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RESEARCH

The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in New York City

Volume One

The CSEC Population in New York City: Size, Characteristics, and Needs

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As required by the original NIJ solicitation, this study involved two components: a population estimate and a formative evaluation of a citywide project intended to address the commercial sexual exploitation of children in New York City. The John Jay College of Criminal Justice implemented the population estimate and description of the exploited youth (Volume One); and the Center for Court Innovation implemented the formative evaluation (Volume Two). The two research teams also reviewed each other's work and jointly authored an Executive Summary. The current authors would like to thank their CCI colleagues, Amy Muslim, Melissa Labriola, and Michael Rempel for their invaluable insights and collaboration.

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Chapter One

Introduction

The number of commercially sexually exploited children (CSEC) in the United States is unknown, but the U.S. Department of Justice estimates that there are between 100,000 and three million, including children forced into prostitution, pornography, and those trafficked into the country for sexual slavery. For the purposes of this study, commercially sexually exploited children are defined as juveniles (18 and under) who perform sexual acts in exchange for money, drugs, food or shelter. According to researchers and child advocates, the CSEC issue mostly affects: runaway and homeless youth who trade sex as a means of survival; children who have been sexually, physically and emotionally abused; juveniles with minimum education who are unable to find legitimate employment; and children who are vulnerable and easily controlled and manipulated by an adult looking to make a profit. This study of commercially sexually exploited children in New York City, and the City's response to the problem, conducted by the Center for Court Innovation and John Jay College of Criminal Justice (see Volume Two for the background to the project), hopes to provide an empirical foundation that will better inform policy makers, professionals, researchers and advocates about the extent and nature of the problem.

Though there is a dearth of empirical data about the commercial sexual exploitation of children to offer guidance to policy makers, clearly, the larger context of the sex business in New York City – in which CSEC markets are embedded – has dramatically changed over the last two decades. For example, under the Giuliani administration all “adult establishments,” including stores specializing in sexually explicit magazines, books and videos as well as strip clubs and peeps shows, had to be located at least five hundred feet apart from each other and at least five hundred feet away from churches, schools and residential districts. These establishments were also restricted from operating in certain commercial and manufacturing districts. The regulations severely limited the number of adult establishments located around Times Square, and significantly reduced street prostitution in the Midtown area (Sviridoff et al, 2000)¹, displacing much of the sex business to the outer boroughs (Spangenberg, 2001)². More recently, in January 2002, Mayor Bloomberg announced “Operation Clean Sweep” with the purpose of abolishing quality of life problems by targeting repeat offenders with high numbers of arrests, including those involved with prostitution, with the use of undercover police to arrest offenders or issue them summonses, and the more aggressive pursuit of warrant cases. But as law enforcement has devoted more attention to pursuing the street-level sex market and their participants, the sex business has adapted and diversified, becoming reliant on technological innovations such as the Internet and cell phones, to conduct business. The paradox is that while the City can rightfully claim to have made progress in addressing the most blatant sex markets, there is scant evidence that the overall sex market has been reduced in size during this same period of time. Indeed, all evidence points to the opposite conclusion: that the sex market is bigger and more multi-faceted than ever. The hidden nature of the CSEC population and the stigma that is attached to sexual

¹ Sviridoff, M., Rottman, D., Ostrom, B. & Curtis, R. (2000). *Dispensing Justice Locally: The Implementation and Effects of the Midtown Community Court*. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic.

² Spangenberg, M. (2001). “Prostituted Youth in New York City: An Overview.” *ECPAT-USA*.

exploitation make it extremely difficult to estimate the size of the population using empirically sound methods. Yet professionals and child advocates have become concerned that the CSEC population has grown in recent years. Indeed, End Child Prostitution, Pornography and Trafficking (ECPAT) USA, estimated that by 2001, there were up to 5,000 youth who were sexually exploited in New York City (ECPAT 2001), though a more recent study estimated that the CSEC population in New York City was approximately 2,200 (Gragg et al., 2007)³. Still, many practitioners and child advocates believe that the problem is becoming worse, not better, as illustrated by suggestive evidence from the police and courts in New York City. For example, the recidivism rate for prostitution is often believed to be quite high, but “of 1,075 prostitution-related charges arraigned by the Midtown Community Court in 2001, 849 (79%) involved offenders with no prior convictions” (Thukral & Ditmore, 2003, p. 14)⁴. The large percentage of first-time prostitution arrests at the Midtown Court suggests that the overwhelming majority of the adult sex worker population is new to the criminal justice system. Therefore, commercially sexually exploited children are even less likely to be represented in arrest or court statistics, and thus, far more numerous than they appear. Better estimates of the size of the population are urgently needed, and if CSEC markets are indeed growing as feared by some, policy makers and professionals need more detailed information about the attitudes, orientations and behaviors of these youth, and those who prey on them, to develop effective responses.

³ Gragg, F, Petta, I., Bernstein, H., Eisen, K. & Quinn, L. (2007, April 18). *New York prevalence study of commercially sexually exploited children*. Rockville, Maryland: WESTAT.

⁴ Thukral, J. & Ditmore, M. (2003). *Revolving door: An analysis of street-based prostitution in New York City*. The Sex Workers Project at the Urban Justice Center.

Chapter Two

Methodology

The CSEC Population in New York City: Size, Characteristics, and Needs

The John Jay College research team was charged with gaining a better understanding of the CSEC population, particularly its size, characteristics, needs, and geographic spread in New York City. This section, followed by the findings from the study, describes the sequence of steps that the research team at John Jay followed to reach those goals, organizing the information into three major sections:

- 1) A discussion of *the rationale* for the data collection methodology that the research team initially envisioned as the most appropriate for this study, and an overview of how that method works.
- 2) A description of *the preparations* that the research team made before beginning to refer research subjects, including:
 - a. A description of formative research conducted by the team at sites across New York City,
 - b. An overview of the specialized training that the team received about youth engaging in CSEC before beginning data collection,
 - c. A description of how the research team's experiences in (a) and (b) led to adjustments to the original research model.
- 3) A description of *the data collection process*, including a discussion of what worked and did not work in ways that had been anticipated, and how the research team adjusted and embellished the original methodology in response to conditions in the field.

The Rationale: Why this method?

This component of the overall project was thought to be especially challenging because there was so little information about youth engaging in CSEC beyond the anecdotal reports provided by advocates and practitioners, and the meager numbers of CSEC cases that appeared in official data bases like court records or arrest statistics (435 arrests in 2004) which suggested that they were concentrated in a few hot-spots that were scattered across New York City. The John Jay College research team was recruited to partner in this research, in part, because of their track record in conducting research with hard-to-reach populations. The John Jay team that conducted this research was composed of nine (Ph.D. and Masters) students at the college, and was led by Ric Curtis, Chair of the Department of Anthropology, who had more than 25 years of ethnographic experience working in precisely the neighborhoods of greatest interest to the project.⁵ The findings and insights from his earlier projects and his ongoing relationships with a

⁵ For example, in the mid-1990s, he conducted a study for the Midtown Community Court in Manhattan that documented changes in street-level sex markets from 14th to 57th Streets on the west side. In 2003-4, he was hired by the Foundation for Research on Sexually Transmitted Diseases (FROST'D) to evaluate the effectiveness of their van-based Syringe Exchange program in Hunts Point, the Bronx, and Coney Island, Brooklyn. During that same period, he also conducted exploratory research for the New York City Department of Health that focused on describing street conditions in Queens Plaza, Jamaica and Far Rockaway, Queens, to help support the Health

variety of local social service agencies in these neighborhoods informed the conduct of the team's research, especially our evaluation of the costs and benefits of direct observation as a major component for this study.

Because of the lack of a substantial body of empirical evidence about this population, ethnography, another strength of the John Jay team, was initially envisioned as the appropriate methodology for the project as it is often used as an exploratory tool. But the research team was concerned about finding sufficient numbers of youth to be able to make empirically-supported statements about the CSEC population, and this is not a strength of ethnography. Thus, the challenge at the outset was to craft an approach to the research that would capitalize on the strengths of the research team and advance our understanding of CSEC markets and their participants.

From the beginning, there were several reasons why traditional ethnographic approaches seemed limited for this study, especially the problems associated with geography and time. For example, the half-dozen CSEC hot-spots (known colloquially as "tracks" or "strolls") that had been initially identified as potential locations for ethnographic observation and subject recruitment were so widely scattered across the city (from Coney Island in Brooklyn, to midtown Manhattan, to Hunts Point in the Bronx), that a relatively large team of ethnographers would have been needed to conduct a true ethnographic study in the space of one year, which after all, depends on actually *being there* for prolonged periods of time. The number and geographic spread between these sites would have made it virtually impossible for a small number of ethnographers to maintain a continuous field presence at any one of the sites, thus undermining one of the primary strengths of ethnography: its ability to develop relationships with research subjects and see the culture through their eyes. But even if the research team had selected a small number of known hot-spots as ethnographic field sites, it was not clear that ethnographic methods would have been effective at these sites; indeed, the hot-spots had been identified as CSEC *markets* and there was no evidence that these settings would have offered ethnographers the opportunity to refer, interview or "get to know" potential research subjects, especially youth that were being "pimped" by adults (see below, Formative Research). Given the problems described above (and others), traditional ethnographic approaches seemed unlikely to yield the kinds of data that is typically expected to be produced, and thus, the challenge was to find a research methodology that would collect empirical data to answer some of the fundamental questions about the CSEC population in New York City.

In crafting an approach that would accomplish the goals of the study, the John Jay College research team made two initial assumptions about youth engaging in CSEC that were based upon evidence provided by our collaborative partners:

1. The actual number of youth involved in the market was far greater than any of the statistics suggested. If this were true, then it should have been possible to refer and interview enough youth (i.e., more than 100) to quantify and analyze the results in ways that ethnography often does not.
2. Youth engaging in CSEC know each other and have formed network(s) that transcend geographic boundaries. We made this assumption because a) some of the girls had been

Department's plans to provide syringe exchange services to drug injectors. In 2005, he conducted ethnographic observations in many of these same sites for a CDC-funded project at NDRI that focused on testing drug injectors for HIV. Finally, he serves on the Board of Directors of three non-profit social service agencies (After Hours Project, Inc., in Brooklyn; Family Services Network of New York, Inc., in Brooklyn; CitiWide Harm Reduction, Inc. in the Bronx).

arrested on multiple occasions in different hot-spots and thus, they might link geographically diverse sub-networks of youth, and b) there was evidence that some of the girls were circulated (bought, sold, or traded) among pimps (colloquially referred to as pimped girls), and thus, some girls might link groups of pimped girls.

These two assumptions about the CSEC population led the project to adopt a subject recruitment strategy called “Respondent Driven Sampling” (see below) that sought to capitalize on the connections between the youth, and to use them to refer each other to the study – and we set a goal of interviewing 200 youth – rather than relying upon the traditional, painstakingly time-consuming ethnographic methods of subject recruitment that generate small samples.

RDS methods and techniques

Respondent Driven Sampling (RDS) is a methodology that is used to recruit statistically representative samples of hard-to-reach groups by taking advantage of intragroup social connections to build a sample pool (Heckathorn 1997, 2002, Heckathorn et al. 2002, Abdul-Quader et al. 2006, Robinson et al. 2006)⁶. RDS is much like the well-known and often-used recruitment strategies of “snowball sampling” (Goodman 1961)⁷ and “chain-referral sampling” (Erickson 1979)⁸, but unlike these methods whose primary utility is generating a large number of research subjects, RDS also provides a powerful set of analytic/statistical tools for creating weighted population estimates which are at least as powerful and robust as those generated through more common probabilistic statistics (Heckathorn 2002, Salganick & Heckathorn 2004⁹).

An additional benefit is that Respondent Driven Sampling (RDS) has been shown to improve upon previous chain referral and snowball sampling methods by employing a systematic recruiting scheme and mathematical modeling techniques during data analysis in order to mitigate, estimate, and correct for biases, including those due to 1) selection of the initial sample, 2) volunteerism (higher levels of participation from cooperative and interested participants), 3) problems related to the how chain referral takes place (e.g., problems with inaccurate contact information and differential recruitment), and 4) homophily (the tendency of seeds and subsequent referrals to recruit those like themselves) (Heckathorn, 2002). As recruitment chains go through many waves of referral, the biasing effects of initial seed selection are minimized (Heckathorn, 2002; Salganick & Heckathorn, 2004).

⁶ Heckathorn, D. (1997). “Respondent-Driven Sampling: A New Approach to the Study of Hidden Populations.” *Social Problems*, 14(2), 174-199; Heckathorn, Douglas D. (2002). “Respondent-Driven Sampling II: Deriving Valid Population Estimates from Chain-Referral Samples of Hidden Populations.” *Social Problems*, 49(1), 11-34; Abdul-Quader, A., et al. (2006). “Effectiveness of Respondent Driven Sampling for Recruiting Drug Users in New York City: Findings From a Pilot Study.” *Journal of Urban Health*, 83, 459-476; Robinson WT., Risser J, McGoy S, et al. (2006). “Recruiting injection drug users: A three-site comparison of results and experiences with respondent-driven and targeted sampling procedures.” *Journal of Urban Health*, 83(1), 29-38.

⁷ Goodman, L. (1961). “Snowball Sampling.” *Annals of Mathematical Statistics*, 32, 148–70.

⁸ Erickson, B. (1979). “Some Problems of Inference from Chain Data.” *Sociological Methodology*, 10, 276–302.

⁹ Salganik, M. and Heckathorn, D. (2004). “Sampling and Estimation in Hidden Populations Using Respondent-Driven Sampling.” *Sociological Methodology*, 34(1), 193-239.

RDS, like similar recruitment strategies, has proved extremely useful in quickly recruiting large numbers of people from hidden populations, but it also allows researchers to describe the salient characteristics of the population and, in some instances, make population estimates. Instead of making estimations directly from the sample to the population, RDS outlines a methodology for making indirect estimates by way of the social networks connecting the population (Salganik & Heckathorn 2004). Because of these advantages over other recruitment strategies, RDS has been increasingly used nationally and internationally in studies of hard-to-reach groups, including injection drug users, commercial sex workers, and men who have sex with men (Abdul-Quader et al. 2006, Johnston, et al. 2006, Simic et al. 2006¹⁰), and the John Jay research team reasoned that RDS had great potential for this study.

The basic mechanics of RDS recruitment are fairly straightforward: a small number of initial research subjects (called “seeds”) are referred, interviewed by the researchers, and paid for their time and effort (\$20 in this case). Following their interviews, the seeds are given 3 sequentially numbered coupons and instructed to pass them along to friends or associates who are like themselves (in this case, others who currently participate in CSEC markets). If referral chains do not develop as expected, additional seeds may be referred as replacements. The numbers on the coupons allow the researchers to prevent duplication, identify who referred each participant, and keep track of subsequent recruitment patterns using the RDS “Coupon Manager” software that is downloadable for free at www.respondentdrivensampling.org. When coupons are redeemed by eligible research subjects, their referrer is compensated (\$10) for each coupon redeemed. The eligible subjects referred by the seeds comprise the first wave of the sample and they are each given three coupons to refer the next wave of study participants. Study participants are recruited in this fashion until the desired sample size is reached.

In addition to the advantages described above that RDS offers, there were three additional reasons why RDS was envisioned as a superior strategy for conducting research with this population:

1. The issue of trust and building rapport with research participants was thought to be problematic with youth engaging in CSEC, but many research projects that had used the RDS peer-driven network recruiting method appeared to have easily overcome the issue of building rapport. Using RDS, the researchers are always introduced to each new unnamed research subject by a friend or associate who can describe the non-threatening nature of participation in the study beforehand, and vouch for the researchers’ good faith, thereby facilitating subject recruitment.
2. The potential savings of time (and hence, money) that RDS affords the data collection phase of a project (Abdul-Quader et al. 2006, Robinson et al. 2006) was attractive given the limited resources available for this component of the overall project. Using traditional ethnographic methods or recruiting eligible respondents from field sites where youth engaging in CSEC were said to be prevalent was likely to take much longer and refer far fewer study participants than RDS methods, which have been shown to recruit large numbers of study participants in a very short amount of time (Abdul-Quader et al. 2006,

¹⁰ Simic, M., et al. (2006). “Exploring Barriers to Respondent Driven Sampling in Sex Worker and Drug-Injecting Sex Worker Populations in Eastern Europe.” *Journal of Urban Health*. In press.

Robinson et al. 2006, Wang et al. 2006¹¹).

3. RDS can begin recruitment anywhere within a pool of eligible subjects, and it can reliably produce a representative sample of the population regardless of the starting points. As Heckathorn (1997:176) notes, “RDS produces samples that are independent of the initial subjects from which sampling begins. As a result, it does not matter whether the initial sample is drawn randomly.” To further assure a robust heterogeneous sample of youth, the research team planned to recruit demographically diverse seeds from across New York City, but it was reassuring to know that any starting point in a network will produce similar results.

The John Jay research team believed that RDS offered the best opportunity for learning about the CSEC population given the multiple challenges posed by this research, but before starting to recruit youth into the study, considerable preparation was required to learn more about them and the environments where they were found. Below, these preparations – the formative research and the specialized training – are described and discussed, followed by a discussion of how these experiences led the research team to modify and embellish the original research plan.

The Preparations: Formative Research

To orient the research team to the field and prepare them for recruiting youth into the study, several months of “formative research” were conducted over the first half of 2006 that included direct observations in known hot-spots across the city, visits to social service and governmental agencies that served youth engaging in CSEC, attending meetings and seminars with advocates and practitioners in the field, and interviews with service providers and “cultural experts” in a variety of neighborhoods. Below, these components of the formative research are described and discussed.

1) Direct Observation in the Field

It was initially expected that direct observation in the field, as is often standard with ethnographic approaches, would allow the research team to collect data about variations in conditions over time, see things that young people overlooked, and learn what young people would not talk about in interviews. To begin to develop a deeper understanding of the physical environments where CSEC populations were located, direct observation were conducted in many of the hot-spots that had been identified by our collaborative partners and the police, including Hunts Point in the Bronx, Queens Plaza, East New York and Coney Island in Brooklyn, and midtown and the West Village area of Manhattan. Below, three of these major “hot spots” for CSEC – in Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx – are described based upon prior work done by Curtis in these neighborhoods and the research team’s own direct observations in these areas:

¹¹ Wang, et al. (2005). “Respondent Driven Sampling to recruit MDMA users: A methodological assessment.” *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 78, 147-157.

Hunts Point, Bronx

Hunts Point is a neighborhood of about 100 blocks in the Southeast Bronx that juts into the East River and features a mixture of factories, warehouses, and freight yards located near the waterfront, with 3 and 4-story privately-owned buildings squeezed between them and the elevated highway (the Bruckner Expressway) that effectively cuts off this neighborhood from the rest of the Bronx (see Map). Because of this relative isolation and the existence of major trucking routes that begin and end there, the neighborhood has featured street-level sex and drug markets for decades. And thanks to a recent show on HBO that sensationalized and memorialized its street-level sex markets, Hunts Point cannot seem to shed its image despite substantial changes in the neighborhood over the last decade. Among the significant changes that have altered the landscape in Hunts Point has been the construction of moderate-income, owner-occupied housing that has reinvigorated the residential section of the neighborhood, and the investment in considerable public resources in upgrading Hunts Point's capacity to serve as a hub of business for New York City. The Fulton Fish Market, for example, was relocated from downtown Manhattan to Hunts Point in November 2005, as part of this larger strategy.

These changes that have substantially transformed Hunts Point over the last few years have affected the sex and drug markets that exist there. And those changes have, in turn, affected social service providers and police who work in the area. One service provider, FROST'D, has conducted outreach from a van to sex workers and drug users in Hunts Point since the early 1990s, but by 2002, they had begun to experience dramatic reductions in the number of clients that were served by their staff, especially during daylight hours. The City and State agencies that funded FROST'D were alarmed by the plunging numbers of sex workers and drug users served by their outreach teams, and they assumed that the sex and drug markets had been largely displaced to other Bronx neighborhoods. Consequently, in 2003, FROST'D was funded by the New York State Health Department's AIDS Institute to conduct an exploratory study to find a new site(s) in the Bronx to provide these services. Curtis was contracted by FROST'D to conduct ethnographic observations in Hunts Point and interview sex workers, drug users, service providers and law enforcement officers to gain a better picture of changes that were taking place with regard to sex and drug markets in Hunts Point, and the Bronx in general. Below, two excerpts from the final report summarize some of the changes that are relevant to this study:

When the Hunts Point [FROST'D] site was initiated [in the early 1990s], it featured a robust sex stroll as its centerpiece, and the thriving drug markets that existed there served a steady stream of customers who exited the Bruckner Expressway to buy sex and/or drugs. But in recent years, improvements in the neighborhood and more intensive policing have dramatically reduced the size of both markets. The sex stroll still exists in the area, but it seems to be much more active at night, especially after midnight. Police statistics, for example, document several arrests in 2003 of teenage girls and their pimps in Hunts Point at 3am and 4am, but no arrests of them at any other hours during the day. During daylight hours, a few women can still be seen working the stroll, but they seem to stay strictly out of the residential section of the neighborhood, and seek customers in cars and trucks while they walk along streets in the nearby industrial sector.

