly probe: when the participants were born, the number of siblings, the family make up, home environment, schooling and educational opportunities, work or employment opportunities, economic circumstances, significant deaths or separations and memorable people)

**Interview 2 - Details of the Trafficking Experience**

I: Last time we met you shared with me your life history and significant events up until the time you came to Cebu. Your story is unique and I thank you for sharing so deeply with me. In the interview you shared with me … Is there anything you want to change, clarify or add to your last interview? Today, I'm wondering if you could tell me about your experience in Cebu.

(I will listen for and possibly probe for information about how the participant travelled to Cebu, the environment in which the participant was originally placed in Cebu, the conditions of the work, any threats or violence, any debts or feelings of being entrapped, types of customers, support from other women, support from NGO’s)

**Interview 3 - Reflections on the Meaning of Experience**

I: Once again thank you for sharing the details of such a significant event in your life. Your contribution to this research is very valuable. In our times together you have shared with me stories about your childhood circumstances and your experience of coming to Cebu. In those stories you said… Is there anything you would like to change, clarify or add to your last interview or the one before that? Today, I would like to focus on the impact of your experience in Cebu. I would like to be a little specific and ask you some questions about the impact of this experience on your life.

I: How would you describe the impact of your experience of being trafficked?

(I will listen for and possibly probe for information about the physical, psychological, spiritual, emotional and financial impacts)
I: Last interview, you talked about your recruiters and traffickers very openly, what do you think your recruiters and traffickers were trying to achieve by trafficking you? What do you believe motivates them to act in this way?

I: What factors do you believe make a young woman vulnerable to being trafficked for sex?

I: Some people say that if there was not poverty in the Philippines then there would be no trafficking. What are your thoughts about that?

I: Some people say that migrating from the country to the city is dangerous for girls? What are your thoughts about that?

I: Why do you think that you were recruited and trafficked?

I: Were supports were available to you? If so, were they effective and why?

I: What other supports do you think should be available?

I: What are your hopes and plans for the future?
### Table 1.2 Research Questions and the Data Collection Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Data Collection Techniques</th>
<th>Participants/Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1. What accounts do Filipino women give of their experiences of being trafficked for sex in the Philippines?</td>
<td>Focus groups</td>
<td>Focus group participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In-depth interviews</td>
<td>Interview participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2. How do Filipino women’s accounts reflect what is already known about women and sex trafficking?</td>
<td>Focus groups</td>
<td>Focus group participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In-depth interviews</td>
<td>Interview participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reflexive Journal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ3. How do Filipino women’s accounts add to the body of knowledge about sex trafficking?</td>
<td>In-depth interviews</td>
<td>Interview participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reflexive Journal</td>
<td>Focus Group participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ4. How can Filipino women’s accounts inform policy makers and support services?</strong></td>
<td>Focus Groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In-depth interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reflexive Journal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 1. Identify some of the interests that, as a researcher you might take for granted in undertaking this research?

I am a Sister of Mercy, belonging to a Catholic women’s Religious Congregation. The Congregation was founded in Ireland in 1831 and was formed on the premise of Catholic Social Teaching \(^4\) and care and education of marginalised women. As a member of this Congregation my interest lies particularly in addressing oppressive circumstances and the marginalisation of women. In addition, over the last ten years I have been a manager of a women’s safe house, providing accommodation and support services to women and children who have been exposed to family violence. This has heightened my sensitivity to issues related to violence against women, in particular the notion of silence and

- Reflect on the role of the Sisters of Mercy in bringing about social change for women in Australia. For example, the role of education and health.

- Note how these changes are relevant to my current research.

- Acknowledge the impact of hearing women’s stories of abuse in my work in

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\(^4\) Modern Catholic social teaching is the body of social principles and moral teaching that has been espoused since the late nineteenth century. It deals with economic, political and social order and is grounded in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures as well as in traditional philosophical and theological teachings of the Catholic Church. The ten Catholic Social Teachings are: The Dignity of the Human Person, The Common Good, Solidarity, Subsidiarity, The purpose of the Social Order, Participation, The Universal Purpose of Goods, The Option for the Poor and, The Care of Creation. (Source: Social Action Office, Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes, Queensland, [www.sao.clrig.org.au](http://www.sao.clrig.org.au))
During my time in the domestic violence sector I became aware of the ‘hidden’ issue of human trafficking and saw at first-hand its effects on women. My interest is in exploring and uncovering the reality of human trafficking and its impact on women.