The drug markets in Hunts Point have become much less visible than in the past, and increasingly they seem to serve local users rather than outside customers. Despite the

fewer number of dealers and customers in the area and the decreased visibility of the drug scene, there is still much evidence that it exists in the area. For example, the building at 913 Bryant Avenue (between Garrison and Seneca, and one block from the SEP site) is abandoned and boarded up, but the well-worn path that leads to the backside of the building suggests that this is a place visited by many drug users. Further along the block, where Bryant Avenue meets the Bruckner Expressway, the footbridge that crosses the highway is littered with discarded syringes, empty bags of heroin, bleach and water bottles, cookers, and other drug paraphernalia, further evidence that a number of injectors still exist here.

As part of the exploratory research to prepare for this project, Curtis visited the 41st Precinct in 2005 and spoke with police officers that patrolled Hunts Point to gain their perspective on changes in sex markets there. Their view was that the increasingly discreet sex markets in Hunts Point had also been accompanied by changes in the types of (primarily) women and girls who worked there. In the past, sex markets in Hunts Point had attracted women and girls from outside the neighborhood, particularly from “down south,” and they were visibly on display in the streets to residents, the police and social service providers. But the new generation of sex workers, according to the police, was “homegrown” and lived in the neighborhood. The police complained that because the women and girls lived in the area, it was much more difficult to make arrests as they could more easily disappear into local buildings when the police searched for them.

The exploratory research done in Hunts Point and nearby Bronx neighborhoods by Curtis in 2003 suggested that sex and drug markets had become considerably more discreet and that extensive ethnographic observations in the areas where those markets continued to exist was likely to require many hours to produce any valuable data. Still, existing evidence suggested that Hunts Point continued to be active at night, and it seemed likely that observations at night were more likely than daytime observations to provide opportunities for observing CSEC markets and meeting some of its participants.

To follow up on reports that sex markets were more active at night, and thus, might provide opportunities for ethnographic observations, the research team accompanied outreach workers from CitiWide Harm Reduction, Inc. on several occasions during their forays through the Bronx to provide medical and social services to sex workers, including those who work in Hunts Point. In general, sex markets were indeed more active during nighttime hours, but they did not feature the large number of female sex workers that once worked the streets in many of these locations in the 1990s. Indeed, the increasing number of transgender (male to female) sex workers who worked in Hunts Point (and elsewhere in the Bronx) led CitiWide to hire several transgender staff to work with this growing population.

The CitiWide team noted, however, that most of the sex workers who they encountered were adults, not teens; and even though they occasionally provided services to teens, there was no way to predict where and when they might find them. As the excerpt from fieldnotes below suggest, the difficulties that the CitiWide outreach team had in locating and serving sex workers was suggestive of the problems that the John Jay research team members were likely to encounter in Hunts Point (and, by implication, other CSEC hot spots):

Southern Blvd. took us to Hunts Point, and Gil [the CitiWide outreach team leader] drove around the Point, mostly through the residential streets, looking for working girls. He noted

that not many of them work in the industrial areas anymore because they are too exposed to the police. Instead, they have moved into the residential areas and use the cars that are parked there as cover. Driving down the streets, you sometimes don't see them until they literally pop up between the cars. The first female that they saw was on Barretto St. and Lafayette. She appeared to be a Latina or white woman in her 20s, had red hair and was rather boyishly dressed. After talking with Gil and his male "peer" [a client paid a stipend] for several minutes, she took a packet of condoms and walked down Barretto. We drove around the area for about 10 minutes before Gil spotted another sex worker near Spofford and Faial St.: a young, tall, thick black female dressed in tight-fitting white clothes. She had been hidden between 2 cars and was only visible when we were practically on top of her. Gil stopped and briefly talked with her through the window of the mini-van. They handed her a packet of condoms and continued driving.

As we worked our way back toward the starting spot in Hunts Point (near Barretto and Manida St.), Gil spotted two underage-looking working girls. Gil and his male peer got out of the van and approached them and others who were working the area. He said that the two young girls looked "like they were about 14 years old." But he also noted that some of the girls that they had tried to approach were "moving away" from them fairly rapidly. He meant that they were skittish about the police and were worried that Gil and his male partner might have been undercover police. Clearly, as his boss later noted, a female is needed for that outreach team. (Friday, March 17, 2006)

As the John Jay research team discovered through formative research in Hunts Point and other New York City neighborhoods, conducting ethnographic observations that would accomplish the original goals set out by the project – to collect data about variations in conditions over time, [to] see things that young people overlooked, and learn what young people would not talk about in interviews – seemed unrealistic given the relative invisibility of the CSEC population and the obvious problems that outreach workers who were there on a regular schedule had in developing stable, working relationships with them. Other neighborhoods provided similar examples of the problems that we were likely to encounter in conducting prolonged observations of local conditions.

Coney Island

Coney Island, in Brooklyn, like Hunts Point, is a neighborhood that is largely cut off from the rest of the borough by a highway (here, the Belt Parkway), and its relative isolation makes problems there appear self-contained. Unlike Hunts Point, however, its reputation outside of New York City was not built on sex and drug markets, but rather, on somewhat more wholesome recreational opportunities: its public beach and world-famous, though somewhat antiquated amusement park. The neighborhood's notoriety as a destination for sex and drugs has been far more recent (though they may have been available for as long as the amusement park), but by the early 1990s, Coney Island rivaled other New York City neighborhoods in the severity of its social problems, and it was heavily targeted by law enforcement agencies and AIDS outreach and service organizations, like FROST'D. But Coney Island also benefited from its location, and the construction of a significant amount of moderate-income, owner-occupied housing in the late 1990s had significantly altered the neighborhood, once dominated almost entirely by high-rise public housing projects. And the waterfront has attracted business

investments, like a new minor-league baseball stadium (home of the Brooklyn Cyclones), that changed the landscape for the sex and drug markets that continued to exist there. An excerpt from the 2004 FROST'D report hints at the impact that some of these changes had upon the area and the populations that they served:

Today, drug market transactions are much more discreet and drug users are not nearly as visible as had once been the case. The crime rate dropped over the last decade, the police have found much more time to focus on “quality of life” crimes, so that loitering and other minor offences are much more aggressively pursued. Thus, whereas FROST'D initially served a highly visible population of relatively sedentary drug users, they are now faced with an inconspicuous, and somewhat isolated, population of drug users who find that they must “stay on the move” to avoid problems with the police.

In addition to the injectors who attend the program, there are many other types of clients who use the services provided by the program. Sex workers who are not injectors, for example, regularly accept the condoms provided by FROST'D, and sexually-active young men and women from the neighborhood are also comfortable asking for them.

Accompanying the FROST'D outreach team to Coney Island in 2003, ethnographic observations by Curtis revealed that the number of clients that they served had dwindled to just a handful each day, and the few sex workers they served tended to be women in their 30s and 40s with multiple health problems (AIDS, Hep C, etc.). There was little evidence of the busy street-level sex markets that had initially attracted AIDS outreach workers in the mid-1990s, and the outreach workers were largely unaware of the existence of any teens participating in street-level sex markets in Coney Island.

Ethnographic observations were conducted in Coney Island in 2006 that followed up upon earlier visits that had been made to the neighborhood, and generally, they confirmed that the neighborhood had continued along a trajectory of adding new and more stable businesses, and more moderate income housing. Some of the drug-using and selling sites – like local crackhouses – that had been among the primary recruiting grounds for outreach workers looking for drug users and sex workers in 2003-2004, had been closed down, sealed up or fenced off. Sex and drug markets did not disappear from Coney Island, and one new source of supply and demand for both was from the adjacent community of Brighton Beach, where Russian nightclubs that featured drugs and girls for their patrons were popular.

But by 2006, Coney Island was far from the busy street-level scene that marked the 1990s, and as such, observing local conditions had relatively little to contribute in the way of fieldnotes given the amount of time spent there. The following excerpt was typical of the experience of conducting observations there:

Reaching Coney Island by about 3am, we drove up and down Mermaid and Surf Avenues. There were a few bodegas open at this time, including the dingy spot directly across from the Stillwell Ave subway terminal that is often used by “working girls” to buy snacks and “loosies” (single cigarettes), but the stores that are open in the neighborhood are scattered around in such a way that there is not critical mass of them where people can hang out without becoming very visible to the police. None of the stores had people who seemed to be hanging out in front or inside of them. Perhaps because it is so close to the ocean and there was a slight wind, there were very few people on the streets this night, but either way, it is

clear that a vehicle of some kind is necessary to work in Coney Island. This may change once the amusement park opens for the season. (Friday, February 24, 2006)

Like Hunts Point in the Bronx, it seemed unlikely that prolonged periods of observation in Coney Island would produce voluminous amounts of useful data that would describe “variations in conditions over time, [and allow the researchers to] see things that young people overlooked, and learn what young people would not talk about in interviews.”

Queensboro Plaza

Street-level sex markets located near the base of the Queensboro Bridge were never as infamous as those in Hunts Point. In the 1960s, the area had a reputation as a destination for sex workers who had recently arrived from out-of-town, but in the late 1990s, had become a place where local, young, pimped girls could be found working the streets. One account of this recent transformation in the street-level markets in the Queens Plaza area described how the police responded to this development:

The New York City police department is targeting this new generation. Specifically, they believe that Brooklyn Bloods have infiltrated western Queens. And they say the gang has brought drugs, guns and a crop of young women recruited from group homes and homeless shelters along with them.

In a 14-month period starting last May [2000], Queens-based police arrested more than 300 people for prostitution, robbery and possession of drugs and weapons. ‘This is an area that is sensitive to breeding certain criminal elements,’ says Detective Walter Burnes, an NYPD spokesman.

So, back in February, the department filed a lawsuit in Queens County Supreme Court to obtain a civil injunction against 21 men and women allegedly associated with the gang. The injunction – the first of its kind in the city – would have banned the defendants from a 25-square block area between 11 P.M. and 7 A.M.

(Nicholson, Ann-Marie. 2000. The return of big pimpin’. *The Source*, No. 133, October, Pp. 91-92.)

Like Hunts Point and Coney Island, the police began to focus on Queensboro Plaza, in part, because the area was experiencing a significant amount of economic redevelopment and revival (as were most neighborhoods located directly across the East River from Manhattan), and the sex markets that persisted, and indeed seemed to intensify there, were a blemish on the area’s ability to attract big business and upscale housing developments. As such, there was considerable pressure on the police to respond to the problem.

The police were not the only New York City agency to focus their attention on the Queensboro Plaza area; the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYCDOHMH) was also concerned with the historically high rates of HIV/AIDS in the neighborhood (one of the highest rates in Queens). In 2003, the NYCDOHMH hired Curtis to conduct exploratory ethnographic research in several Queens neighborhoods with high rates of HIV/AIDS, including Long Island City (where Queensboro Plaza is located), to prepare for establishing syringe exchange services for injection drug users (there were none in Queens prior to that). One unexpected finding from this exploratory research was the degree to which active drug users had to be recruited from the

periphery of the neighborhood; they were no longer concentrated in the Queensboro Plaza area, primarily because of aggressive policing there. The City's determination to clean up the area became even more evident when the Commissioner of Health, Dr. Thomas Frieden, met with the local Community Board in early 2004 to negotiate a location for the new syringe exchange program. The NYCDOHMH recommended that the site be placed close to Queensboro Plaza, but local elected officials and Community Board members, citing pressure from corporations with significant financial investment in area (like Silvercup Studios, a large movie production company), were adamant about ridding this part of the neighborhood of drug users and sex workers, and the syringe exchange program was ultimately located outside the immediate area.

When the John Jay research team began to conduct ethnographic observations in Queensboro Plaza in early 2006, it was clear that the City's reclamation of the neighborhood had only gained steam after the ethnographic research that Curtis conducted there in 2003. Overall, the John Jay research team found little to observe on the streets as they crisscrossed the neighborhood in the early hours of the morning on multiple occasions. With so little to observe or report upon, team members sought advice from outreach staff that work at the Fortune Society's office in Queensboro Plaza. Their nightly job was to greet prisoners released from Rikers Island as they disembark the bus that drops them off at Queensboro Plaza at 3 A.M. The Fortune Society's outreach workers did not, as a matter of course, provide services to local sex workers, but they frequently had the opportunity to observe and talk with sex market participants while they were waiting for the prison bus to arrive each night. One of the outreach workers was especially helpful in describing the current state of sex markets in the Queensboro Plaza area, and his advice was instructive:

According to Mike [a Fortune Society outreach worker], it's difficult to predict when we are likely to find prostitutes working in the area; over the last several months, the police have been more rigorously enforcing quality of life crimes, and this has cut down on the visibility of prostitution in the area. At one point, about 6 months ago, Mike noted that there might have been as many as 15-17 girls in a single night walking the main stroll, basically the strip in front of the 24-hour stores along the south side of Queens Boulevard. Since then, however, the numbers have been smaller, and they have been less predictable in their schedules. They are mostly black and Hispanic, but a few white girls are sometimes among them. He did note that they are often spotted when the strip clubs empty out at about 4am. One strip club is located on the north side of Queens Blvd. and another is on the south side, near the donut shops. Though he did not say that he knew many of the girls or their pimps very well, he noted that many of the girls appear to be quite young. Some of them have pimps, but not all.

After gulping down a cup of coffee, Mike agreed to show us around the neighborhood, and we piled into the car to cruise around. The boundaries of the turf, according to Mike, extend from Jackson Ave. on the East and Vernon Ave. on the west. Vernon Ave. runs under the Queensboro Bridge, and the stroll extends several blocks in either direction, beginning at the bridge abutment. Across the street from the south corner of the abutment, Mike pointed out a "hot sheet hotel" that is tucked into the surroundings in a way that makes it easy to miss. A small neon "open" sign is the only indication that something is happening there. But on this evening, there was no evidence that there was much going on. We didn't stop to go inside, but there was no obvious activity to indicate that there would have been anything to report. This is, however, a place that we might want to visit on another occasion. Driving

through the side streets, near the Silvercup Studios, there were very few people to be seen. Yet this is the area, Mike insists, where there continues to be a considerable amount of prostitution activity. We dropped Mike at the corner of his block around 2:15am and continued to drive around the area to double check whether anything might be stirring, but not a soul – either on foot or in a car – looked like they were engaged in anything that might be of interest to our project. (Thursday, February 16, 2006)

The John Jay research team continued to conduct observations in the Queensboro Plaza area throughout the first half of 2006, including times when the local strip clubs began to close for the night. Below, fieldnotes from one of these occasions, hints at some of the difficulties conducting productive ethnographic observations in this environment:

We arrived back at Queensboro Plaza at about 4am, just as the strip club on the North side of Queens Blvd. (bet. 23rd and 24th Sts.) was letting out. There were double-parked cars in front of the place as well as on 23rd and 24th. Two young black girls were clearly working the area. One was tall and thin, dressed in knee-high black boots, tight pants and a very visible, clean white coat with a hood (the puffy down-type coat). Walking toward Manhattan on the sidewalk, several cars rolled up to her and she talked with the drivers through the passenger-side window. The other girl, short and pudgy, was not as well dressed and her hair seemed to fly out in an unkempt fashion. She slouched against the wall of the building on 23rd St. across the street from the strip club and appeared bored as she pulled on a cigarette. Given the bustle of cars and men as the club let out, it did not seem like the time or place to get out and strike up a conversation. There may have been a pimp there, but it was not clear who or where he might have been. Clearly, we need to learn more about this scene before approaching the actors. Driving around the area, there did not appear to be any other girls working at that moment; however, the donut shop across Queens Plaza was quite busy and an animated crowd in front of the place did not take notice as we slowed down to peer inside of the shop. Seeing nothing more of note, we called it quits at about 4:30am. (Friday, February 24, 2006)

Based upon the formative research that was done over the first several months of the project, it was clear that there was no site(s) that was consistently and predictably occupied by youth in a fashion that would have allowed the research team to conduct useful, systematic observations. Even outreach workers from social service organizations who visited these sites on a nightly basis had, on the whole, very ephemeral relationships with sex market participants. Thus, while direct observation is a key ingredient of ethnography and offers researchers invaluable opportunities to gain entry to the study population and see things from a perspective that not enjoyed by survey researchers, it is also very time consuming. In this instance, while direct observation was useful to understanding part of the general milieu where youth engaging in CSEC were found, it was clear from the formative research that direct observation was unlikely to produce copious amounts of useful data or generate robust numbers of contacts with potential research subjects. While the research team did not know whether RDS methods would ultimately prove successful in recruiting exploited youth in sufficient numbers, it seemed clear that standard ethnographic methods of observation were not the way to go.

Staff Training

Before starting to refer youth into the study, the John Jay research team benefited from formal and informal training on the unique practical and ethical problems that were likely to accompany this research. To learn about these issues, the research team attended New York City CSEC task force meetings, forums devoted to the problem, and held one-on-one discussions with policy makers, professionals and CSEC advocates, who described the nature and scope of the problem.¹² The research team was especially interested in learning about factors and conditions that could potentially impede progress in reaching the project's goals, and there were several concerns raised in these meetings and discussions that called for careful planning by the research team. Some of the unique problems that were said to be impediments to research with youth engaging in CSEC included: being exploited by adults, distrust of adults, low self-esteem leading to non-responsiveness, and manipulation by the youth themselves for monetary gain. The John Jay research team was consistently advised that finding girls working for a pimp was likely to be particularly difficult, and because of that, the research team sought additional training from experts who work exclusively with this population as well as those who work with homeless youth in general.

One of these organizations, Girls Educational and Mentoring Services, Inc. (GEMS), works specifically with young females, age 12-21, who have been victims of commercial sexual exploitation. GEMS founder and Executive Director, Rachel Lloyd, provided specialized training for the John Jay College research staff over the course of two days. Ms. Lloyd described and discussed many of the potential problems the research team might encounter when trying to find and interview this population, and how to best handle the issues that might arise.

Based upon the expertise of Ms. Lloyd and the staff at GEMS, as well as other experts who work with these girls in New York City, young women who engage in CSEC were said to be generally divided into two camps: those who work for pimps and those who do not. Those who do not work for pimps tend to engage in survival sex, and it seemed likely that they would be easier to refer and interview than pimped girls whose movements were said to be highly structured and controlled by men.

The girls who are controlled by pimps often formed "families" and each pimp has an average of 5-7 girls in his "stable" (a group of women working for the same pimp). Pimps control certain tracks around the city, and a girl could not work on these tracks unless she worked for one of the men. The girls are often used to recruit other girls, and they are offered incentives for every girl that they bring into the stable. Lloyd noted that modern day pimps are becoming indoctrinated into "the game" (the system of commercial sexual exploitation) at an increasingly younger age, and tend to come from impoverished backgrounds and neighborhoods. Pimps often have quotas for their girls: \$300-\$500 on weeknights and \$700-\$1000 on weekends, which begin on Thursdays. The majority of pimps collect all of the money that the young women working for them earn each night, and in return they pay for the girls' rent, food, clothing and occasional visits to the hair and nail salon. The rest is profit for the pimp.

Lloyd cautioned the research team that the majority, if not all, of the young women engaging in CSEC have experienced psychological trauma due to acts of coercion, manipulation

¹² The team consulted with experts from the following agencies: Legal Aid, NYPD, Bronx Community Court, Queens Community Court, Brooklyn Community Court, Midtown Community Court, Empire State Coalition, Streetworks, Safe Horizon, Green Chimneys, Sylvia's Place, Neutral Zone, CitiWide, Urban Justice Center, GEMS, SAVI, NDRI, ECPAT, and the Sex Workers Project.

and exploitation by men. She likened the trauma to Stockholm and Battered Wife Syndromes.

The girls' relationship with these men is characterized by love, loyalty, dependence, control, fear and pain. Because many of young women engaging in CSEC come from calamitous backgrounds, the pimp was often considered the first person to treat them with "love" and "respect." Girls are at risk of becoming psychologically enslaved by their pimp(s), and as a result, the "signs of ownership" become embedded in their psyches, even once the pimp is no longer involved in their lives. Because of the extensive trauma that these girls have endured, Ms. Lloyd stressed the importance of gaining the youths' trust, no matter how long that took, in order for them to open up about their experience.

In addition to the training provided by Rachel Lloyd, Marya Gwadz, Ph.D., of the National Development and Research Institutes (NDRI), trained the research team on how to best interview and study this population. Dr. Gwadz has conducted numerous studies on homeless, runaway and street-involved youth. The training included tips on gaining trust, detecting deception, remaining objective, and how to best defuse problematic situations. Dr. Gwadz discussed the challenges the researchers could face in trying to refer and interview sexually exploited youth, which included: the stigmatization and illegality of "sex work" could make youth uncomfortable disclosing their involvement in the market; youth may be dishonest regarding both their age and involvement in the market in order to collect monies for their participation in the study; and the youth may be drunk or high. Additionally, Dr. Gwadz spoke about the potential benefits that the youth may acquire by participating in the study. This included giving youth an opportunity to "give back" and help others; youth often benefit by telling their story; and they would receive various youth-focused service referrals (i.e. shelters, counseling, health-care, job-training, etc.).

Based on her past research, Dr. Gwadz reported that there was a 30%-50% sex work prevalence rate amongst homeless youth and that there was no gender bias. In her study that looked at young men who have sex with men, 35.2% were involved in sex work and transgender youth were 3.5 times more likely to participate in the trade than males or females. Like Rachel Lloyd, Dr. Gwadz found a number of homeless girls are actively recruited by adults and often work for pimps. They exhibit high rates of victimization and are regularly subjected to violence at the hands of their pimps and clients. Gwadz, however, stated that male-to-female transgender youth are the most vulnerable population engaging in CSEC. Transgender youth are at the highest risk for violence since they violate gender norms and tend to make the most money.¹³

Dr. Cynthia Mercado, a licensed psychologist specializing in sex offenders, risk assessment and the law, trained the research team in how to assess the competence of research participants to consent/assent to the research, in the detection of acute distress, in making appropriate medical and social service referrals, and in general clinical interviewing skills. As part of this training, a professional actor was hired by the project to perform role-playing tasks in order to strengthen the research team's interviewing skills.

Based on what the research team learned from the training sessions and meetings with other experts in the field regarding the role of pimps and other factors that may inhibit the project's inability to recruit a representative sample of sexually exploited youth, the research team took special precautions to compensate for these potential problems.

¹³ Gwadz, M., et al. (2005). *Work experiences of homeless youth in the formal and street economies: Barriers to and facilitators of work experiences, and their relationships to adverse outcomes*. New York, NY: Center for Drug Use and HIV Research (CDUHR), Institute for AIDS Research, National Development and Research Institutes, Inc.

2) Planning for Subject Recruitment via RDS and Interviews with Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth

Conceptually, it is not difficult to understand how the RDS process works, but successfully implementing the recruitment of research subjects requires considerable training and contingency planning based upon what is learned during the formative research stages of a project. In light of what the John Jay research team learned through direct observations in neighborhoods and from specialized training about CSEC populations, modifications and embellishments to the basic RDS model, to the informed consent process, and to the interview itself, were implemented before beginning to refer research subjects. In retrospect, some of these alterations were useful, though many were not; they do, however, say a lot about our lack of knowledge, our biases and our misconceptions with respect to youth engaging in CSEC. Below, the plans made by the John Jay research team for recruiting, assessing and interviewing youth are described, including several of the modifications or elaborations to the basic RDS model and the rationale for why the staff (or others) felt that they were necessary.

a) *The Interview Site*: Most projects that employ RDS method feature a site (an office) where research subjects show up to redeem coupons and get interviewed. In this case, however, youth were reportedly scattered across New York City, and it was not clear that they would (or could) travel great distances to participate in a research project. And clearly, the project could not afford to rent and staff an office in each of the city's five boroughs. An additional concern pointed out by our collaborative partners was that considerable stigma might be associated with participating in such a study, and some youth might not be willing to go to an office where CSEC interviews were being conducted.

The solution to this problem, the research staff reasoned, was to allow youth to anonymously contact project staff via telephone, and after screening them for eligibility, go to them, rather than have them come to us. To accomplish this, the research team set up an account with a toll-free telephone service so that the youth could anonymously contact the research team at their convenience. The 1-800 number was written on each recruitment coupon and two staff members were available to answer calls 24-hours a day (a primary responder and a back-up where calls would "roll over" if the first staff member did not answer after three rings). This arrangement, it was presumed, would allow the research team to receive phone calls around-the-clock and meet youth on a moment's notice.

When potential research subjects contacted the project by telephone, the research team anticipated negotiating a place where they (always a pair of researchers) could meet the subject, complete the screening process and conduct an interview. Given the many anecdotal accounts that the research team heard about the degree of control that pimps exercised over teenage girls, there was great concern about the degree of freedom and mobility that youth engaging in CSEC had, and their ability to meet with researchers away from the watchful eye of pimps. In response to those concerns, the research team wanted to provide as much flexibility as possible in meeting youth where they were most comfortable, yet still allowing for privacy and the safety of the research staff.

To meet with youth in a timely fashion at a location negotiated over the phone, the project contracted with a car-rental service that rented cars by the hour (see www.zipcar.com for details). The research staff anticipated that an additional benefit of having a car was that, if needed, it could also provide a private space with good acoustics for digitally recording the

interviews. The rental cars could be reserved via online booking, and the vehicles were parked in a large number of 24-hour garages across New York City, making them quickly and easily accessible to staff members on-call.

b) *Coupon Design and Subject Recruitment*: RDS recruitment works with populations that are networked, but its success hinges upon people giving the numbered coupons to others in their network who are then recruited into the study. The design of the coupons can sometimes be critical to the probability that research subjects will hold onto them and then give them to others. To enhance this probability, researchers recommend that coupons mimic paper money in size, appearance and “feel” because they believe that people intrinsically value items that seem like money and are less likely to throw them away. In this case, however, the research team reasoned that money-like coupons might be problematic, especially with pimps who might not want youth who were under their control to participate in the study. To avoid this potential problem with pimps, the research team decided to disguise the coupons to enable girls to conceal their participation in the study. The research team purchased a variety of cosmetic items, including bottles of nail polish, lip gloss, pocket mirrors, change purses, combs, and cigarette lighters to serve as “coupons”: after being interviewed, each youth would be asked to select three of these items to pass out to their recruits and the staff would then affix small transparent stickers that featured the 1-800 number and the RDS number in a manner that camouflaged the information on each of them.

c) *Screening Prospective Research Subjects*: In most RDS research projects, subjects who redeem coupons that they receive from a peer do so at an office where their eligibility is assessed. Those who do not qualify for the study are not interviewed or given coupons to refer more people, and the person who referred them is not paid for sending an ineligible subject. In this study, screening potential research subjects was envisioned as a two-step process: assessing their eligibility over the phone (i.e., asking questions to assess whether they were 18 or younger and involved in CSEC markets) and further assessing their eligibility when the researcher met the youth face-to-face. Since those who were not eligible for the study would not be interviewed, it was important to determine eligibility as accurately as possible over the phone to reduce potential misunderstandings during the face-to-face screening.

d) *Informed Consent*: The prospective research subjects targeted by this research were minors, who by legal definition, were not able to give “consent,” but rather, could only give their “assent” to participate in their research. To ensure that the youth who were recruited into the study would not be further endangered by their participation in the study, staff members on the project were trained as “Child Advocates” whose exclusive job in the field was to assess each prospective research subject across a variety of dimensions, including their psychological state of mind, their physical condition, the degree to which they appeared to fully understand the aims of the study, the extent to which they assented to participate in the study, and the relative degree of freedom that they appeared to exercise in making decisions. After conducting an evaluation of each prospective research subject, the Child Advocate was to sign a consent form that indicated that the child appeared to be appropriate for inclusion in the study. Those youth who the Child Advocates found to be inappropriate for the study were not to be interviewed. The Child Advocates were to issue monthly reports that documented the number of refusals to participate in the study and the details of each case.

To preserve the confidentiality of research subjects (participation could not be anonymous because RDS relies on research subjects referring each other to the study) the youth were allowed to orally waive written documentation of their informed consent/assent to participation in the study. They were allowed to do this because the research team believed (and the John Jay Institutional Review Board (IRB) agreed) that the main threat to their confidential participation was the existence of written documentation of their participation in the study, such as would be created by signing a traditional informed consent/assent form. Further, the IRB agreed that the study presented no more than minimal risk of harm to participants beyond the considerable risk that they already faced, and involved no procedures for which written consent/assent was normally required outside of the research context. Potential participants were read the Documentation of Consent/Assent and Waiver of Written Consent/Assent (see attached). All recordings of interviews began with oral assent to the waiver of written informed consent/assent with participants being identified only by their unique identifier number.

e) *The Interview Process*: The interview (see attached) consisted of 93 questions covering the following domains: 1) *demographic characteristics* (14 questions, including race/ethnicity, age, living situation), 2) *market involvement* (28 questions, including age and means of initiation, location of work, and type of involvement), 3) *network size and characteristics* (15 questions, including information about pimps and customers), 4) *health and social service history and needs* (14 questions), 5) *experience with law enforcement and courts* (12 questions, including number of arrests, charges, and arrest/court outcomes), and *future expectations* (10 questions).

The number of questions were limited because of the belief that 1) youth might not have much time to meet with researchers if they had a pimp who monitored their movements, 2) youth might not want to participate if the questions became too intrusive and prying, and 3) some youth might have a short attention span given that the amount of money that they could earn from the interview was only \$20.

A payment of \$20 cash/cash value for interviews was selected as the appropriate amount because our collaborative partners and interviews with outreach workers in the field suggested that this amount was *half* the prevailing rate for the average transaction in street-level sex markets. As such, this amount was not considered to be so large as to be coercive. Subjects were to be offered a choice between twenty dollars cash, or the equivalent of \$20 in a gift certificate (e.g., for a beauty salon, nail salon, etc.). The rationale for offering these two options was that some of the young people might have pimps who would take the cash, but might allow them to keep the \$20 gift certificate.

The research team was repeatedly advised of the potential for psychological stress that the interview process might produce, and this concern was echoed by the John Jay IRB which, in turn, imposed several conditions on the project. Among them was that the research staff needed to be trained to look for signs of psychological stress and how to handle it should the situation arise. To satisfy this requirement, the project hired Dr. Cynthia Mercado, as mentioned above, to provide the training. In addition to this specialized training, the project was also required to report any adverse reaction that research subjects had to being interviewed so that the IRB could monitor whether the interview process placed undue stress on research subjects. To provide additional safeguards against the possibility of adverse consequences to participating in the research, the project was also required to retain the services of a licensed psychologist who was “on call” for emergency consultation. Dr. Mercado agreed to provide this important back-up for the project.

Finally, regardless of whether youth explicitly sought assistance, the researchers were trained to provide the research subjects with an opportunity to seek help or get help. The staff was trained to look for opportunities to offer and provide help for youth who participated in the study (and for those who contacted but not referred). With advice from our collaborative partners, a referral card was created that provided telephone numbers for various agencies throughout the city that specialized in assisting young people (including GEMS, the Adolescent Health Center, Safe Space, The Door, Street Work Project (both “downtown” and “midtown”), the Neutral Zone, Callen-Lorde, Sylvia’s Place, and the Ali Forney Center). This information was to be provided to all the participants in the study, and upon request, immediate transport was to be offered to them (via taxi or project vehicle) to the service provider of their choice.

f) *Redeeming Coupons*: Research subjects must re-contact the research team to get paid for successfully distributing RDS coupons. When research subjects return to collect the money they have earned, the “Coupon Manager” software determines how many of their 3 referrals were recruited into the study (they were paid \$10 for each), and it affords the research team the opportunity to complete a critical step in the RDS process: finding out about eligible research subjects who refused to participate in the study. Thus, when respondents returned to collect their referral fees, they were asked 1) how many eligible subjects refused to accept the coupons, 2) how many of them were male, female or transgender, and 3) how many were black, white, or Latino. Knowing the coupon refusal rate is important because it allows one to make generalizations regarding the population, and see whether particular subgroups are more prone to refusing the coupon.

g) *Second Interviews*: Because eligible research subjects were envisioned as calling a toll-free telephone number to arrange the time and place for their initial interviews, in a similar fashion, the research team was prepared to make the same arrangements to meet with subjects to pay them for their referrals and to complete the RDS process by asking about refusals to accept coupons. This important completion step had the potential to keep the research team extremely busy (driving to Hunts Point, Coney Island or elsewhere) because research subjects could potentially call the project on three separate occasions (once for each coupon) to request payment. In thinking about the time and effort that these subsequent encounters to pay research subjects for recruiting others into the study might involve, it seemed wasteful to pass up the opportunity to ask more than the relatively few questions required for the RDS process. As such, the study attempted to interview research subjects a second time (for which they were paid \$20) to help construct a rich description of their lives, including a better understanding of network dynamics and subpopulations that might have remained unrecruited by the study.

The areas of concern described above are among those (and there were many others that are not described here, such as, selecting an “appropriate” name for the project) that led the research team to alter the basic research plan in ways that, at the time, seemed reasonable and seemed to offer the best chance for accomplishing the goals set out by the study. The research team began recruiting subjects on August 3, 2006. The implementation of the study immediately challenged many of the preconceived ideas that the research team (and others) had about youth engaging in CSEC, and it offers findings that are equally as important and as profound as those derived from the questionnaire – the main data-generating instrument for the study.

The Data Collection Process: adjustments to the plan

The initial plan for recruiting research subjects into the study envisioned taking nine months to contact, screen and interview 200 youth across New York City, and all of the background information and training that the research staff had received suggested that it might be difficult to achieve that benchmark. But the project was able to recruit 200 youth in about eight weeks – below, we explain how adjustments to the research plan allowed us to achieve this – so that by the time the project had reached its recruitment goal, we were faced with the decision of whether to continue to refer research subjects into the study (and there were sufficient funds available to do so) or simply stop recruiting youth at that point. After consulting with our research partners about the costs and benefits of recruiting additional research subjects, the John Jay research team continued to do so, and eventually interviewed 329 youth in about 6 months. Below, we describe the surprises that were met along the way and the adjustments that were made to the original research plan that enabled the project to recruit so many youth.

The First Night: lessons learned

The first night of recruitment (we assumed, erroneously, that night was the best time to recruit research subjects for the study) was August 3, 2006. To begin the RDS recruitment chains, the project hoped that some of our collaborative partners who had been helpful in the formative stages of the research would refer a few of their clients who were eligible subjects to the project as “seeds.” As such, on the first night, the research team accompanied the outreach team from CitiWide Harm Reduction, Inc., as they provided direct services to street-level sex workers in the Bronx. The CitiWide outreach workers circled the Bronx in the agency’s van, including in Hunts Point, an area of continued interest to the project despite the disappointing experiences of conducting direct observations there during the formative stages of the project. Trailing behind the CitiWide van in a car, two members of the John Jay research team were ready to screen and interview any eligible subjects that the CitiWide outreach workers might refer to them. The outreach workers stopped and talked with several sex workers over the course of the night, but almost all of them were too old to participate in the study.

Near the end of their first loop around the Bronx that evening, while in Hunts Point around midnight, the CitiWide outreach workers spotted a young female who was walking/working the street and they referred her for the John Jay research team to screen as a potential seed. The young Puerto Rican girl said that she was 18, and after the researchers explained their purpose, she agreed to get into the car with them and drive to a nearby McDonalds where she was interviewed while sitting in the car in the parking lot. The girl completed the interview, but she seemed eager to finish and get back to the street (after all, the interview only earned her \$20). At one point, she asked for a break to use the bathroom inside of the McDonalds, and the researchers paused for several minutes. She did not seem entirely uncomfortable inside the car with the two researchers (one an older male), perhaps because the CitiWide team had vouched for them, but a trio of people having an intimate conversation inside of an enclosed space seemed a bit cramped and claustrophobic to the researchers (who fumbled with their equipment), and it immediately became apparent that some research subjects were likely to be quite uncomfortable with this arrangement. Indeed, we quickly discovered that most research subjects did not want to be interviewed by two people in a car: they overwhelmingly preferred talking one-on-one, and meeting in a public space.

When she completed the interview, the researchers asked her if she could help refer other youth to the study (she said that she knew others) and they explained how the coupons worked. She seemed decidedly uninterested in recruiting others to the study and made no commitment to do so, and she was not interested at all in taking coupons that were “camouflaged” on cosmetics (in fact, no one wanted them). She already had enough “junk” to carry, she said. She did, however, accept the standard paper coupons that the project had also prepared, but we were not confident that she would follow through with giving the coupons to others. And indeed, we never heard from her again or any of her referrals. When we dropped her off after the interview, she disappeared into the night, and there were no other potential candidates in sight.

Near the beginning of the CitiWide outreach team’s second loop of the Bronx that night, they recruited two young African-American men who were working what is known as the “boys” stroll near Yankee Stadium as potential seeds for the study. The two young men who the John Jay research team interviewed in the car parked along the park near Yankee Stadium were initially uncomfortable with the idea of doing an interview inside the car, but they were eventually convinced to do so when one of them agreed to stand directly outside the vehicle (to “watch his back”) while the other was inside being interviewed. This was further evidence that our initial plan to meet prospective research subjects and interview them inside a car was problematic and it was clear that the plan for interviewing youth needed to be altered. Over the course of the study, the research did conduct additional interviews inside a car, but not many were done in this fashion, and they were always one-on-one interviews (with the second researcher standing nearby, outside the car).

After the first young man completed his interview, he vouched for the non-threatening nature of the interview to his partner who had waited nervously outside the car, and the second interview was far more relaxed. One important lesson that we learned from this initial encounter with the two young men, was that the youth were most comfortable participating in the study when in the company of their friends and associates. Rather than seek privacy to talk with the researchers because of their (purported) fear of being stigmatized, the youth who we recruited sought solace and safety in companionship, and they were most comfortable interacting with project staff when they were accompanied by one or more of their friends or associates. While the research staff ensured the confidentiality of youths’ responses to specific questions by interviewing each of them out of hearing range of their peers – and most of the interviews were done in public, outdoor settings – the close proximity of network members was an important component of their comfort.

These two young men were screened and interviewed, but they were to be the last two of the night, as the CitiWide team did not encounter any more potential research subjects on the second loop of their route. At the end of the first night, the research team’s experience of recruiting seeds in this fashion suggested that it was possible to do it this way, but it did not seem particularly fruitful and it was clearly not predictable.

The Second Day: A Recruitment Boom

After the somewhat disappointing experience of driving around the Bronx at night in search of prospective candidates for the study, the researchers asked a Manhattan-based social service agency that serves youth to refer some of their eligible clients to the study. The agency was given ten coupons with RDS seed numbers on them (a seed number ranges from 1-100). On August 12, 2006, approximately a week after we gave the coupons to the agency, researchers

received their first call on the 1-800 number. The girl who called offered to meet with us, albeit hesitantly, on the corner of 17th and Park Ave South near Union Square Park at 5:00pm. She said she was bringing another friend with her who was also given a coupon by the youth agency. Rather than asking the seed for a physical description, the researcher provided the girl with a physical description of herself so that she could be easily identified, and allay any fears that law enforcement was involved. In order not to overwhelm the youth, it was decided that the other researcher would stand close by but not participate in the interviews.

After waiting approximately a half hour, a young female and male approached the researcher, and showed her the coupons that they were given by the agency. They decided to move to a café since it would provide a more conducive setting than the street to conduct and record the interviews. The youth indicated that they were thirsty, so the researcher purchased a couple of drinks for them and then began the interview with the girl first. The girl stated that she was 19, but said that she knew others who were 18 or younger, and there was little doubt that she had been prostituted. Throughout the interview, the girl was open about her experiences and did not seem uncomfortable answering any of the questions. Once the interview was completed, the researcher moved on to the second youth. During the screening process, the seed admitted to being 23 years of age and having never been sexually exploited. Even though he was not technically eligible to participate in the study, he did claim to know 20 prostituted youth and was willing to refer them for the study. He was true to his word, because in less than 24 hours, he had recruited three youth who successfully met the project's eligibility criteria. This led to a flood of calls, and over the next three days, 25 interviews were conducted. Our initial fears of not being able to recruit 200 prostituted youth were abated; however, a whole host of new issues arose based on the overwhelming response we received from these two seeds. Below, several of these issues, and how the research staff responded to them, are described.

The Interview Site and Traffic Congestion

The research staff had initially believed that they would need to meet prospective research subjects in private locations near the strolls or tracks where they worked because of the stigma associated with the sexual exploitation of youth and the short leash that pimps were said to keep on youth under their control. None of these assumptions proved to be correct. Although there is certainly stigma associated with sexual exploitation, few of the youth expressed this sentiment. Indeed, there were more youth who boasted about their experiences earning money in this fashion than there were youth that expressed shame about what they had done. And far from hiding their participation in the study from others, most of the youth who were referred for the study were eager to bring their acquaintances to get interviewed, and they sometimes gathered in numbers far too large for the interview team to handle. Because of the large number of youth who flocked to the study, the researchers chose a public park in lower Manhattan as the primary site for interviews. But even the public park was sometimes too small, and on several occasions, the researchers had to ask the youth who were waiting to get interviewed to disperse because they had begun to attract the attention of the police (who were arresting nearby drug users).