As a middleclass Australian woman I am aware that women are being trafficked into Australia from Asia. As an Australian citizen I am concerned about the human rights of these women.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Clarify your personal value systems and acknowledge areas in which you know you are subjective?</th>
<th>I identify with the following values;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The Dignity of the Human Person</td>
<td>- Being aware of this subjectivity may enable me to listen more attentively and explore the participants experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Community</td>
<td>- make note of an obvious clash in values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Equality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Democracy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Autonomy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Independence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interdependence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Diversity</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

When I hear/see that these values are compromised, for example, in the trafficking...
| Describe possible areas of potential role conflict. | As a researcher in the Philippines, I am seen as privileged because I have an education, am well-resourced and in a position to conduct the research.  
As a white western woman I may be seen as contributing to the participant’s oppression. The Philippines has been colonised twice by ‘white westerners’.  
In the Filipino context, as a Religious Sister I am held in high regard, this is because the Philippines is a predominately Catholic country. This places me in a privileged position with the trafficked women, other workers, agencies and faith communities. On the other hand, in the Australian context my religious status is more likely to be seen as suspicious. Questioning the motivation of my research on moral grounds. | - Be aware of the privilege of being able to conduct cross-cultural research.  
- Make a note of those privileges, when they become obvious during the research.  
- Be mindful of perceptions about my role as researcher.  
- Notice situations in which my presence is resented.  
- Be aware of the impact of being a religious sister in the Philippines and certain privileges that may be given.  
- Be aware of the impact of being a religious sister in Australia and the perceived biases that may be projected on to me.  
- Look for times when I avoid situations. |
| 3. Recognise feelings that could indicate a | Strong feelings or a clash of values could be a block to deep listening and appropriate | |
| lack of neutrality. | responses to participants. | - Note feelings of anger or resistance  
- Note feelings of anxiety  
- Note feelings of uncomfortableness  
- Revisit Journal entries  
- Engage in conversations about the research with a critical friend. This is in relation to responses, reactions, thoughts and feelings. |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4. Is anything new or surprising in your data collection or analysis? | There is a risk that the researcher may become oblivious to new or surprising data because of data blockage, fatigue, or desensitisation. | - Look for signs of data blockage  
- Notice if I am feeling bored  
- Notice if I am engaging with the participants  
- Engage with a critical friend |
| 5. When blocks occur in the research process reframe them. | There is a risk that I may become rigid and certain about the project as opposed to being flexible and open | - Look for new possibilities to inject life into the project  
- Be open to new ways of thinking about the research. Make notes/memos about changes, new insights and developments. |
Appendix 5  Ten Guiding Principles – Working with Trafficked Women

The Ten Guiding Principles to the ethical and safe conduct of interviews with women who have been trafficked.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Researcher application of the principles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do not harm,</td>
<td>• No interviews will be undertaken with any women if her safety or psychological health is deemed to be at risk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Even if a woman agrees to an interview, the interview will not take place if the researcher foresees negative outcomes for the woman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The researcher will always treat each woman with the greatest respect, acknowledging that everything the researcher says and does will impact on the woman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Interviews will be conducted in a sensitive and non-judgmental way</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• As some women have been betrayed or deceived by traffickers, it is important that the researcher build up a relationship of trust. This is to ensure that the violation of trust while trafficked is not replicated in the research process(Fontes, 2004).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Know your subject and assess the risks. | • The researcher will consult and be in ongoing dialogue with the Research Advisory Committee\(^5\) in the Philippines regarding risks associated with trafficking in Cebu. The experience and expertise of these organisations and their knowledge of the local scene cannot be underestimated.