One of the biggest problems encountered in the field was having sufficient time to screen and interview all the youth who showed up to participate and the availability of cash to pay them. Though the project had enough money to pay for all of the interviews and referral fees, the researchers were reluctant to carry large amounts of cash in their pockets, and they withdrew money from the bank's ATM as needed. But given the large number of youth who showed up on

a regular basis to get interviewed, the researchers found that they usually exceeded the maximum daily amount that could be withdrawn from an ATM machine (\$500) before all the youth could be interviewed. As such, the researchers were regularly forced to dip into their own savings and checking accounts for the several hundred dollars more that were often required to pay all of the youth. Eventually, the research team began to anticipate how much money would be needed, and they withdrew money on days when no interviews were scheduled just so that they would not run out of cash the next time that interviews were conducted.

Time management also became a problem for the research team. It was apparent from the first night of recruitment that late night was not the best time to interview the youth, but a pattern of interviewing was quickly established. Many youth called the toll-free number to find out how to get into the study, but the phone calls did not come at all hours of the day and night. Usually, the phone began ringing in the late morning and early afternoon, and more often than not, youth preferred to be interviewed in the late afternoon. Given the demand for interviews, the research team tried to regularize the interviewing site and schedule so as to maximize the number of interviews that could be completed in a single day. Typically, the researchers began interviewing at 4pm, and they continued to work until the money ran out, or conditions in the park became too difficult to keep going. Several problems were notable in this regard: it sometimes got too dark to fill out the necessary paperwork and handle the recording equipment, and after dark, mosquitoes and rats came out in large numbers. The researchers eventually brought mosquito repellent with them, but the rats were big and bold, and the researchers ceded the park to them when there were simply too many to ignore.

Screening youth for the study

Screening youth for the study was envisioned as a 2-step process (first, over the phone and then in person), and for those who called the toll-free number, that was how it worked. But screening for age and CSEC activity over the phone is very difficult, and in many cases, poor telephone connections (cell phone to cell phone) did not allow for extensive conversation or give the researchers much confidence about their initial determination of a subject's eligibility. Still, many people who called the toll-free phone number were disqualified when they said that they were older than 18, or that they were not engaged in CSEC activities. But most young people who called the toll-free number were well aware of the eligibility criteria for the study, and they knew what to say to make an appointment for a face-to-face screening.

Upon meeting the researchers for the second step of the screening process, prospective subjects had to convince the researchers that they were eligible for the study. The first hurdle to overcome was age. Since the project strictly protected the confidentiality of its subjects, no one was ever asked to produce any documented evidence of their age (like an ID card or birth certificate). Those young people who argued that they were 18 or below, and who looked as though they were the appropriate age, were admitted into the study, despite reservations in some cases. Yet, there were many instances when young people were not admitted into the study because they simply looked too old. Some of them, particularly young men, had heavy beards, facial wrinkles, or even a grey hair or two. Typically, their arguments included statements like, "I'm big for my age," "I developed early," or "premature balding runs in my family." The researchers were polite in denying them an interview, and most of them accepted the fact that they could not successfully pose as an 18-year old. Despite attempts by the research staff to screen out those too old for the study, several managed to get interviewed, but during the

interviews, most of them were not very good at concealing the fact that they were older than 18 years of age (below, the process of vetting the completed interviews for eligibility is described).

Screening youth for involvement in CSEC activities was also very difficult, and many prospective research subjects were not interviewed because the research team did not believe that they had been sexually exploited. Some of the youth who initially wanted to get into the study refused to say that they had sex for money when asked outright: the stigma associated with this was far less than the research team had been led to believe, but some youth could not bring themselves to make up this kind of story. Of course, some might argue that this behavior is so stigmatized that some youth would never admit it to others, but the crowd of youth that typically queued up to get interviewed on a daily basis lessened that sense of stigma and there was some amount of peer pressure to “fess up” since everyone waiting for their turn to get interviewed in the park (or elsewhere) knew what questions were being asked.¹⁴

Some youth, especially boys, were all-too-willing to make up stories about their involvement in CSEC activities to get accepted into the study (to earn the money). Their attempts to convince the researchers of their eligibility in this regard were often clumsy and sometimes, quite comical, but they also said much about the character of stigma as regards sexuality. One of the most often-heard stories told by young men who tried to get into the study was that they were “gigolos” and that “ugly women pay me for sex.” The researchers were convinced (by the rich descriptions that some young men provided) that some of the young men were indeed paid by women for sex, but most of the young men had sex with men, not women, if they were involved in CSEC markets. These young men knew that they could get into the study if they said that they had sex with men, but the stigma associated with homosexuality was too much for some young men to admit, and they could not bring themselves to make up a story about having sex with a man. The researchers were very skeptical of those young men who claimed to be gigolos paid by women, and most of them were screened out. To discourage this kind of scamming, the researchers were often quite rude to those young men who attempted it¹⁵, and told them to pass

the word to their acquaintances that this tactic would not work. Although some of the boys tried to argue or bargain with the researchers, the majority left the area, albeit reluctantly.

¹⁴ One fascinating outcome of interviewing the youth was the degree to which the study opened the door on what had been a taboo subject at some of the social service agencies where many of these youth were clients. About a month after the project began interviewing, the director of one agency that had referred some of the initial “seeds” to the project, commented that the interviews had broken the ice on a topic that had never been openly discussed in their group therapy sessions. The interviews, according to him, had opened a floodgate of discussion, but it remained unclear to the research staff whether the reluctance to talk about this topic at social service agencies was because of the shame and the stigma that youth felt, or whether staff members at the agency had been reluctant to bring up the topic for fear of alienating their clients.

¹⁵ For example, on one occasion, a group of several young men showed up, hoping to get interviewed. The first one to get screened, a skinny kid with dirty clothes, insisted that he was a gigolo and that women paid him for sex. His buddies, standing nearby, watched intently to see if he was going to succeed in this ruse. The researchers realized that they were being tested and that if they accepted the first young man into the study or showed any hesitation in deciding his eligibility, the others would pounce on this opportunity to scam the project. With a smile on his face, the researcher told the young man: “Son, there is no way that women pay you for sex. First, you’re dirty and women don’t like dirt. Second, you’re ugly; so ugly that if I had a dog with a face like that, I’d shave his butt and make him walk backwards.” The young man did not protest; he simply got up and walked away, taking his friends with him.

Ineligible subjects that were interviewed

The initial research plan was to exclude a research subject if the researchers discovered that someone who successfully passed the initial screening was ineligible for the study, and not pay them or the person who recruited them, or give them coupons to refer additional subjects. On several occasions, the researchers did just that, and stopped the interview, especially when they discovered that the young person was not the victim of sexual exploitation. But in many cases, ineligible subjects who slipped past the initial screening process were not terminated. There were several reasons for this change of plans:

1. Disqualifying young people who were not eligible for the study because they were too old would reduce the project's opportunities to recruit eligible subjects. As part of the RDS screening process, potential research subjects were asked how many other youth they knew who were eligible for the study, and they often said that they knew several other youth who they could refer. Indeed, youth almost always came to the study in groups, and they could often point to their network members who were hanging out in the park, waiting their turn to get interviewed, as evidence of their ability to recruit eligible subjects. Out of 80 ineligible subjects who received coupons, 23 recruited 40 eligible subjects to the project.
2. Many of those who were found to be too old during the course of the interview, had compelling accounts that described their CSEC experiences that often began at a very young age. Excluding these research subjects from the database because they were a bit too old would have deprived the project of this information.
3. Having some research subjects that were older than 18 would allow the project to better understand how the experiences and networks of youth develop. For example, these older youth might help determine whether they develop more extensive networks over time, whether they become more or less prominent within their networks, and whether their social circles begin to close off and become more restricted to others in "the life."

The research staff was confident that they could identify those young people who were included in the sample but were not, in fact, eligible for the study because they were too old or who were not victims of sexual exploitation (see below, where we describe the 3-step process of vetting the interviews). Those who were too old often provided clues in their responses to some questions (like, "When did you last go there [to school]?") that tipped off the researchers to problems in this regard. For youth who were not victims of sexual exploitation, their responses to questions about their experiences in the market were generally flat and lacking the kind of detail that was present in others' accounts. Or alternatively, their stories were so improbable that it was apparent that some youth relied on prostitution stereotypes and made it up as they went along. The research staff was interested in identifying which subjects were eligible and which were not. To make this determination, the project used a 3-step process:

1. A professional transcriptionist¹⁶ was hired to transcribe all the digital audio recordings made by the project. The 329 research subjects were interviewed by 8 different researchers, but a single person who listened to and transcribed every interview provided consistency to the quality of the data, and allowed the project to flag potential problems before the interviews were coded and entered into the database. At the end of each interview, a narrative assessment of the respondent was written by the transcriptionist that detailed any misgivings she had about the truthfulness or accuracy of the interview. In total, 139 interviews had, in the view of the transcriptionist, problems that called for further review by the research team.
2. A single staff member¹⁷ coded the interviews and reviewed the narrative written by the transcriptionist at the end of each interview. She then assigned a number to each interview based on a “credibility” scale of 1-3 (1 = very credible, 2 = unsure of credibility, 3 = not credible). Credibility was based on the information provided in the interview, the transcriptionist’s behavioral assessment, and her own recollection of the subjects. Once all the interviews were assessed and coded, she differed from the transcriptionist on 77 cases. In cases where the transcriptionist and research staff member were unsure of the credibility of the subject (n=36), a third step of review was used to make a determination of inclusion or exclusion.
3. A group was formed to examine problem cases: listening to the original recording and reviewing the transcript. Of the 36 cases where there uncertainty, 16 were eventually excluded. In total, 249 cases were included in the database and 80 were excluded. Five of the audio files were accidentally deleted, and as a result, the only information that exists on these five respondents is the RDS demographic information (e.g. date of birth, age, ethnicity, birthplace and network size). Thus, they will not be included in the qualitative analysis, but will be part of the population estimate.

The research subjects who were eventually excluded from the sample because they were not engaged in CSEC activities form an interesting group. Their attempts to get into the study, and their narratives that they provided once they did so, offered insights that could not be captured by the interview itself. In telling the researchers what they thought that we wanted to hear about CSEC activities (especially those accounts that were richly embellished), they provided a normative view of what they believed these youth were supposed to look like.

The Interview Process

The questionnaire that the research team constructed for the project was relatively short because of the fear that young people would not, or could not, devote much time to answering a lengthy set of questions, and because too many intrusive questions might decrease their willingness to participate in the study. Both of these assumptions were only partially correct: The fear that pimps might be lurking nearby and that youth they controlled would be

¹⁶ Dr. Lisa Robbins-Stathas holds a Masters Degree in Counseling Psychology, a M.Ed. in Psychological Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling, and an Ed.D. in Family and Community Education from Teachers College, Columbia University. She has more than 25 years of experience transcribing qualitative interviews for criminal justice and public health researchers.

¹⁷ Meredith Dank, the staff member who conducted the largest number of interviews (N=161), reviewed each transcript before coding and entering it into the database.

rushed to finish their interviews was simply not an issue for the project as most of them did not have pimps. Indeed, many of the youth that were interviewed for the study were more than willing to talk at length, but they often had their friends waiting nearby, so there was some amount of peer pressure to avoid talking for a long time. The interviewers were somewhat constrained by the several other youth waiting nearby for their turn to get interviewed.

The youth were given their choice of who they wanted to conduct the interview (there were normally at least two interviewers present, but occasionally, there were three), but most of the time, they simply took the next interviewer who was free. The exception to this was when Curtis was the next interviewer. A few youth, particularly girls, did not want to be interviewed by an adult man, and they said that they preferred to wait for one of the female interviewers, but most youth did not seem to care who interviewed them. When asked during the interview what the “customers” looked like, several of the youth interviewed by Curtis – especially the boys – jokingly responded, “they looked like you” (a middle-aged white man)! It is, perhaps, surprising that more of the youth did not opt for another interviewer, but it may also be emblematic of their resilience and the decrease of stigma surrounding these activities that they forged ahead with the interview despite who was asking the questions.

The intrusiveness of the questions that were asked was also a concern, but because of the project’s here-and-now focus that asked questions about features of CSEC markets and their social networks, many youth seemed a bit surprised that they were not asked pointed questions that sought to elicit detailed “explanations” about how they arrived at this point in life. For example, the questionnaire did not ask youth if they had been victims of sexual abuse while growing up, or whether they had unhappy childhoods. Yet many youth, perhaps wanting to rationalize or justify their behavior, wanted to talk about the very issues that the project had avoided asking for fear of re-traumatizing those who wanted to avoid revisiting unpleasant memories.

A few youth did find some of the questions painful to answer, and re-traumatization was a concern. For example, one 18-year old male broke down and cried a few minutes into the interview, after being asked the question, “How old were you when you first started having sex for money or in exchange for other things?” He tearfully explained that he was from out-of-state and attending his first semester of college in New York City. He had not received much financial aid, and when his money ran out six weeks into the semester, he started having sex with men for money. But he was deeply ashamed about it (he was not homosexual, he said), and even worse, the fact that he had not made very much money having sex with strangers was simply too much for him to bear. The interview was stopped at this point and the young man was counseled about his options and offered help in seeking solutions to his problems. The staff considered calling the psychologist for a consultation, but the young man pulled himself together after crying for a few minutes, and said that he was not interested in the help that the staff had offered. He also had a friend waiting nearby who helped comfort him after his breakdown. In some ways, his emotional response to the interview was worrisome and gave legitimacy to the initial concerns that the interviews were intrusive and potentially traumatizing, but at the same time, his admission about what he had been doing seemed cathartic, and perhaps set him on another path; and with little urging from the staff, he accepted a palm card that had phone numbers to social service agencies that served youth. This young man represented one extreme end of the spectrum with respect to their reactions to being interviewed; far more common, and perhaps more disturbing, were those youth at the other end of the spectrum.

The stigma that the research team had feared would impede the willingness of youth to

participate in the study was far less an issue than expected, and indeed, some youth were eager to tell their stories. And far from depicting their lives as ones filled with debilitating exploitation and abuse, some youth portrayed themselves as in charge of their own destinies and charting careers in they referred to as “the business.” Some may argue, perhaps correctly, that the trauma inflicted on these youth must have been exceptionally profound to turn them into the eager advocates of their own exploitation, and yet, there was a disturbing plausibility to their plans which envisioned “sex work as a profession and a career, rather than just a short-term means of employment” (Murphy and Venkatesh, 2006).¹⁸ The proliferation of this narrative, however rooted in trauma it might be, is testimony to the changing nature of sex markets in New York City and to changes in societal views about a host of other issues, including sex, children, and social responsibility. The narrative also challenges the dominant view of children as victims of exploitation by adults (both pimps and customers) insofar as they portray themselves as having and exercising agency in the conduct of their everyday lives. Policy makers, practitioners and CSEC advocates have largely focused their attention on youth who are held captive or otherwise directly dominated by adults, but the large number of youth engaging in CSEC that were interviewed by this project did not fit that profile. This suggests that this traditional view is too narrow, and that additional approaches to effectively working with this population need to be developed.

Waves of Recruitment

One feature of the RDS process is that research subjects typically refer those most closely connected to themselves, a process known as homophily. Researchers have demonstrated that with RDS the problem of homophily is overcome after several waves of recruitment (Heckathorn, etc.), but the recruitment process typically goes through “waves” of recruitment during which many of the same “type” of subjects seemed to be interviewed. This project evolved in a similar fashion: starting out in September 2006 with a few “seeds” from an agency that served a large number of homeless youth, the project first recruited a cohort of homeless, “traveler” youth. These youth were typically white and more drug-involved than subsequent groups interviewed. This group eventually gave way to a surge in the recruitment of LGBT youth, many of who were clients at an agency that specialized in working with this population. The LGBT youth were followed by young men who worked the “buddy booths”¹⁹ in midtown Manhattan and outside the Port Authority. The last group to be interviewed were the pimped girls; however, the research team had to personally reach out to this sub-group of the population since RDS was not successful in recruiting these girls for the study (see below). The project did not recruit a very large sample of youth as compared with other studies that have employed RDS methods (typically, more than 500), and it seems likely that some sub-groups are under represented in the sample recruited for this study. It would have been valuable to continue recruiting youth until the recruitment trees died out to be more assured that all the distinct subgroups of youth had the opportunity to participate in the study, but limited resources did not permit this. To assure that some of these subgroups were represented in the sample, the project staff altered the RDS protocol as described below.

¹⁸ Murphy, A. & Venkatesh, S.A. (2006, June). *Vice careers: The changing contours of sex work in New York City*. In Publication

¹⁹ A buddy booth is a theater booth found in a number of sex shops in NYC that accommodates seating for two.

Pimped Girls and Directed Recruitment

RDS generates representative samples of populations, but it became apparent quite early in the recruitment process for this project that young men would significantly outnumber young women in the study, and if the number of youth recruited into the study remained at 200, then there would have been comparatively few young women referred into the database. The desire to refer more young women into the study was one reason why the research team felt it necessary to extend the number of research subjects beyond the 200 that had been initially proposed. But even then, the rate of young men with coupons approaching the researchers to get screened was much brisker than young women who were contacting the project. As such, after several weeks of accepting any young person with a coupon, the project began to press research subjects to give their coupons to young women, especially pimped girls. Shortly after that, the project stopped interviewing young men entirely, and accepted coupons only from young women and transgender youth. Recruitment slowed considerably after young men were subtracted from the equation. Even though it appeared that there were far more young men than women who were given coupons and entering the study, young men also recruited young women into the sample, and when they were excluded, the ability to robustly recruit young women was hampered.

The project recruited a few pimped girls in the first 8 weeks of the study (n=8), and others who were interviewed said that they knew pimped girls (n=36) and thus, it seemed apparent that it was possible to refer them in this fashion if the recruitment trees were allowed to continue to grow. But given the limits of the sample size, the research team decided that it was necessary to alter the recruitment process to increase the number of pimped girls in the sample. As such, the staff began to ask subjects to give their coupons to pimped girls, and even offered extra coupons to young people who said that they could refer pimped girls for the project, though none did so.

To recruit more pimped girls, two research subjects who had successfully recruited eligible subjects into the project were asked to accompany the research staff into the field (in Queens and Hunt's Point in the Bronx) to assist in the recruitment of pimped girls. Both subjects had assured the researchers that they knew pimped girls and that they were familiar with the locales where pimped girls worked. We met them early one night in midtown Manhattan, near a Zip Car garage, and drove first to the Roosevelt Avenue area of Jackson Heights, Queens. The area along Roosevelt Avenue that they selected to search had a reputation for prostitution, especially houses that featured Hispanic girls, and more recently, street-level solicitations. But on this night, a heavy overlay of uniformed police officers (from Operation Impact, an NYPD anti-crime initiative) lingered on the corners, and there was no activity to observe. To avoid getting stopped by the police for suspiciously "cruising" the area, we drove to Hunts Point to continue the search, arriving there before midnight. But after spending an hour driving up and down the streets of Hunts Point, we saw nothing. Similar to our experience with the CitiWide Harm Reduction sex worker outreach team, this approach seemed like a lot of work with little pay off, and we discontinued this method of locating pimped girls.

On four separate occasions, Meredith Dank accompanied outreach staff from the Sex Workers Project to try and refer pimped girls. The Sex Workers Project, which is a project based out of the Urban Justice Center, provides legal services, legal training, documentation, and policy advocacy for sex workers. They have a small outreach team of former and current sex workers who canvass well known strolls, and distribute legal rights pamphlets and contraceptives to sex workers. Because the outreach workers were familiar with many of the girls and boys

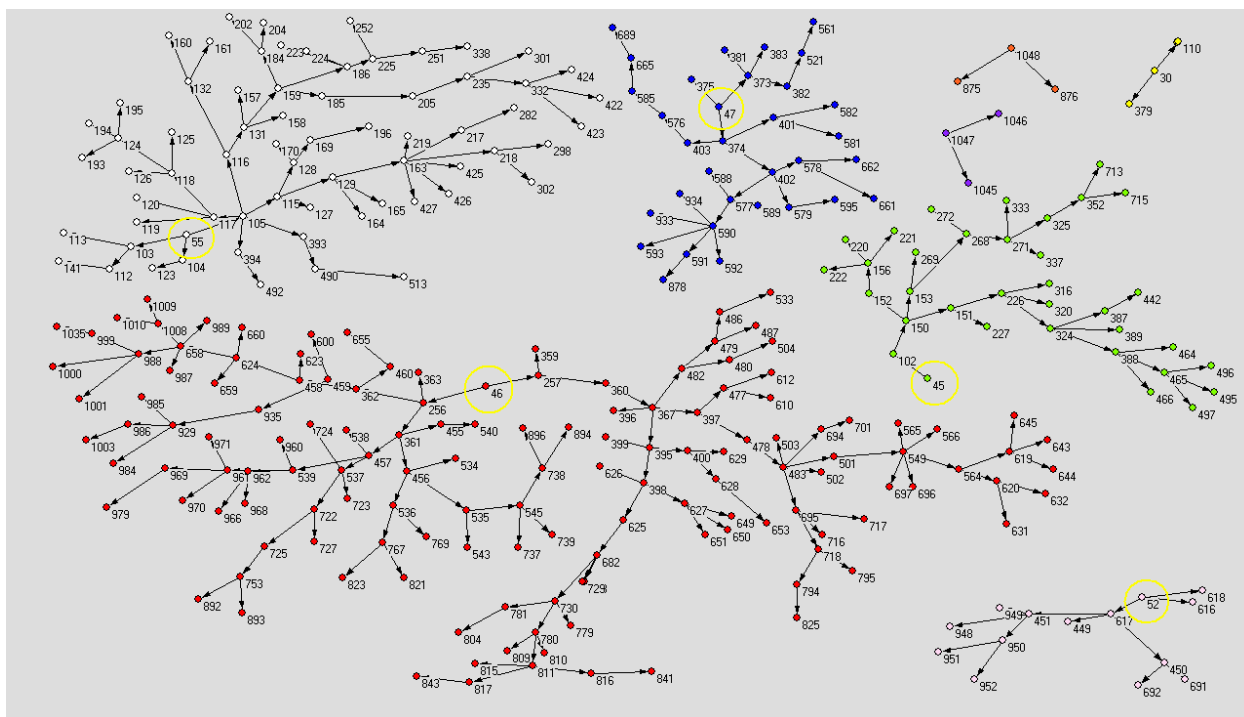
(both young and old) that worked the strolls, we were hoping that a formal introduction made by someone the youth were familiar with would help with our recruitment efforts. On one occasion, at approximately 1 AM in mid-October, Dank and four outreach workers walked along Jamaica Avenue in Queens, but only encountered older transvestite prostitutes. They then drove to Sutphin Avenue in Queens where there is a well-known pimped girls track by an industrial park. Although the area was quite desolate, they parked the car and circled the block a couple of times. They spotted only one girl on the street; however, she was quickly picked up by someone in a car. One of the outreach workers pointed out several cars with tinted windows circling the area, and noted that rather than have the girls stand outside where they can be picked up by the police, the girls' pimps will drive them around until they spot a potential customer. After realizing that they would not be able to refer anybody for the study in this area, they went home. On the other three occasions, Dank and the outreach workers went to Hunt's Point and the West Village. Although they were unable to refer anyone in Hunt's Point, they did find transgender youth at a well known stroll in the West Village who were willing to participate.

A final way that the researchers sought to recruit and interview pimped girls was by seeking them out at the Queens Criminal Court and Midtown Community Court. On five occasions, Dank visited the courts, and met with a case worker from the Mount Sinai Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention Program (SAVI) at the Queens Criminal Court and a Legal Aid attorney at the Midtown Community Court. With the help of both of these individuals, Dank was able to refer and interview twelve prostituted girls. All but two of the females interviewed through the court system were controlled by pimps. Although they all claimed to know at least one other prostituted youth, none of the girls recruited anyone for the study. In fact, a couple of the girls reluctantly took the referral coupons, and it is unknown whether or not they discarded them once they left the interview site. This more or less confirmed that pimped girls are, as our collaborative partners had warned us, one of the more (if not the most) difficult sub-groups to recruit.

Chapter Three

Research Findings and Data Analysis

To gain a better understanding of the CSEC population in New York City, the John Jay College research team recruited a sample of 329 youth using RDS methods to 1) make estimates of the size of the population, and 2) to provide a reliable and ethnographically rich description of the characteristics, experiences, and service needs of the local CSEC population. Below, the RDS recruiting trees are drawn, with the seed for each of the major groups circled.



Population estimates and special seeds

The most valid and reliable method of estimating the size of the CSEC population is by comparing the RDS-generated sample with official records. In this case, arrest records provided by the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) offer the most reliable source of official data.²⁰ Such a method is referred to as a “capture-recapture” methodology. Originally developed in biology (Kendal 1999), this method has been applied widely in social sciences (Bouchard and Tremblay 2005; Bouchard 2007), including in prior studies of prostitution

²⁰ Although the research team had access to court records provided by the Family Court Universal Case Management System (UCMS), the DCJS data was deemed more reliable due to the fact that a number of the youth admitted to lying about their age to the police in order to avoid child welfare services. Thus, the DCJS data was more likely to capture these cases, although the ages reported come into question.

(Roberts and Brewer 2006).²¹ In its most simple form, a capture / recapture population estimate is based on determining the proportion of a representative sample of a given population that conforms to a known statistic germane to that population (in this case, arrest records for “loitering for prostitution” and “prostitution” for offenders 18 and under for the five boroughs of New York) and assuming proportional levels of un-arrested individuals in the larger population, to derive a total population. In other words, where there exists a sample (s) of an unknown population (P), a known statistic of that that sample (σ) can be used in conjunction with the same statistic for the unknown population (Σ) to determine the total population, where:

$$P = \frac{(\Sigma)(s)}{\sigma}$$

In the present study the respective value of each of these variables is:

$$P = \frac{(599)(249)}{37.8}$$

The known statistic for the total CSEC population (Σ) was derived from the DCJS “prostitution” and “loitering for prostitution” arrest statistics for youth 18 and under in 2005 and 2006. In 2005, 60 males were arrested (19%), 238 females (77%) and 13 transgender (4%). In 2006, 47 males were arrested (16%), 218 females (76%) and 23 transgender (8%). In the sample population (s), 249 youth were deemed reliable and included in the study. The known statistic of the sample (σ) was excogitated from the arrest history information obtained from the interviews with 172 of the 249 youth (see page 90 for arrest history breakdown). According to the data, 88 youth had never been arrested, 75 had last been arrested in 2005 or 2006 and 9 had last been arrested prior to 2005. We assume that there has not been a significant change over time in the conditional probability of an individual being charged with loitering for prostitution/prostitution, given that they have been charged with some crime²². From this assumption, it follows that in our sample, the distribution of time elapsed since last arrest is the same as the distribution governing the time elapsed since last arrest for loitering for prostitution/prostitution. Since 10.75% of the arrestees in our sample reported being arrested over 2 years ago, we deduce that of the 42 respondents who reported being arrested for prostitution, only an estimated 37.8 should be counted as having been arrested for loitering for prostitution/prostitution during 2005 and 2006. The known statistic for the sample population is $42 - 10\% = 37.8$. Thus, the estimated CSEC population for New York City is 3,946.

In order to obtain a percentage breakdown of how many of the 3,946 youth are female, male and transgender, Respondent Driven Sampling Analysis Tool (RDSAT) was used to

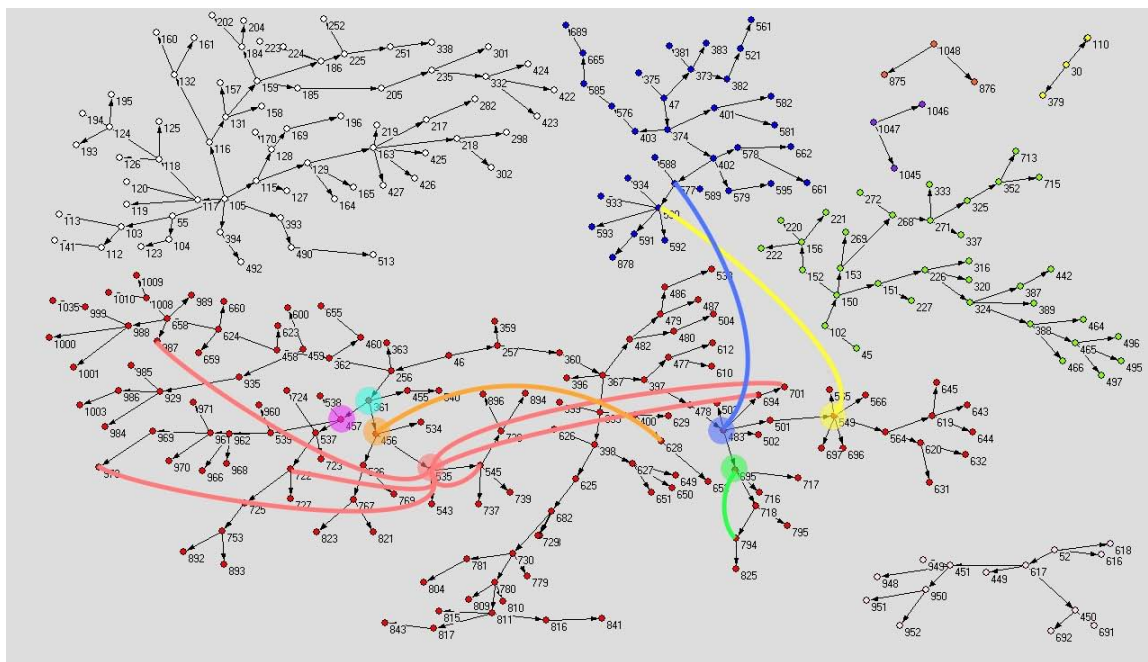
²¹ “Estimating the prevalence of male clients of prostitute women in Vancouver with a simple capture-recapture method” Roberts, JM.; Brewer, DD. *J Roy Stat Soc Seri A*; 2006 Vol. 169, p1-12; Risks of arrest across markets: a capture-recapture analysis of ‘hidden’ dealer and user populations; Bouchard, M.; Tremblay, P. *J Drug Issues*; 2005 Vol. 34, p733-754; Robustness of closed capture-recapture methods to violations of the closure assumption; Kendall, W. L. *Ecology*; 1999 Vol. 80, p2517-2525; A *Capture-Recapture* Model to Estimate the Size of Criminal Populations and the Risks of Detection in a Marijuana Cultivation Industry” Martin Bouchard, *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 2007 13(3): 221-241.

²² Such an assumption follows from the fact that relative to other offenses, loitering for prostitution/prostitution has not experienced significant changes in status, both from the vantage point of potential perpetrators circumstances and the criminal justice system's priorities.

estimate the percentage based on the sample population proportions. Sample population proportions are basic ratios of how many of a particular group was recruited to the total number of recruits. It is not adjusted for statistical biases. From the sample population proportions, RDSAT calculates estimated population proportions for the Data-Smoothed population equations, which accounts for statistical biases. RDSAT estimated that of the total estimated CSEC population, 53.5% are male, 42% are female and 4.5% are transgender. However, because the transgender sample was quite small (n=19), 4.5% is most likely an under-estimate of prostituted transgender youth in NYC.

As has already been described above, in our study the population estimate is derived from arrest records via the method known as the "capture-recapture" methodology—the standard way of estimating the size of the population by comparing the RDS-generated sample with official records. However, the research staff also developed and tested a new population estimation technique, to serve as mutual cross-validation against the "capture-recapture" estimate of the population size. The novel method was implemented as follows: about two months into the project (on 10/2/06), once the RDS recruitment trees had gone through several iterations, the researchers selected seven "special seeds" (5 females and 2 males) and paid them \$20 a week to call or visit the research staff (using their RDS code number to identify themselves) and report if they were offered any coupons, and if so, to report the number(s) of those coupons. Five of the seven special seeds reported any coupons offered to them for three months, until the end of December 2006. One of the special seeds only checked in with researchers twice, and the other was arrested for soliciting an officer in beginning of November 2006, and never heard from again.

The special seeds were not offered many coupons over the three months, but they were offered a few (13 coupons from 11 distinct sources). The figure below shows the positions of the 7 special seeds in the RDS sample tree, together with the offers they received.



The analysis proceeded as follows. From each seed (i), we obtained the self-reported **network size** (n_i). The **adjusted network size** (m_i) was then computed to be (n_i) minus the number of coupons that were distributed *by* seed (i). Thus (m_i) served as an upper bound on the number of offerings that we would *expect* seed (i) to receive if and when the RDS sample were to exhaust the population. The **discovered offerings** (d_i) were the actual number of offerings seed (i) received in the period prior to the end of the study. The **post-seed sample** (A_i) is the number of coupons retrieved from circulation in the RDS study after the time that seed (i) was assigned its special status. The relevant data is shown below:

Seed Number (i)	Network Size (n_i)	Adjusted Network (m_i)	Discovered Offerings (d_i)	Post-seed Sample (A_i)
361	15	12	0	196
456	4	1	1	177
457	30	27	0	162
483	90	85	1	172
535	12	10	6	160
549	50	45	2	155
695	6	3	1	96

If we hypothesize that the RDS sampling has gone through sufficiently many iterations to approximate a random sampling of the population, and furthermore that the network of an individual is drawn from the population as a whole uniformly, independently at random, then by linearity of expectation, the expected value of d_i is given by

$$E[d_i] = m_i (A_i / N)$$

where N is the true population size. Thus for every seed (i) for which the sampled value of $d_i > 0$, we can compute an estimate N_i of the true population size as follows:

$$N_i = A_i [m_i / d_i]$$

These estimates are given below.

Seed Number (i)	Population Estimate (N_i)
456	177
483	14620
535	272
549	3488
695	288

Although these estimates vary widely, the mean value of the population estimate obtained using the five seeds was 3,769, which is comparable to the population estimate obtained by the traditional capture-recapture technique. The application of the new technique in this study shows considerable promise—as is readily seen in the confluence of estimates obtained through classical "capture-recapture" and the special seed technique. The theoretical hypotheses in which the special seed technique can be made to reliably generate population estimates are still under investigation.

One important caveat to the population estimates attempted in this study is that they calculate the number of youth that are likely to exist within the universe from which they sample, that is, they estimate the number of youth who stand a chance of getting recruited into the study, but not those who stand no chance of being recruited. The project demonstrated that it was possible to refer pimped youth into the study, but there are some CSEC sub-groups that are likely to be excluded from this estimate, e.g., those who are trafficked into New York City from other countries to work in tightly controlled indoor environments, and whose lack of cultural and linguistic skills make it impossible for them to network with the larger universe of CSEC youth. To the degree that these sub-groups exist – and there is no doubt that some do exist – the CSEC population will be larger than what this study has estimated. Unfortunately, the methodology employed here cannot offer any insight into the size of this component of the CSEC population as none of the youth that were recruited into the study offered any information that hinted at the existence or prevalence of these youth. Other methods of investigation would be required to gain insight into the number of these types of youth.

Data Analysis

In all, three distinct forms of data were collected in the project: statistical and coded data in the form of a questionnaire, narrative and quantitative data in the form of open ended questions whose answers have been transcribed, and network data derived from the sampling chains themselves and the “special seed” data used to provide information of network cycle length and tree overlaps not normally available in RDS methods.

The network data produced by the RDS sampling method was analyzed with the RDSAT program (Heckathorn 2007) to provide information on network strength, density, and homophily. And while spanning tree graphs of the sort produced by RDS provide only limited topological information of the ambient social network, the special seed data will help provide some statistical information about such issues as cycle length and network density, and again provide suggestions for explorations among the qualitative and statistical data (such as possible relationships between gender and network brokerage roles).

The main body of the report will primarily rely upon descriptive statistics of the study population, but in future publications, the questionnaire/quantitative data will be analyzed using standard statistical analysis techniques, including regression (least squares) analysis among continuous variables²³ such as age, peer network size, and arrest history. This analysis will be carried out via SPSS software, where multiple fields of data can be modeled according to single and multiple regression techniques. This analysis will complement the descriptive statistics and uncover potential relationships among various social factors, while the large sample size should ensure that any relationships discovered will have high confidence intervals. These relationships will also, subsequently, be explored via other data forms, most especially narrative forms of

²³ David A. Freedman, *Statistical Models: Theory and Practice*, Cambridge University Press (2005); Cohen, J., Cohen P., West, S.G., & Aiken, L.S. (2003). *Applied multiple regression/correlation analysis for the behavioral sciences*. (3rd ed.) Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates; Patrizi, Patrizia “Deviant Action and Self-Narration: A Qualitative Survey through Atlas.ti” *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior* 35(2): 171-188; Bruner, J. (1997). A Narrative Model of Self-Construction. In J.G. Snodgrass and R. Thompson (eds.), *The Self across Psychology: Self-Recognition, Self-Awareness and Self-Concept*, Annals of the New York Academy of Science, vol. 818. New York: New York Academy of Science, pp. 145–161. Alexa, Melina and Cornelia Zuell (2000) “Text Analysis Software: Commonalities, Differences and Limitations” *Quality and Quantity* 34: 299-321.

qualitative data as well.

Below, we report findings from the analysis of RDS recruitment data of 329 youth, and the interviews that research team conducted with the 249 eligible youth that were included in the final sample. In presenting these findings, we hope to allow the voices of the youth to be heard without excessive editing or editorializing. Of course, which voices are heard and which are not is important, and how we understand those voices that are selected is vital too, but our purpose here is to simply represent the voices that we heard as thoroughly and as accurately as possible, leaving arguments over interpretation to another time and place. Each subsection is followed by the relevant tables of the descriptive statistics. Please note that not every youth answered all the questions asked in the interview; thus, the number of youth who answered the question (n) is provided above each variable.

RDS Recruitment Data

The RDS recruitment data offers a wealth of information that the project staff has just begun to mine, only some of which is reported here, but preliminary analyses of the data provided a number of surprises. The first, and most unexpected outcome, was the large number of boys in the sample. Although past literature has suggested that there are a sizable number of prostituted males in the U.S. (Spangenberg, 2001; Finklehor & Ormrod, 2004; Estes & Weiner, 2002; Weisberg, 1985; and West, 1993)²⁴ the research team was not expecting to recruit such a large number of males for this study. Even with the alterations to the recruitment of research subjects that the research team implemented to favor the recruitment of girls, boys were still estimated to outnumber girls in the population, 54% to 42%. The homophily data show that boys are slightly more inclined to recruit other boys, and more to the point, girls are slightly more inclined to recruit boys (or transgender youth) than other girls.

	Male	Female
Total Distribution of recruits	177.0	106.0
Estimated Population Proportions	0.535	0.42
Sample Population Proportions	0.562	0.386
Recruitment Proportions	0.604	0.362
Mean Network Size, N (adjusted)	7.193	5.561
Homophily (Hx)	0.176	-0.15
Degree Homophily (Hd)	0.129	-0.144
Standard Error of P	0.038	0.036

*transgender youth are omitted from this table

²⁴ Spangenberg, M. (2001). "Prostituted Youth in New York City: An Overview." *ECPAT-USA*; Finklehor, D. & Ormrod, R. (2004, June). *Prostitution of juveniles: Patterns from NIBRS*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.; Estes, R.J. & Weiner, N.A. (2002, February 20). *The commercial sexual exploitation of children in the U.S., Canada and Mexico*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, School of Social Work, Center for the Study of Youth Policy.; Weisberg, D.K. (1985). *Children of the night*. Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books.; West, D.J. (1993). *Male prostitution*. New York: Harrington Park Press.

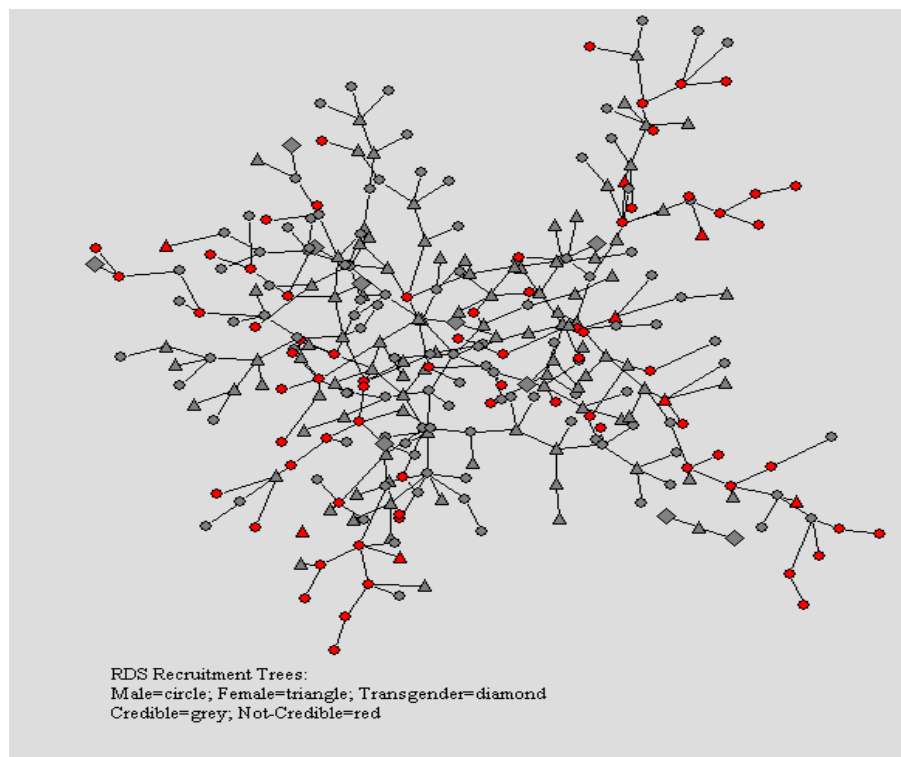
Despite the greater number of boys in the RDS data, however, there were more problems with their eligibility for the study than with girls or transgender youth, and many of them were removed from the database for the analyses that are presented in subsequent sections. After reviewing all of the interviews, the research staff found that 74 boys (35%) were not credible (because they were too old or not involved in CSEC activities), but only 6 girls and transgender youth were not credible. Because of this, the percentage of boys in the CSEC market is certainly less than the 54% that was estimated with raw RDS numbers, but removing the non-credible males and females still leaves us with exactly 108 of each (not counting seeds). Thus, while estimating the exact proportion of males versus females versus transgender youth in the CSEC market remains unknown, at the very least, the proportion of males in the overall population is far more substantial than had previously been reported.