• The researcher will consult with the Research Advisory Committee in the Philippines regarding the appropriateness of undertaking an interview with a particular woman.

• Every focus group and interview will be undertaken at either of the two women's centres \(^6\) to ensure the safety of both the woman and the researcher.

• The interview will take place in a private room at the women's centre.

• No women will be approached about the research outside of the two women's centres. This is because the researcher has an established relationship with these two centres and protocols are in place around safety and security.

• All women will be given a copy of the information and informed consent letter. However, they may not wish to carry this letter with them, as this could compromise her privacy and possibly her safety. They will be given the option to leave the paper work at the centre. |

| Prepare referral |

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\(^5\) While scoping out the research in November, 2010, the researcher established a Research Advisory Committee in the Philippines. This committee is made up of staff members from the two local agencies as well as the interpreter. The purpose of this committee is to be a reference around issues of safety and security, and cultural and language sensitivities.

\(^6\) The two women's centres are Good Shepherd Welcome House & Good Shepherd Recovery Centre.
**Information:**

Be prepared to provide information in a woman's native language and the local language (if different) about appropriate legal, health, shelter, social support and security services, and to help with referral, if requested.

- All interviews with the women will be undertaken with a translator. This is to ensure that the woman understands fully the research and what is being asked of her.

- The researcher will have relevant information about legal, health and other support services available at the interview. These will be sourced from the two centres.

**Adequately select and prepare interpreters and co-workers.**

Weigh the risks and benefits associated with employing interpreters, co-workers or others, and develop adequate methods for screening and training.

- The researcher will use an interpreter for all interviews. This is because the researcher does not speak Cebuano and wants to ensure that the participants fully understand the nature of the research. Being able to respond in their native tongue may assist the women in their level of comfortableness about talking about trafficking. By the same token women may feel stigmatised and judged by someone from their own culture (Fontes, 2004). It will therefore be essential to ensure that the translator is professional, sensitive and non-judgemental.

- A bi-cultural research assistant will be employed by the researcher. The research assistant will be required to work for a number of weeks with the researcher prior to undertaking any interviews; this is to ensure that they understand the purpose of the research, the research questions and particular needs and sensitivities when working with women who have been trafficked.

- Screening and training of the Bi –cultural Research Assistant will involve
  
  (a) Ensuring that the translator has experience working with women who are marginalized

  (b) Assessing the level of awareness around

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7 Literature concerning cross-cultural research recommends the engagement of a bicultural research assistant (Liamputtong, 2008; Vannini & Gladue, 2008). The role of the bicultural research assistant is to interpret and also advise on social and cultural aspects.
human trafficking

- In addition the research assistant will need to be aware of and trained in the following

(a) Dynamics of trafficking in women, the risks, safety and emergency procedures

(b) An introduction to issues around physical, sexual and psychological abuse

(c) A basic understanding of gender and ethnic discrimination and inequality

(d) An exploration of the issues related to the interview e.g. prostitution and sex trafficking

A understanding of the local terminology

| Ensure anonymity and confidentiality. | Ensure that the RBA is familiar with all issues related to confidentiality and anonymity

Protect a respondent’s identity and confidentiality throughout the entire interview process – from the moment she is contacted through the time that details of her case are made public.

- All measures to protect the identity and confidentiality of the research participant will be taken.

- Audio recordings of the interview will be destroyed once transcribed.

- Participants were assigned pseudonyms at every stage of the recording process throughout the research.  

- Ensure that the RBA is familiar with all issues related to confidentiality and anonymity

- Any personal information about participants will be aggregated.

- Quotes will be identified by use of pseudonyms.

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8 Cwikel & Hoban(2005) suggest that the use of aliases be an option for women in the research as fears of reprisal may exist for the participants. In order to match interviews for follow-up they suggest keeping password –protected double lists of their real names, together with their pseudonyms which will only be accessible to the researcher(p. 311).
Get informed consent.

Make certain that each respondent clearly understands the content and purpose of the interview, the intended use of the information, her right not to answer questions, her right to terminate the interview at any time, and her right to put restrictions on how the information is used.