The existence of a large number of non-credible subjects certainly indicates the need for better screening methods (though it is difficult to imagine how one might do that for CSEC youth), but what was surprising about the recruitment data was the fact that non-credible research subjects often recruited youth who were credible. For example, of the 74 non-credible males, 21 recruited credible male subjects, and 18 recruited credible females. While the existence of non-credible research subjects is a clear indication of the degree of scamming that plagued the project, the fact that non-credible subjects were able to recruit eligible ones, is evidence of the larger web of social relationships to which CSEC youth belong that includes more than simply other sexually exploited youth.

Recruitment by Gender and Credibility (Recruitment Count)					
Person who Recruited	Recruits				
	MaleCr.	MaleNotCr.	Female/TG Cred.	Female/TG Not Cred.	Total
Male Cred.	48	24	51	1	124
Male not Cred.	21	23	18	2	64.0
Female/TG Cred.	37	20	38	5	100.0
Female/TG Not Cred.	2	2	1	0	5.0

*to run some analyses on RDS, we had to merge the female and transgender youth categories

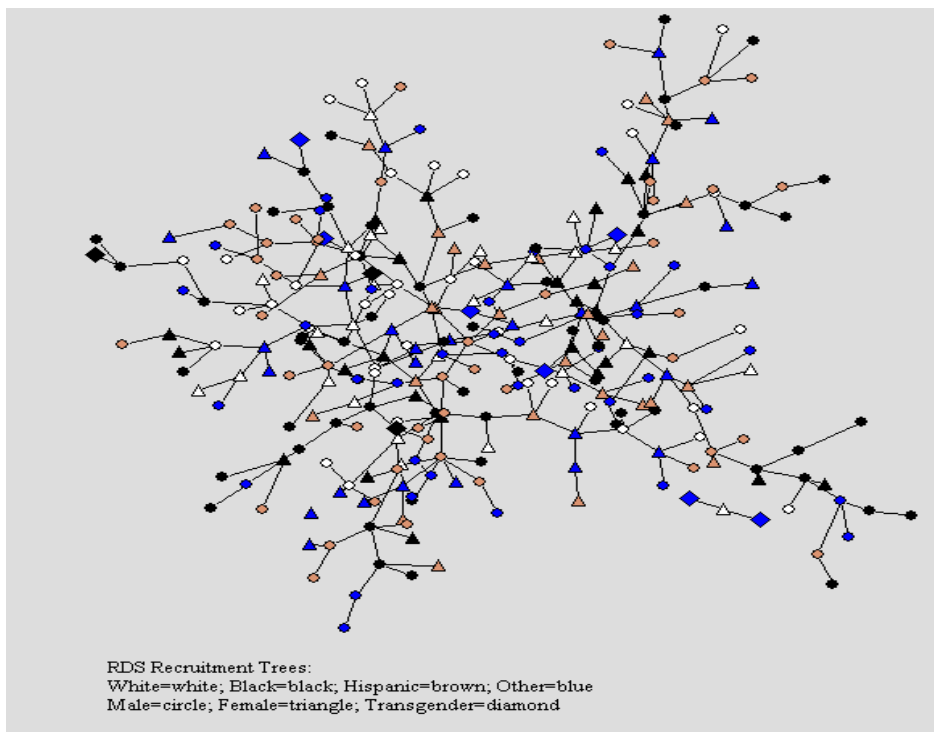
The degree to which ineligible youth recruited eligible ones, and vice versa, is also captured in the illustration below that depicts the RDS recruitment trees:



During the data collection phase of the project, the staff was aware of the problems that would accompany the over-recruitment of males – not the least of which was that later, 35% of them were found to be ineligible – so efforts were made to focus on recruiting more girls, especially pimped girls. In the RDS data reported below, the recruitment of pimped youth is illustrated. The pimped girls that were recruited near the end of the project and that were interviewed as “seed” cases do not appear in the sample of recruits reported below, so the number of females in the RDS data is lower than the number of pimped girls in the sample, but one interesting finding from the RDS recruitment process was that 90 non-pimped males recruited 8 pimped males and 10 pimped females while the 13 pimped girls in the sample produced no referrals of other pimped youth. Some may interpret the lack of recruitment by pimped girls of other pimped youth as evidence of the degree of control that pimps have over youth, and that may very well be true, but more important, that it is possible to refer pimped girls through youth that are not pimped, including non-pimped boys.

Recruitment by Gender and Pimped (Recruitment Count; Transition Probability)					
Person who Recruited	Recruits				
	Nonpimped Male	Nonpimped Female/TG	Pimped Male	Pimped Female/TG	Total
Non-Pimped Male	90	52	8	10	160
Non-Pimped Female/TG	43	34	4	7	88
Pimped Male	8	7	1	2	18
Pimped Female/TG	11	2	0	0	13

The various races, ethnicities or nationalities claimed by the youth also produced some revealing proportions within the overall CSEC population. Black youth were estimated to be the largest single group within the population, but at only 29% of the total, there was a significant presence of other groups, including 23% whites, 23% Hispanics (including Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, which were separate categories), and 22% of the youth who identified as “multi-racial.” The degree to which the sample was diverse is reflected in the diagram below that depicts the RDS recruitment trees:



One outcome that was somewhat unexpected was the high homophily score (nearly .5) exhibited by white youth: an indication that white youth were very likely to refer other white youth. The researchers have speculated that one reason why white youth appear to be so insular is that many of them were recruited from a group of “traveler” youth that move from city to city and rely on each other for survival. Further analysis of the data is needed to confirm this. Black youth also had a tendency to recruit other Blacks, but not nearly to the degree that whites had within their own group. And Hispanic youth, somewhat surprisingly, were more likely to refer non-Hispanics than members of their own group. Multi-racial youth showed the lowest homophily score (approaching zero) of all the groups, meaning that they were just as likely to refer another multi-racial youth as they were a member of another group.

RDS Population Estimates by Race, Ethnicity or Nationality

	Bl.	Wh.	His.	Dom.	P.R.	Asn.	NvAm	Mix	Total
Total Distribution of recruits	90.0	65.0	40.0	4.0	24.0	5.0	3.0	62.0	293.0
Estimated Population Proportions	0.294	0.232	0.137	0.012	0.081	0.016	0.009	0.219	1.0
Sample Population Proportions	0.298	0.204	0.131	0.018	0.088	0.021	0.009	0.231	1.0
Recruitment Proportions	0.307	0.222	0.137	0.014	0.082	0.017	0.01	0.212	1.0
Equilibrium Sample Distribution	0.295	0.232	0.126	0.011	0.078	0.014	0.008	0.236	1.0
Mean Network Size, N (adjusted)	6.474	6.458	5.916	5.96	6.206	5.505	5.76	6.981	
Mean Network Size, N (unadjusted)	18.894	17.062	13.049	10.5	16.538	9.667	19.0	20.12	
Homophily (Hx)	0.256	0.499	0.086	-1.0	-1.0	-1.0	-1.0	0.073	
Affiliation Homophily (Ha)	0.255	0.499	0.098	-1.0	-1.0	-1.0	-1.0	0.052	
Degree Homophily (Hd)	0.001	0.0	-0.083	-0.077	-0.039	-0.147	-0.108	0.02	
Population Weights	0.986	1.141	1.049	0.65	0.924	0.761	0.974	0.946	
Recruitment Component (RCx)	0.989	1.141	0.962	0.6	0.889	0.649	0.869	1.023	
Degree Component (DCx)	0.997	0.999	1.091	1.083	1.04	1.173	1.121	0.925	
Standard Error of P	0.038	0.043	0.028	0.009	0.017	0.005	0.006	0.023	

One concern that the research staff had about beginning the RDS recruitment process was the potential biasing effect of the geographic distribution of seeds, even though, according to RDS theory, the starting point should not have mattered. Because of that, the researchers began collecting data in the Bronx, and interviewed three subjects there on the first night. But those three subjects did not refer anyone else to the project, and the researchers sought additional seeds through a collaborative partner in Manhattan. From those few seeds, the entire sample grew, resulting in 5 major “trees” (see RDS tree diagram above). Nearly the entire sample is contained in 5 major “trees,” with the largest tree extending to 12 waves of recruitment, far more than needed to produce a representative sample of the population, and the second-largest tree (begun by a non-eligible research subject!) extending to 9 waves of recruitment. The findings regarding the geographic distribution of research subjects reveal that youth from all 5 boroughs of New York City were recruited into the study, as well as youth from across the country and abroad. A larger sample may produce slightly different estimated population proportions by birth (Queens, for example, seems underrepresented), but the sample appears to have accomplished the goal of geographic representation.

Population Estimates By Place of Birth

	Man.	Bk.	Qns.	Bx.	S.I	N.J.	NYS	Penn.	USA	Oth.	Total
Total Distribution of recruits	76.0	41.0	13.0	38.0	7.0	18.0	12.0	6.0	55.0	27.0	293.0
Estimated Population Proportions	0.246	0.165	0.044	0.119	0.026	0.089	0.04	0.021	0.177	0.072	1.0
Sample Population Proportions	0.24	0.149	0.046	0.134	0.021	0.055	0.043	0.024	0.185	0.103	1.0
Recruitment Proportions	0.259	0.14	0.044	0.13	0.024	0.061	0.041	0.02	0.188	0.092	1.0
Equilibrium Sample Distribution	0.256	0.142	0.046	0.129	0.024	0.068	0.043	0.017	0.182	0.093	1.0
Mean Network Size, N (adjusted)	6.688	5.527	6.776	6.962	5.914	4.868	6.785	5.335	6.582	8.245	
Mean Network Size, N (unadjusted)	16.507	13.333	14.4	16.659	12.857	12.235	36.786	9.0	21.276	19.5	
Homophily (Hx)	0.085	-0.038	-1.0	0.021	-1.0	0.048	0.038	-1.0	0.078	0.085	
Affiliation Homophily (Ha)	0.073	0.02	-1.0	0.01	-1.0	0.07	0.036	-1.0	0.073	0.064	
Degree Homophily (Hd)	0.014	-0.139	0.002	0.011	-0.079	-0.242	0.002	-0.169	0.006	0.022	
Population Weights	1.023	1.11	0.961	0.891	1.222	1.632	0.947	0.862	0.955	0.701	
Recruitment Component (RCx)	1.066	0.956	1.015	0.967	1.126	1.237	1.001	0.717	0.979	0.901	
Degree Component (DCx)	0.96	1.162	0.947	0.922	1.086	1.319	0.946	1.203	0.975	0.779	
Standard Error of P	0.029	0.026	0.013	0.027	0.011	0.027	0.021	0.011	0.026	0.015	

Demographics of Eligible Youth in the Sample

The sample of 249 eligible youth was diverse in a variety of ways – by gender, by race/ethnicity, and by nationality or place of origin. In terms of gender, the 119 females, 111 males and 19 transgender youth may be, arguably, broadly representative of the gender ratio within the larger CSEC population as a whole. While the number of transgender youth in the sample is not large enough to produce statistically valid statements about them, they occasionally provided an interesting or provocative contrast with males and females. For example, while more than 75% of the sample of boys and girls had not yet made it beyond the 11th grade in school, nearly half of the transgender youth (9 of 19) said that they had made it as far as the 12th grade or beyond. This may be a reflection of the later age at which transgender youth enter the CSEC market as compared with boys or girls (see below), it may be an indication that transgender youth are, in general, more educated than other CSEC youth, or it may be an artifact of the small number of transgender youth that were recruited. More research on transgender youth would be required to answer that question.

The racial/ethnic or national backgrounds of the 249 youth mirrored the findings from the RDS recruitment data: Black, White, Hispanic and multi-racial youth each represented about one quarter of the population. The majority of the youth in the sample (56%) said that they were born in New York City, with Manhattan (20%) providing the largest percentage of youth from the five boroughs, followed by the Bronx (14%), Brooklyn (13%), Queens (6%) and Staten Island (3%). Among the many other places of origin that were sometimes mentioned by youth, were included upstate New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Florida.

The majority of the youth in the sample were homeless, though the type of homelessness varied considerably, and there were trends with regard to gender in where and how youth lived. For example, the largest category of homelessness (32%) was what was described as “living in the street,” but 44% of the boys described themselves in this category while only 24% of the girls

and 11% of the transgender youth described themselves as living this way. Girls more often described themselves as living in their “family home” (29%), in a “friend’s home” (26%), or in “another home” (18%), than boys (who chose these same responses only 16%, 19% and 6% of the time). Girls were also far more likely to say that they lived with a “parent” than boys (22% vs. 13%, respectively), while more than half of the boys (52%) said that they lived “alone” (versus only 22% of the girls). Though the number of transgender youth is too small to draw any conclusions about their living arrangements, 8 of 19 said that they were living in a “shelter” and the researchers were struck by the degree to which they seemed to form their own sub-group within the larger CSEC population (furthermore, the RDS data suggested that transgender youth exhibited a very high degree of homophily as compared with boys or girls, i.e., they were far more likely to refer other youth who were like themselves than boys or girls). In general, based upon how the youth described their living arrangements, boys seemed much more solitary and disconnected from others, including family members, than girls.

Youth Demographics

	Females (n=119)	Males (n=111)	Transgender (n=19)	Total (n=249)
Ethnicity				
African American	25.2%	23.4%	36.8%	25.3%
Caucasian	22.7%	27.9%	5.3%	23.7%
Multi-racial**	23.5%	18.0%	42.1%	22.5%
Hispanic- Other	16.0%	13.5%	0.0%	13.7%
Puerto-Rican	7.6%	10.8%	5.3%	8.8%
Asian	2.5%	2.7%	0.0%	2.4%
Dominican	2.5%	1.8%	5.3%	8.8%
Native-American	0.0%	1.8%	5.3%	1.2%
Education				
6 th Grade	2.6%	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%
7 th Grade	1.7%	1.9%	0.0%	1.7%
8 th Grade	6.9%	13.0%	11.8%	10.0%
9 th Grade	16.4%	24.1%	11.8%	19.5%
10 th Grade	17.2%	25.9%	11.8%	20.7%
11 th Grade	23.3%	13.0%	5.9%	17.4%
12 th Grade	22.4%	17.6%	11.8%	19.5%
GED	4.3%	0.9%	23.5%	4.1%
Some College	2.6%	3.7%	15.8%	4.0%
Don't Remember	2.6%	0.0%	5.9%	1.7%
Birthplace				
NYC	68.9%	47.7%	21.0%	55.8%
Manhattan	26.9%	16.2%	0.0%	20.1%
Bronx	14.3%	15.3%	5.3%	14.1%
Brooklyn	18.5%	8.1%	5.3%	12.9%
Queens	6.7%	4.5%	10.5%	6.0%
Staten Island	2.5%	3.6%	0.0%	2.8%
Suburbs of NYC	11.8%	9.0%	21.0%	11.2%
New Jersey	7.6%	3.6%	10.5%	6.0%
Pennsylvania	3.4%	3.6%	10.5%	4.0%
Connecticut	0.8%	1.8%	0.0%	1.2%
Other New York Area	3.4%	4.5%	5.3%	4.0%
Other U.S. States	8.4%	28.8%	47.4%	20.5%
Florida	0.0%	5.4%	10.5%	3.2%
California	0.8%	3.6%	0.0%	2.0%
Other	7.6%	19.8%	36.8%	15.3%
Other U.S. Territory	0.8%	4.5%	5.3%	2.8%
Other Country	6.7%	5.4%	0.0%	5.6%

**Youth from a multi-racial background can range from a mix of Black and White, Black and Hispanic, Puerto Rican and Dominican, etc. Because the youth gave such detailed accounts of their racial background, and did not classify themselves as one specific race, we thought it best to make a general multi-racial category.

Current Living Situation	Females (n=119)	Males (n=110)	Transgender (n=19)	Total (n=248)
Friend Home	26.1%	18.9%	10.5%	21.7%
Family Home	28.6%	16.2%	5.3%	21.3%
Homeless	46.2%	78.4%	57.9%	61.4%
Streets	23.5%	44.1%	10.5%	31.7%
Shelter	17.6%	27.9%	42.1%	24.1%
Squat	5.0%	6.3%	5.3%	5.6%
Other Home	8.4%	6.3%	15.8%	8.0%
Own Apartment	4.2%	2.7%	15.8%	4.4%
Market Facilitator Home	4.2%	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%
Group Home	0.8%	0.0%	5.3%	0.8%

Currently Live With	Females (n=119)	Males (n=110)	Transgender (n=19)	Total (n=248)
No One	26.1%	52.3%	42.1%	39.0%
Friend	36.1%	30.6%	31.6%	33.3%
Parent	21.8%	12.6%	5.3%	16.5%
Partner	6.7%	2.7%	10.5%	5.2%
Extended Family	5.0%	2.7%	0.0%	3.6%
Sibling	5.9%	1.8%	5.3%	4.0%
Market Facilitator	3.4%	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%
Fictional Family	1.7%	0.9%	0.0%	1.2%
Other Family Member	0.8%	0.9%	0.0%	0.8%
Other	10.1%	5.4%	5.3%	7.6%

Entry into the CSEC Market

The age at which youth are initiated into CSEC markets and the way that this happens are important for policy makers and professions to know so that more effective interventions and services can be designed and implemented. But the project did not make special efforts to delve into this issue because 1) there was no way to check the veracity of the accounts provided by the youth about their entry to the market, and 2) the researchers (and the IRB) were concerned that revisiting these episodes might re-traumatize youth that had suffered childhood sexual abuse. Indeed, the researchers specifically avoided asking about sexual abuse in their past, but even so, a number of youth brought up childhood sexual abuse when asked about being initiated into CSEC markets. In general, however, the accounts provided by youth about their entry into CSEC markets were quite varied and they did not always implicate adults (aside from customers) as the responsible persons. Still, 33% of the youth provided narratives that the researchers had expected to hear: those that described adults taking advantage of vulnerable youth, including accounts of youth that had been initiated by a relative, recruited by a pimp, or simply approached and propositioned by customers on the street. The remaining narratives offered some surprises, as described below.

Age of Initiation

Many of the professionals who offered guidance to the John Jay research team believed that the average age of entry for girls was much younger than for boys, but boys and girls differed only slightly in our sample. The average age of entry for females was 15.15 years and males 15.28 years, but a higher percentage of boys (19%) entered the market under the age of 13 than girls (15%). And transgender youth tended to start out later in their teens (16.16 years) than boys or girls. Where boys, girls and transgendered youth differed the most was not in their age of entry, but in how they entered the market.

Recruitment into CSEC Markets

There appeared to be real differences in how girls, boys and transgendered youth entered CSEC markets. Girls and boys reported similar (though, surprisingly high) percentages of their “friends” as responsible for their entry to CSEC markets (46% and 44%, respectively), but transgender youth reported that 68% of the time, “friends” initiated them. Another glaring difference between girls, boys and transgender youth was in the percentages that attributed their entry into the market to “customers approaching them” the first time, with boys reporting this 32% of the time, girls only 16%, and only 2 (10.5%) transgender youth reporting this route of entry. Below, these various routes of entry are described in more detail.

Recruitment via Adults in the Home

Even though a number of youth stated that they were sexually abused in their own deeply dysfunctional homes, in only 4 cases (1.6%) did they point to family members – mothers, fathers, uncles, brothers and sisters – as responsible for their entry into the CSEC market. For example, one 19-year old Puerto Rican female who entered the market at age 15, pointed to her father as directly responsible:

I was kidnapped from my mother and it was a setup because my father didn't want to pay no more child support payments. He had one of his best friends kidnap me. And he started pimping me. He started telling me I'd have to sell my body in order to pay my father's debt. (045)

An 18-year old white male from Yonkers who worked the "buddy booths" in Manhattan (i.e., cubicle-like enclosures in midtown sex shops that provide space for men to engage in quick sex) said that he was initiated into the CSEC market at the age of 12, and attributed it to an uncle:

My uncle...he used to molest me, and he used to do stuff to me. And basically -- in my town, he knew people, and they were a bunch of perverts -- and he pretty much got money for me to do stuff with them. At first, he would just buy me stuff and then eventually I started getting money from him. (483)

Recruitment via "Boyfriends" and Pimps:

In addition to family members, it was widely expected that pimps and so-called "boyfriends" would be a primary route into CSEC markets for youth, especially girls (see section below on "market facilitators"). Pimps were clearly a route into the market for some girls (n=19, 16%), but only one boy and no transgender youth reported being recruited into the market by pimps. As reported in the methods section above, the project made extra efforts to recruit pimped girls, and while it seems likely that they were more difficult to recruit than youth that did not have pimps, there is little reason to believe that the proportion of pimped girls in the CSEC population was much higher than what is reported here. Indeed, when asked how many pimps they "know," out of 93 youth that responded, 44 reported "none", and others offered relatively low numbers.

Among the girls that blamed pimps for their entry into the CSEC market, some of them said that they were not at all surprised or alarmed when they were approached by pimps who tried to recruit them. Initially, the pimps seemed to offer options that appeared somewhat attractive to the girls, and certainly better than what group homes or the shelter system seemed to offer them. For example, one 17-year old female from the Bronx described meeting a pimp at a homeless shelter where she had multiple problems:

He found me at Franklin Shelter in the Bronx. We was outside. It's a lotta pimps out there. I know a whole lot of 'em. So one day, I was in a bad situation because I was gettin' kicked out because I got into a fight, so he offered to let me stay in a hotel with him. So, I packed my stuff and I left wit' him. (1035)

Another young African-American girl, who at the age of 15 felt despondent and alone, recalled being easily swayed by the pimp who approached her outside her group home:

I was in a group home. And he was like, you know, the little leeches that linger around. And I was sittin' on my steps and I was cryin' because they're givin' you allowance -- \$20 sumpin' dollars a week -- and then you're not allowed to do certain types a jobs because you have a curfew. And if you miss curfew, they shippin' you somewhere else.

So it's like, I was just at my rope's end. And the things that he was sayin' to me, it sounded good. So, it was like, "Hmm, you know, maybe I can do this." But once I started seein' certain things and certain actions, it was like, I might as well have stayed in the hell I was in, because now, I'm doin' things that I really don't wanna do. (360)

For other young women, another route into the CSEC market was through "boyfriends" who seemed to have plans for them from the beginning, as a 17-year old African-American female described:

I fell in love with this guy and thought he was *the one*...and he called himself a pimp. But he always tell me I'm his *Bottom Bitch*²⁵ and whatever. He put me on the stroll, out there with black eyes and broken noses. I was out there messed up. This was in Atlantic City. (397)

Approached by Strangers:

More often than being recruited by pimps, 23% of teens said that they were unexpectedly approached on the street by a stranger with a proposition. A 17-year old Caribbean male who grew up in New Jersey, described how he was surprised by the initial encounter that led to his initiation into the CSEC market:

I was in Newark, New Jersey, in the financial area, on Broad Street, where the Prudential building is now. I was walking and this pretty sharply dressed fellow talked to me. He was very touchy feely on me, but I really didn't pay too much attention to it because he was talking money. I could see the money hanging out of his pocket. He gave me a proposition. He said if I'd just lay in the bed with him and that we'd go to a hotel nearby, he'll give me a cell phone afterwards and \$100. And I did it, and he gave me the cell phone. I hid it from my mother for, like, forever and he used to call me regularly and I went back and saw him a few times. (124)

Another teen, a homeless 18-year old African-American male from Virginia who had been in New York City for only two months, said that his initiation into the market came almost the minute that he stepped off the bus in midtown Manhattan:

As soon as I got off the bus, the guy came up to me. And, like, I asked him where a shelter was and he said, "There is a shelter right around the corner, but why would you want to sleep in the shelter when you can stay at my place? You smoke? You drink?" I told him, "yeah." It was an older guy, but Arabian. I think he was about 50. (204)

Several youth spoke about how they were initially propositioned by men on the street who asked them to perform a variety of fetishized sex acts. One 15-year old mixed race male who was living with his mother, was shocked by the amount of money offered by a customer who was widely known amongst the street youth in Union Square:

²⁵ Bottom bitch is a term of "respect" for the girl who has been with the pimp the longest and is considered the main earner.

I was hanging out in Union Square and some guy – some ‘sock man’ – came up to me and was like – well his fetish is little boys’ socks – take off your socks in front of him... then he jerks off with them. He paid me \$20 for my socks. Then he offered me \$200 if he could rub my feet. We went into the bathroom at Union Square and he smelled them too... it was really weird and I closed my eyes. (795).

While adults approaching youth appeared to be widespread, several youth (n=14) said that “being homeless” was a reason why they were receptive to their propositions. One 19-year old mixed race female from Brooklyn, for example, was willing to do almost anything to get out of the December cold:

I have only done this once. It was in December and it was really cold. I couldn’t stand to be on the street. And this guy saw me, and he was like, “Are you homeless?” I said, “Yes.” And he asked me, “I’m willing to take you in; what are you willing to do for me?” And at the moment, I couldn’t answer the question, but I knew what he meant. So I just I went along with it. He took me to his house. He fed me, gave me clothes to change in and everything. And at the end a the night, it was pretty much that I had to do something sexual to him to stay. And I had to give him oral sex. (616)

Recruitment by Friend(s)

Despite the widespread belief that adults – especially pimps – are directly responsible for the entry of youth into CSEC markets, adults preying on vulnerable youth was not the most frequently mentioned route into commercial sexual abuse reported by youth in the sample: nearly half of the youth (47%, n=116) claimed that it was “friends” that introduced them into the CSEC market. But some of these “friends” seemed as though they were simply acting as surrogate recruiters for pimps. For example, one 17-year old African-American girl from Brooklyn said that she was introduced to her former pimp by her “best friend” at age 13:

I was supposed to be goin’ to school and my best friend asked me to come wit’ her to go see her boyfriend. But I told her I didn’t want to play hooky. But I go with her and she introduced me to this dude named Kevin. Kevin was 29 at the time. And he says, “Well, can I get you some money.” I’m like, “How can you get me some money?” He’s like, “Well, meet me later and we can talk about it.” So me, I violated my curfew just to go see this dude. So I goes to see him and he makes me do *favors* for him. And in the same night, I lost my virginity. He taught me how to dance, how to screw, he taught me how to stay in-pocket, and how to not go outta-pocket (In-pocket is when you doin’ it right there. Outta-pocket is when you violate or, like, you look at another pimp), how to play the game. I was tellin’ my friend, I said, “Yo, I think I like him.” At 13, I don’t know what love is. The first thing he did was brought me a customer within three days. And he put me out on this track on forty-deuce [42nd street], told me how to walk, all a this. I was getting’ mad chedder [money] then. I was out there every night, no breaks, nothing. I got a percentage of my money and he got the rest. (5114)

But many friends did not appear to have or need pimps; they were already deeply involved in CSEC markets themselves, as described by a 17-year old female from the Bronx:

I got kicked out at 14, and I had nowhere to go. And when I found one a my friends, at first, she referred me to be at a strip club. It's called Oasis, in the Bronx. So I stripped for a couple a months and I didn't like the pay. I tried to look for a job, but I was too young. So, then she referred me to...do this. And I don't consider myself a prostitute, but an escort. My friends told me their clients...and then their clients...and it just goes up from there. (5033)

Similarly, a 15-year old Black girl from Brooklyn who said that she entered the CSEC market at age 12, described how another girl showed her how and where to engage the market. She noted that she currently worked near the new "Gateway" mall off the Belt Parkway – a site known for its street-level prostitution stroll (generally, adult sex workers are found there), hot-sheet motels, 24-hour diners that cater to sex workers and their customers, and as a dumping ground for dead bodies.

When my mom kicked me out, I didn't have nowhere to go. I lived on the street for a couple a days. When I met this one girl, and she asked me if I wanna make money 'cause she said I'm a pretty girl. And I said, "Sure." She started showin' me the places where you could go to pick up guys, like in Brooklyn, and it's by a mall, but it's more like by the highway. (395)

Some of the youths' friends put them directly in touch with their first customers. For example, an 18-year old white female from the Bronx who had been living in a group home said that she started at age 16 with the help of a girlfriend who helped her overcome her reluctance:

I ran away from the group home I was staying at upstate, and one a my friends she introduced me to stripping. We was in a house party in Brooklyn and, well, she intoxicated me because I felt uncomfortable with it. She put three E-pills in my drink and after that, I was just turnin' tricks like there was no tomorrow. (1010)

In one case that seemed a bit like role reversal, an 18-year old Black/Puerto Rican male from the Bronx who started at age 16, described how a female friend initiated him into the business:

A friend of mine was doing it. She told me about it, and at the time, I needed money 'cause I was on the streets. My friend is like my organizer. She tells me, like, for private parties, if they need a male. (129)

An 18-year old white girl who started at age 15, was not only taught all the rules of the game by an older female "friend" she met on the street, but was also able to establish a steady clientele as a result of this friendship:

My mother died and I was placed in foster homes. My foster father would touch me and I ran away. I ended up coming to NY and I was on the streets; nobody wanted to help

me. And I ran into this girl, and she was like 38 when she passed away last year, but she taught me everything I know. She taught me how to do what I have to do -- but not be stupid about it -- to play it right, and be smart. I'm not a prostitute. I make money -- I earn money -- the best way I know how to. After that, she just started referring me to friends, and after a while, I had a base clientele. (644)

In a similar scenario, a multi-racial 18-year old transgender youth was introduced to the stroll in the Meatpacking District by another transgender prostitute:

My first time I went to the city, I hung out with this other transgender. She says, "I know a way you can make money, and you can make money!" We're gonna get you done-up -- and you're goin' out -- and you're going to make some money. So we went up, and we went out to the West Side, like 14th and 9th. A guy came up to me -- offered me \$500 and stuff like that -- for a blowjob... And he wanted to fuck me. So I'm like, "You know, I'm gonna have to charge you a little bit more, it depends on the time, also." And she [my friend] was like, "Don't spend no more time than two hours with them. If you do, charge them over. If you're gonna be a whore, be a whore. Make money." And I'm like, "Okay." And then she was like, "I'm gonna make you my daughter out here, and all the girls is gonna know you -- and look after you -- so nobody won't mess with you." (595)

One 18-year old Hispanic girl who said that she started at age 17 to help her aunt pay bills and avoid being evicted from her apartment, reluctantly decided to go along with a friend to meet some "guys":

I was living with my aunt and niece and the bills were pilin' up and I didn't want us to get evicted, so I didn't feel like I had much of a choice. I couldn't get a job, I don't have high school behind me. So. I was out in the South Bronx and this girl who I used to go to school with, she was like, "Yeah, I'm gonna get me some money." She was waitin' for this guy or whatever. And he came over there with another friend of hers and they was like, "Yeah, you know, if you need sumpin', I'll take care a you or whatever." And I'm like, "Um, not really." I didn't feel comfortable with it, but you got a dude offerin' you like \$150, and you can't say no to it, you know what I mean? (164)

Recruitment via Peer Networks

Clearly, friends and acquaintances were often important actors in initiating youth into CSEC markets, but many of these cases seemed to be accompanied by narratives of economic desperation, like the case above, that drove them to the market. But some young people did not talk about their need for money; instead, they described social contexts where sex work seemed integral to their peer networks, and these networks seemed to draw in others over time. For many youth, it seemed, the language of prostitution had become normalized (perhaps helped along by the barrage of media sources like MTV's "Pimp My Ride" or the many music videos that purport to depict "pimps" and "hos" as embodying the epitome of fashion). A 20-year old African-

American female who said that she started at age 13, described herself as having become intrigued by the prostitution lifestyle and said that she decided to enter the *game* herself:

I used to go on Queens Plaza [shopping mall], and I used to see other females out there, workin'. And then I became real curious about the lifestyle of prostitution and pimpin and ho'in. And, like, I met my first john at 13. He offered me \$300, you know, to just spend quality time with him, just to talk about his family, you know, he's divorcin' wit' his wife. (5111)

And peer networks among some youth, far from stigmatizing participation in sex work, seemed to model this behavior, and in some cases, they provided pressure to join in. For example, one 15-year old mixed-race male described such a scenario:

I didn't know my friends did that -- that they sold their bodies -- and they brought me to West 4th and they told me what they were gonna do. So, I didn't wanna do it, but I was pressured into it. So, I was standing on some random corner and someone pulled up in their car and then called me over. And they just started asking me to do it orally. I was told to say it was \$90 an hour. It was a woman and we drove to this place and it was weird 'cause someone else got in the car. It was a male...and they both participated. (466)

Yet in most cases where youth attributed their entry to CSEC markets to peers, the narratives were not so much about being "pressured" as they were about fascination and curiosity with what appeared to be an emerging "lifestyle." For example, a 17-year old white female from New York City who said that she started at age 14, described her surprise when she discovered what her friend was doing to earn money:

One of my best friends used to do it. When I was 14, I used to hang out with her all the time. Then, after like 3 months, I wondered how she would get her money, 'cause she didn't work or anything. So one day, she brought me with her to her friend's house. She always used to bring me with her, but she never showed me. She'd go into a room and come out, and we had pot to smoke and she'd have money and stuff. And she would be, like, her friend gave it to her. Then one day she was like, "Come in the room with me," and she wanted me to sit and watch. I felt really weird. So, I'm not on the bed, I'm in the corner on the chair, watching. And I was like, "Oh wow, this is what she does, how she gets her money. It all makes sense now." (316)

An 18-year old female runaway from Philadelphia also described her peer group as influential in her decision to enter the CSEC market, helping her to overcome her reluctance:

I was hangin' around a lot and ended up walkin' down 10th Street one day and ran into some friends who were doing it. And they told me it's not that bad, and so, that's how it happened. (030)

A 17-year old African-American transgender decided to tag along with some friends one night and said that she unexpectedly ended up working the stroll in Jamaica, Queens:

I went to stay over at one a my friend's house -- and it's like a bunch a fellas were there. And I saw everybody was getting drunk. And they said they goin' to work, so I thought they would go to a job. But then they got dressed and shit and we went to this spot. I had no idea where we were going until they told me. And...I started. This was on Roosevelt in Queens. They gave me a couple a tips, you know -- like, "Don't go with two guys in a car, make sure you always ask if it's a police officer, don't give your price out until you...do whatever." (5057)

Some youth stated that the *fast* money their friends were making by prostituting was too good of an opportunity to pass up, so they decided to follow suit, as described by an 18-year old transgender who said that he worked on the street and via craigslist.org (a website that contains personal ads):

Most a my friends that I knew did it. And most of my friends are male or transgender. And they were the one who were doing it. So, it was kind of like...it got to the point where I was seeing them walk around with designer handbags and new shoes and new phones every other week, and staying in hotels for weeks on end. And I was like, "Well, I wanna do that." So I went out and did it. (487)

An 18-year old Hispanic male from the Bronx who lived in a group home said that he started performing sex for money at age 16, and he cheerfully credited his peers with encouraging him to start:

I have a couple of gay friends. My gay friends, they used to hang out in the Village , on Christopher Street and 14th Street. They told me, "Oh my God, you could make so much money." I was in a group home and they told me, "Oh you don't have to be in a group home, you could support yourself." So I went out there and my first night I made like \$200. So I saw that it was easy money and it was quick and I really didn't have to do much. (649)

Initial Involvement in the Market

	Females (n=118)	Males (n=110)	Transgender (n=19)	Total (n=247)
Age of First Involvement				
9 years old	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%
10 years old	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
11 years old	0.8%	3.6%	0.0%	2.0%
12 years old	5.1%	6.4%	0.0%	5.3%
13 years old	8.5%	9.1%	5.3%	8.5%
14 years old	15.3%	13.6%	5.3%	13.8%
15 years old	25.4%	10.9%	15.8%	18.2%
16 years old	22.9%	27.3%	26.3%	25.1%
17 years old	16.1%	20.0%	36.8%	19.4%
18 years old	4.2%	8.2%	10.5%	6.5%
Don't Remember	0.8%	0.9%	0.0%	0.1%
Average Age	15.15 years	15.28 years	16.16 years	15.29 years

	Females (n=119)	Males (n=111)	Transgender (n=19)	Total (n=249)
How Youth Got Involved				
Friend	46.2%	44.1%	68.4%	47.0%
Customer Approached Me	16.2%	32.4%	10.5%	23.1%
Market Facilitator	16.2%	0.9%	0.0%	8.1%
Homeless	7.7%	2.7%	10.5%	5.7%
Internet	2.6%	3.6%	5.3%	3.2%
Relative	0.9%	2.7%	0.0%	1.6%
I Approached Customer	0.9%	2.7%	0.0%	1.6%
Bar	0.0%	2.7%	0.0%	1.2%
Party	2.6%	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%
Club	0.9%	0.9%	0.0%	0.8%
Escort Service	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%	0.4%
Other	6.0%	6.3%	5.3%	16.1%

Engaging the CSEC Market

How youth get customers

How youth find their customers often varies depending on how long they have been in “the life”, their access to the internet and cell phones, and the density and reach of their CSEC peer networks. For those who recently entered the market, allowing the customer to approach and proposition them (49%) appeared to be the most common route, followed by the youth approaching the customer (23%). At locales that were well-known prostitution strolls, these methods were often interchangeable, as described by a 17-year old white female from Queens:

They mostly approach me, but if you see the guy and you need the money, it’s just like you go up to somebody and say, “You know, you wanna take a walk?” And mostly they understand what you’re talking about, so you do what you have to do. (223)

One 18-year old Puerto Rican male said that he was panhandling in Midtown Manhattan when he was propositioned by a customer:

About a week ago, I was flying a sign, just tryin’ to panhandle in front of McDonalds on 42nd Street. And the guy came up to me, and he gave me some money. Then he started askin’ me questions. And he was real up front about it, you know? He said, “I’m just gonna ask you if... you know, I like to mess with guys. And, uh, you wouldn’t have to do anything. I would just do it to you, you know, and I’ll give you some money.” And he took me to a peepshow around the corner. (661)

A homeless 20-year old white male who claimed to be heterosexual said that he occasionally sought out gay men when he needed to find shelter for the night:

If I really, really need a place to stay, but I can’t find a place to stay, I’ll do anything I can to find a place to stay, ‘cause I hate staying on benches and in the streets. So sometimes, I’ll meet people on the streets or at bars, and if I see that they’re gay, then I’ll start talking to them. (160)

Other youth said that they frequented areas throughout the city that were known pick-up spots to meet customers. One 18-year old African American male described his strategy for getting picked up:

I hang out in the midtown area, so it’s like certain places where you hang out where people are willing to pick you up. So, the times I needed to get money, or stuff like that, I’d just hang around the areas. And other times, it’s just people come up to you when you’re not in the area. (537)

Another 18-year old African-American male who said that he frequented the same areas, described how his body language offered subtle yet clear signals to potential customers:

It’s just the way you standin’ there and the signals of your body language, they can tell if you’re selling or if your just standing there. They approach you in the car. (170)

Youth that were members of networks of CSEC youth sometimes described how their “friends” were instrumental in connecting them with customers, and 21% said that they got customers that way. For example, a 16-year old Puerto Rican female said that she followed the lead of one of her male network members: “In the beginning he [my friend] would just introduce me to people, and after that, I would just go where he used to go on St. Marks.”(495) A 17-year old African-American female who said that she lived with a “friend,” noted that, “My friend has a cell phone and people just call her, and she tells me. So, they call her and she sets up the appointments. She always goes with me.” (464)

The use of cell phones to build and maintain networks of peers and customers appeared to be prevalent among some youth, particularly those who worked in Manhattan. For example, a 19-year old female from Brooklyn described how she and her peers shared a cell phone for business in Manhattan:

Everybody has a cell phone. Like my friend had one cell phone that everybody used, and they [customers] would call and tell us where to meet them at in the City, like around where Covenant House is. And we’d go and meet ‘em, and do it. And then...get our money and go back, standin’ in front of Covenant House, waitin’ for the next call. (257)

Another African-American female, 18-years old, described the use of technology and peer networking to mediate their engagement with the CSEC market in Manhattan:

I use my cell phone and they...chirp me or call me. My friend has business cards. There are 20 of us and she gives the guys the card and they’ll call whoever’s number. She’ll write...whoever’s number. Everybody put in together towards the business cards that she...we all work together. (682)

CSEC online

To exercise greater control over how they engaged the CSEC market, some teens (23%) said that the internet was an increasingly popular option to meet customers, and 11% of the teen used the popular website, Craigslist, to meet prospective “dates.” Other sites that they identified, like Crushspot (“the premier community website for meeting new people online, for platonic and/or romantic relationships”), Eros (“Listings of female escorts, transsexuals, bdsm, massage and more in the USA, UK and Canada”), Adam4Adam (“Gay men chatting and dating website”), and Manhunt (“Show off your own profile. Check out hot guys from around the world. Hook up with the guy next door!”), were more focused and transparent in their purpose, but widely known, if not used, by young people. One 18-year old young woman described what appeared to be a growing trend among CSEC youth:

I use the computer a lot more frequently now. It’s a lot more convenient – and it’s a bit more promising – ‘cause I can discuss it over a computer with the person before actually following through with it. See, on the streets, it’s a lot harder, and sometimes you don’t really get your money. People would like to say they have this amount a money, and then next thing you know, all they give you is a \$5 bill. (5105)

Some teens said that they were active participants on a variety of internet sites. One 18-year old transgender female who moved to New York from New Orleans shortly after Hurricane Katrina, said that she was on several internet sites, including:

Shemalestokers, Shemalelovers, Eros, Sexyia, Bootytrannies. Some of them are free. Some of them are not. Like on Sexyia, and Eros, you have to pay to be on their lines. Craig's List is free. And Shemalestokers, what you have to do for them is, you have to come and take photos for them. They'll pay you \$500, maybe \$800, and, you know, they'll post your ad up. And you still get clients to call you up, whatever. So, it's cheap with them. (1008)

One 17-year old African American transgender would base her prices on how much money she spent on ads that month:

[I take out] newspaper and internet ads. A visiting ad costs \$500 and a temporary newspaper ad costs around \$200 and that is for a week. The most effective way to get customers is to personally interact with 'em, when they can see you. But this is more efficient, 'cause when they call you, they know what they're looking for. And they wouldn't call you unless they knew what they were looking for. (875)

Several teens said that their initial entry to the market was through the internet. One young man noted that:

The first time I actually had intercourse -- or copulated or whatever you wanna call it -- was by *accident*. And then I was like, "Well, this is *convenient*"... there's money involved. I had met someone over a chat-room on AOL -- America Online -- and then went to their house. And let's say they ended up paying me. It wasn't *much*, but I was like, "*Whoa!* I can *do* this." Craigslist has a posting -- you could do Craigslist -- or sometimes chat-rooms...chat lines on the phone.