- The issue of informed consent is crucial when working with vulnerable populations. (Cwikel & Hoban, 2005; Fontes, 2004; Liamputtong, 2007; Marshall & Batten, 2003) In this instance, women who have been trafficked. Each woman will be invited to participate via a flyer at the women’s centres. They will be required to then register their interest with one of the workers at the centres. This is to ensure that no woman feels obligated or coerced into participating in the research.

- The workers at the centre will then briefly describe the project and explain the notion of informed consent.

- At the commencement of the focus groups, each participant will be given a letter of information and consent form. This will be translated into Cebuano and read out by the interpreter. There will be an opportunity for participants to ask any questions and for those who do not want to continue to leave. At the conclusion of the second focus group, participants will be invited to take part in the in-depth interviews.

- Once again, they will need to register their interest with a worker at the centre. This is to ensure that each woman feels free to make a choice and there is no sense of obligation to participate.

- At the beginning of the interview each participant will be given an information letter and consent form. This will be translated into Cebuano and read out by the interpreter. There will be an opportunity for the interviewee to ask questions and to opt out of the interview if that is her wish.

- During the focus groups and in particular the interviews the researcher will be adopting a ‘process of informed consent’ This is to...
acknowledge that whilst informed consent has been given at the outset, there may be questions or reflections that the participant may not want to answer or give consent to. For example, the researcher may state during the interview, “I am going to ask you to tell me a little bit more about that experience of violence, are you comfortable with us talking further about this issue? This is to confirm that the participant is still willing to give consent.

- The researcher will need to have a heightened sensitivity during the interview to any changes in the participants’ responses. For example, quick responses, distress. It will be up to the interviewer to change the direction of the interview.

Prior to the interview the researcher may say something like, “How will I know when you do not want to talk about something?’ This will give the participant the opportunity to consent to the level of information and participation that she is comfortable with.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listen to and respect each woman’s assessment of her situation and risks to her safety.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recognize that each woman will have different concerns, and that the way she views her concerns may be different from how others might assess them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each woman’s story will be treated with the utmost respect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This research has been designed to emphasise the unique story of each woman. Her experience is given priority and her voice is at the forefront. Therefore her assessment of her own needs and the meaning she draws from the experience has precedence over anything else in the research.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do not re-traumatize a woman.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do not ask questions intended to provoke an emotionally charged response. Be prepared to respond to a woman’s distress and highlight her</td>
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<tr>
<td>The interviews will take the form of narrative inquiry. This means that a woman will be encouraged to tell her story in the way she wishes to. She can choose the level of depth to which she wants to go. Questioning will be kept to a minimum with the occasional probe to talk a little further about a certain topic or theme. The woman will always be asked if she is comfortable to proceed with that level of conversation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Strengths. | • The interviewer is aware of strength based practices which draw on the strengths and survival of women. Whilst recognizing that this is not a therapeutic interview, all efforts to affirm and validate a woman’s experience and her strengths will be made.  
• The interviewer needs to be responsive to signs of distress by the interviewee and change the direction of the conversation.  
• At the conclusion of the interview the researcher will check in with the woman about how she is feeling and affirm her contribution to the study as well as validate her experience. |
| --- | --- |
| Be prepared for emergency intervention | • Safety is the first priority in this research.  
• Any woman who perceives that they are currently in danger will be referred instantly to staff at the centre. The interview will be terminated immediately. |
| Put information collected to good use. | The information collected will be presented in the form of a doctoral thesis. This research is intended to ‘give voice’ to participants whose voice is often not heard. Therefore, it would be my hope to make the project outcomes public in the following ways  
(a)Making extracts from the study available as a resource at the centres where the study is conducted  
(b)Presenting findings at appropriate conferences and writing journal articles.  
(c)Making an executive summary available to participants of the research  
(d)Developing practical workshops for professionals |

Be prepared to respond if a woman says she is in imminent danger.

Put information collected to good use.

Use information in a way that benefits an individual woman or that advances the development of good policies and interventions for trafficked women generally.
Developing relevant brochures to be distributed to different NGO’s

Fontes (2004) claims that research involving violence against women should ultimately be used to improve their conditions. She argues that if research is just and fair, findings from the research should be disseminated widely so that they can influence policy and programmes (p. 163).
Appendix 6: Risk Matrix

Research with Trafficked women in Cebu

**RISK MATRIX**

1 = *approximately 25%* ('possible but not likely that Risk will occur whilst undertaking the research')

2 = *approximately 50%* ('chances are even that risk will occur while undertaking the research')

3 = *approximately 75%* ('a good or better than average chance risk will occur whilst undertaking the research')

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk</th>
<th>Chance</th>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Risk Management Strategy</th>
<th>Action, if risk is actualised</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A participant may become deeply distressed during the interview</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Trauma to the participant</td>
<td>The methods of this research have been designed in such a way as to prevent re-traumatising a woman. The narrative style of interview means that a woman can choose to be as detailed as she wishes. Questions posed by the researcher will be sensitive and throughout the research the researcher will check the level of comfortableness with the participant. No interviews will be undertaken with any</td>
<td>The interview will stop immediately and counselling of the participant will be offered by staff at the centre.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| A participant may be pursued by a trafficker for taking part in the research | 1 | Danger of physical harm or threat to the woman | Many of the women who come to the centre have been let go by their trafficker. This is because they are too old, sick or pregnant. In most instances, the women who come to GSWH or GSRC are not being pursued. Sadly, in many instances the trafficker does not find it difficult to find a replacement as there is said to be an oversupply of young women. Participants will only be approached about the research within the safe setting of the women's centres. 

No interview will be undertaken with any woman if her safety is at risk or she is concerned about her safety. 

Women will not be given paperwork about the research to take outside the centre. | The woman's safety will be given first priority. 

The research project will cease. |
<p>| The researcher may be approached by a trafficker, or | 1 | Danger of physical harm or threat to the researcher | All interviews will be undertaken in the | Safety of the researcher will be given |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agent of the trafficker</td>
<td>Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>women’s centres.</td>
<td>The researcher has safe accommodation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The researcher will carry a mobile phone at all times.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The researcher will not discuss the research outside of the centres nor engage with strangers about the project.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The researcher will always travel in the company of a worker while undertaking the research project.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advice will be sought from the RACphp.</td>
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<tr>
<td>If necessary, the research will cease.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data may be stolen or lost</td>
<td>Breach of confidentiality and safety of data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All research data will be stored by the researcher on a password protected computer. Initial raw data will be kept in a locked cabinet until transcribed.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research data will be backed up on an external hard drive kept by the researcher. This will also be password protected.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If data is stolen or lost, it will not be able to be accessed as it is password protected.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants personal information may be shared by</td>
<td>Participants may be embarrassed or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidentiality will be of prime importance during the research project.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| If a participant’s personal information is shared by co-
| co-participants to outsiders | humiliated | A collective agreement will be signed by all participants and will be posted in the venue as a constant reminder of this important issue. However, the researcher cannot absolutely guarantee that information shared will not be divulged by other participants. Therefore, participants will be reminded only to share information that they are comfortable with sharing. During the focus group sessions, participants will be given a booklet that is private and shared only with the researcher. This booklet will contain the personal thoughts, feelings and feedback from the participants about the research. The researcher will keep this booklet in a locked cabinet and it will not have the participants' name on it, instead it will be coded. | participants to outsiders, the affected participant will be notified immediately and a strategy put in place to protect her from any harm. Participant's physical, emotional and psychological safety is considered the most important in this research. If a participant feel s at risk or is harmed because of a breach of confidentiality by other participants, the researcher and staff of GSWH & GSRC will put in place plans for that participants protection. For example, providing a transport vehicle to and from the venue, providing counselling by staff at the centres. If the researcher becomes aware of any breach of confidentiality, the participant responsible for the breach will no longer be |
part of the research. This will be made clear at the orientation session.

If there is a threat of further harm as a result of the research project. The research project will cease.