Many teens said that there were a variety of benefits to working online as compared with other methods. For example, one young woman expressed a desire to control her working conditions and stated bluntly that, "I go online and look for specific people - nobody contacts me." (156) An 18-year old male, savvy about the deceptions that are common on the internet, described how it afforded him a degree of control in screening older male customers and in helping him to decide how much to charge:

When I meet 'em over the internet, some of them, when they send you their picture, they send you a false picture, so it's like...I have certain standards of what type of customer I deal with. I don't mess with thugs, you know? When we meet, I tell 'em, "let me know what you're gonna be wearing" -- and look at 'em and everything and see, hmm... yes, maybe or maybe no. Then, I decide how much I wanna charge them. (332)

Many of the teens recruited into the study said that they had formed fictional families on the street, and the internet provided opportunities for groups of youth to cooperate, as one youth described: "We usually work independently, or a couple of us will get together and post an ad on

the internet, and we'll split the money between us.”(487) Other teens emphasized the convenience of using the internet, a much more passive way of finding customers than other methods. For example, one 18-year old who was initiated into CSEC on the street at age 15, said that she now uses Craig's List exclusively: “I check the ads that the people already posted. And then, the guys will post an ad and...it's easier and I don't have to type anything.” (141) Still other teens talked about the anonymity and the ability to avoid being stigmatized that the internet offers. One of them commented that, “I ended up going on the internet because you don't get labeled as much. So, I ended up trying to build a clientele list with a gay population of older gay men.” (631) And compared with the dangers of working the streets and other venues (parties, clubs, etc.), some teens said the internet offered a degree of protection from law enforcement and other predators that street work did not provide. One young man commented on this advantage of using the web to find clients:

I go on Adam4Adam or Man4Now. I have a profile. I have my pictures, you know, showing my penis. If I don't feel threatened, then I give 'em my Instant Message screen name. And then we continue the conversation. I tell them I sell my time 'cause sex is part of the package. In the street it's too hot with the police. They try to arrest everybody. Frankly, I don't want to be in jail for doing that. (649)

One 17-year old male living in a shelter said that a friend showed him how to safely make money on the internet:

The internet was...*safer*...than actually goin' to a stroll or sumpin' like that. Its...its very busy... like ten emails at a time. You ask 'em for a number or sumpin' like dat; if they very hesitant about givin' a number, and you tell 'em to call you and they don't call you, that's a flunk right there, you know, they gone flake-out on you.” (363)

But not all youth endorsed the internet as a positive development, and of course, meeting customers via the internet comes with its own hazards, as one young woman attested:

About six times... I have been severely beaten with a knife, got a concussion, been slashed with razors. I got bit...two times. Most of the guys are really strong, and then they forced me to actually have more sex with them. That's happened to me many times. These are the guys I meet over the internet. (564)

Engaging the CSEC Market via Pimps and other “facilitators”

The research team had expected to find that many youths' participation in CSEC markets was mediated pimps or other adults who acted in this role, but even though a relatively low number of youth said that this was the case, girls were clearly more likely to have a pimp than boys or transgendered youth (14% vs. 3% vs. 0%, respectively). Yet one somewhat surprising finding early in the data collection process that led the researchers to slightly alter their questions about pimps, was that some youth that described an adult as enabling their entry to CSEC markets did not want to portray themselves as being manipulated by a pimp. Some youth seemed to portray pimps as “market facilitators” rather than exploiters of children, and when the researchers adopted this seemingly-neutral, market-oriented language to describe pimps, youth

seemed far more willing to discuss their relationships with them. For example, one 17-year old Asian female living with her family in Brooklyn believed that her *market facilitator* was looking out for her by only taking her to private parties until she turned 18:

I dance at private parties. I won't be able to work for the guy until he opens up his club next year. But I have to wait until I hit 18 to work for him. So, he'll take me to private parties until then. (5080)

Even though the majority of youth seemed loath to admit any reliance on pimps, some females were up front about it. For example, a 19-year old mixed race female that recently left her pimp and was residing in a shelter said that he had arranged her appointments with customers:

I was an "escort." They'd call and I had different names, like Fantasy, Unique... So, they used to call, I answer the phone, "King" would drop me off a block away. And he gave me a phone -- a bleep, bleep -- I bleep three times lettin' him know that I'm okay, and I got the money. And then when I leave, I let him know I'm done. I go downstairs, he meets me a block away, and I give him all my money. (1035)

Engaging the market via CSEC Peer Networks

CSEC peer groups were not only vital to youth's entry into the market, but also to their ability to engage the market and their decision to remain in "the life." Some of their networks were quite extensive, and over one quarter of the teens (27%) claimed to know 20 or more CSEC youth, an additional 20% of the youth said that they knew between 10 and 20 other CSEC youth. Almost three-quarters of the youth said that they knew females, while fewer youth said that they knew males (63%) or transgender youth (42%). In general, youth seemed to know more prostituted teens that were the same gender as themselves (e.g. females knew more sexually exploited females than males or transgenders, etc.).

There was a widespread ethos of among CSEC youth of helping each other out, even if they did not know each other very well, and this orientation extended into the market and beyond. Despite the competition that existed in the market, some youth said that they felt an obligation to help their peers find customers, as evident in the comments by one 18-year old male:

Sometimes, if you have a night where you have too many people and you might..see that the other person's really trying, and they haven't gotten anyone yet -- you'll send one to them. I have a thing about certain types of people that I deal with...I'm really not into black guys. So, sometimes, if I get a black guy, I'll send it to someone else who I know would do the job. (393)

An 18-year old Black female from Manhattan who said that she found customers over the internet echoed this sentiment:

We recommend customers to one another and help each other out. 'Cause we all in the same predicament, so why not...if I could look out, I'm gonna look out. (456)

Beyond helping find customers, peer groups were also important sources of emotional and financial support. For example, a 16-year old white homeless girl from California who said that she found her customers on the street, described how her peers pooled their money together so that everyone's needs were met:

The way we work is..if someone has money and no one else does, the one who has money buys food and everything. We normally never go out in more than like three or four, so we don't have to spend all of what we made. All my friends, we all make money, so there's never a time when none of us has nothing. (490)

Where youth go with their customers

The places where teens said that they went with customers were extremely varied and included cars, abandoned cars, friends' houses, project buildings, hallways, rooftops, clubs, bars, parties, movie theaters, McDonalds, empty buses, the Long Island Railroad, subway platforms, hotels (i.e., The Milford on 45th St., St. Marks Hotel, and the SoHotel), Central Park, Cloisters Park, Forest Hills Gardens, and many other locales. Over half of the youth (51%) said that they went to the customers' apartments and 45% said that they frequented hotels throughout the city. Of the youth who said that they mainly worked the streets, 26.5% provided sexual services in the customers' cars, often in a secluded spot. Yet, many youth appeared to be flexible in where they were willing to meet customers. One 20-year old female who started at age 13 noted that:

It depends what they ask for, if we have to do it in a hotel or we have to do it in a car. If they just want, like, oral sex, then we'll remain in the car, but if they wanna have sex then...I definitely wind up goin' to a hotel with them. (5111)

One location that was popular among men who had sex with boys was known as the "*buddy booths*." These booths were found on Manhattan's West Side, in the midtown area that had once been a center for the sex business, but that had, in recent years, been taken over by the likes of family-oriented entertainment businesses like Disney and Madame Taussaud's Wax Museum. Below, an 18-year old male from New York City describes his customers' preference for sex in the buddy booths:

The sex booths are located all over. Sometimes they come down here, or if I'm over there, they tell me to meet 'em there. It's usually at night...and they tell me to meet 'em there. So I meet 'em there at the booth or I would just meet 'em at their house or we would go to a sex booth on the West side. (169)

While the buddy booths were popular among customers, they did not provide youth with the degree of control over their environment that some of them sought. One young man said that, "I bring them back to my hotel room on 110th. They always come to my place so I can feel more safe." (878) Other teens that did not have the luxury of having their own place sought private spaces for meeting customers. For example, an 18-year old Native American from Long Island said that:

I do outcalls 'cause I don't have my own stable place, so I have to go to their place. So most a the time – 90 percent of the time – they ask me to come to their own home, unless in rare occasions, they're here on vacation and we go to a hotel or something like that. (393)

Another young man who worked for an older man, described the fears and precautions that he took before bringing strangers into his *facilitator's* apartment:

[The bodega owner] had an apartment above the shop. He would just give me his keys and I'd go up to his place. I get a beep, go into the store, and he gives me maybe a pack of cigarettes or something. I'll be pattin' the cigarettes outside the pack and the guy will come over and say, So you're my little boy today? Then I'd go with the guy. You never let them walk behind you--you always let them walk in front of you...if they wanna try some shit. (159)

A 15-year old black female from Brooklyn who started out stripping said that she would not go to a hotel for fear of not being able to escape should anything go awry:

I tried to do stripping, but I had a bad experience. Like these guys -- this group a guys -- tried to rape me doin' that, so...I laid-off from the stripping for a while, and just...just kept on prostituting. I never went to a hotel before-- ever since that experience about the strippin'. Because that's how I almost got raped. These guys, you know, they said, if you strip for us, we'll give you a thousand dollars. So I went and they tried to rape me, so I was like I will never go to a hotel with a guy again, I'll just stay in the car. (395)

Street Involvement

Only slightly more than half of the youth (56%) found customers on the streets, and this method was often coupled with trolling the internet or using a cell phone network to reach clients. One 18-year old black female from Manhattan described how she found customers on the street, but also posted an ad on the internet:

I work over in Queens Plaza, but I also post an ad, you know, just because it's talking. They call me on the phone and I got a voice recording. I'm a let you know over the phone, 'cause I don't like to waste my time. (456)

Some youth, however, worked the same area almost every night of the week. For example, an 18-year old African-American male who started at age 13, said that his usual spot was "underneath the bridge on 161 and Yankee Stadium." (780) An 18-year old Latina from Manhattan said that she stood "in front a peep shows and things like that - over on 47th street." (878)

The Tracks

By working the same areas (aka the "tracks") every week, youth are able to forge alliances and friendships with other exploited youth, and establish mentorships with the older,

more seasoned sex workers. Of the 139 youth who said that they worked on the streets, 38 (16%) said that they always worked the tracks and 51 (21%) sometimes worked the tracks. The tracks (aka 'strolls') are specific streets or corners known for prostitution. The teens tended to work the same areas night after night, and were often reluctant to try different tracks due to concerns about their safety. A number of the youth said that sex workers become territorial after working a specific stroll and typically contest any "new blood" that encroaches on their terrain. The older sex workers will often resort to violence (e.g. assault, theft, rape) to drive out anybody they do not want working in the area.

The youth named a number of different and specific tracks throughout the city. The West Village was the most popular (14.5%), followed by Hunt's Point (8%) and Port Authority (5%). Other areas mentioned are as follows (listed by borough):

Manhattan: Hell's Kitchen, Murray Hill, Central Park, Chelsea, Washington Heights - around 190th St., 42nd St., Greenwich Village on the West side, the piers in the West Village, the East Village, Alphabet City by the East River, 125th St. from 1st Ave. to Amsterdam Ave., 155th St., 45th & 10th Avenue, 43rd to 51st St. between 9th and 11th Avenue, between 43rd & 48th St. and 10th Avenue, 41st and 8th Ave and 43rd and 10th Ave., 26th St. & First Avenue, St. Marks St., 57th & Broadway, 11th Avenue, 14th St. or 16th St. to the West side, Christopher and 4th, Eighth St. & Tenth St. by the river, 14th & 9th.

Bronx: Hunts Pt., Southern Blvd. and 161st by Yankee Stadium, Van Cortlandt Park on 242nd St., Gun Hill Rd., Jerome Ave., Fordham Rd., Bainbridge St., Kingsbridge Rd., Westchester Ave., Southern Blvd., White Plains Rd.

Queens: Rockaway Blvd. and Conduit; Jamaica Ave.; Main St., Flushing; Queens Plaza and Sutphin Blvd.; Whitestone; Roosevelt Ave.; Astoria; Queensbridge.

Brooklyn: Atlantic & Bedford Aves.; Coney Island, East New York, and Dekalb and Knickerbocker Aves.

	Females (n=119)	Males (n=111)	Transgender (n=19)	Total (n=249)
What Youth Trades Sex For*				
Money	93.3%	96.4%	100.0%	95.2%
Drugs	12.6%	5.4%	10.5%	9.2%
Shelter	10.9%	7.2%	0.0%	8.4%
Food	1.7%	3.6%	0.0%	2.4%
Other	0.8%	0.9%	0.0%	0.8%

	Females (n=119)	Males (n=111)	Transgender (n=19)	Total (n=249)
How Youth Gets the Customers*				
Customer Approaches Me	41.2%	50.5%	84.2%	48.6%
I Approach the Customer	21.0%	23.4%	31.6%	22.9%
Friends	27.7%	16.2%	5.3%	20.9%
Internet	14.3%	16.2%	52.6%	18.2%
Referral	20.2%	14.4%	0.0%	16.1%
Market Facilitator	14.3%	6.3%	0.0%	9.6%
Club	6.7%	2.7%	15.8%	5.6%
Escort Service	3.4%	0.9%	5.3%	2.4%
Other	11.8%	8.1%	21.1%	10.8%

	Females (n=110)	Males (n=100)	Transgender (n=19)	Total (n=229)
Where Youth Go W/ Customers*				
Customer's Apartment	50.4%	52.3%	47.4%	51.0%
Hotel	36.0%	49.6%	73.7%	45.4%
Car	27.7%	19.8%	57.9%	26.5%
Alley	13.4%	16.2%	31.6%	16.1%
Motel	9.2%	9.9%	5.3%	9.2%
Park	7.6%	9.0%	21.1%	9.2%
Buddy Booth	0.0%	9.0%	5.3%	4.4%
Public Restroom	4.2%	3.6%	0.0%	3.6%
Youth's Apartment	1.7%	3.6%	10.5%	3.2%
Abandoned Building	0.8%	2.7%	0.0%	1.6%
Other	13.4%	9.0%	10.5%	11.2%

	Females (n=111)	Males (n=102)	Transgender (n=18)	Total (n=231)
When Youth Last Worked				
Today	2.0%	6.7%	0.0%	3.9%
Yesterday	14.0%	13.5%	25.0%	14.6%
Within the Last Week	45.0%	48.3%	56.2%	47.3%
Within the Last Month	19.0%	18.0%	6.2%	17.6%
Within the Last Six Months	11.0%	6.7%	12.5%	9.3%
Other	8.0%	5.6%	0.0%	6.3%
Don't Remember	1.0%	1.1%	0.0%	1.0%

*Youth chose more than one answer

Internet Use

	Females (n=114)	Males (n=106)	Transgender (n=19)	Total (n=239)
Find Customers on Internet				
Yes	19.3%	20.8%	52.6%	22.6%
No	80.7%	79.2%	47.4%	77.4%

	Females (n=115)	Males (n=105)	Transgender (n=18)	Total (n=238)
Internet Sites Used*				
Craig's List	7.6%	9.9%	36.8%	10.8%
Chat Rooms	3.4%	4.5%	10.5%	4.4%
MySpace	4.2%	1.8%	5.3%	3.2%
Black Planet	2.5%	0.9%	0.0%	1.6%
AOL	0.8%	1.8%	0.0%	1.2%
Transgender Specific Sites	0.0%	0.0%	15.8%	1.2%
Rent Boy	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%	0.9%
Other	5.0%	9.9%	26.3%	8.4%
None	77.3%	74.8%	47.4%	73.9%

*Youth chose more than one answer

Youth Social Network

	Females (n=112)	Males (n=107)	Transgender (n=19)	Total (n=238)
# In Network Who do Sex Work				
0	0.9%	3.7%	0.0%	2.1%
1	4.5%	0.9%	0.0%	2.5%
2	8.0%	3.7%	5.3%	5.9%
3	5.4%	4.7%	10.5%	5.5%
4	8.9%	4.7%	10.5%	7.1%
5	12.5%	11.2%	0.0%	10.9%
6	7.1%	11.2%	5.3%	8.8%
7	5.4%	3.7%	5.3%	4.6%
8	3.6%	4.7%	0.0%	3.8%
9	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%
10-20	19.6%	19.6%	21.1%	19.7%
20+	21.4%	30.8%	42.1%	27.3%
Don't Know	0.9%	0.9%	0.0%	0.8%

	Females (n=108)	Males (n=95)	Transgender (n=19)	Total (n=222)
Social Network Gender*				
Female	84.9%	63.1%	31.6%	71.1%
Male	50.4%	78.4%	52.6%	63.1%
Transgender	37.8%	37.8%	89.5%	41.8%
Don't know	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	0.8%

	Females (n=88)	Males (n=66)	Transgender (n=19)	Total (n=173)
How Network Gets Customers*				
Streets	47.9%	48.6%	100.0%	52.2%
Market Facilitator	21.0%	9.9%	0.0%	14.5%
Internet	11.8%	9.9%	52.6%	14.1%
Referral	15.1%	6.3%	5.3%	10.4%
Club	5.0%	0.9%	5.3%	3.2%
Escort Service	2.5%	0.9%	5.3%	2.0%
Other	5.9%	3.6%	5.3%	4.8%
Don't know	2.5%	2.7%	0.0%	2.4%

*Youth chose more than one answer

Street Involvement

	Females (n=119)	Males (n=111)	Transgender (n=19)	Total (n=249)
Youth Currently Works Streets				
Yes	47.5%	61.3%	78.9%	56.0%
No	52.5%	38.7%	21.1%	44.0%

	Females (n=119)	Males (n=111)	Transgender (n=19)	Total (n=249)
Youth Works the Tracks				
Yes - Always	12.8%	15.7%	31.6%	15.6%
Yes - Sometimes	16.2%	20.4%	52.6%	20.9%
No	70.9%	63.9%	15.8%	63.5%

	Females (n=116)	Males (n=106)	Transgender (n=19)	Total (n=241)
Tracks Worked*				
West Village, Manhattan	2.5%	18.0%	68.4%	14.5%
Hunt's Point, Bronx	8.4%	7.2%	5.3%	7.6%
Port Authority, Manhattan	4.2%	5.4%	10.5%	5.2%
Hell's Kitchen, Manhattan	4.2%	1.8%	0.0%	2.8%
Flushing, Queens	3.4%	0.0%	5.3%	2.0%
East Harlem, Manhattan	1.7%	1.8%	0.0%	1.6%
Jamaica, Queens	0.8%	0.0%	10.5%	1.2%
Crown Heights, Brooklyn	0.8%	0.9%	0.0%	0.8%
Other	9.2%	5.4%	21.1%	8.0%
None	69.7%	62.2%	15.8%	62.2%

*Youth chose more than one answer

Money Earned & Spent

The principal motivating factor for entering and remaining in the CSEC market was economic necessity according to the majority of the youth in the sample, and 95% of them said that they exchanged sex for money. Far fewer youth said that they exchanged sex for other things like shelter (8%), drugs (9%), or food and items such as clothing or electronic goods (3%). These findings are similar to those reported in other research (Thukral & Ditmore, 2003; Dalla, 2000; Murphy & Venkatesh, 2006; Bagley & Young, 1987; Silbert & Pines, 1982; Weisberg, 1985; West, 1993) and to a recent study of CSEC in New York State (Gragg, et al., 2007)²⁶ where 80% of the youth said that they exchanged sex for money, 23% for shelter, 3% for drugs and 14% for food or clothing.

Prices Charged

The prices that youth said that they charged their customers varied considerably. Of course, different sex acts can be expected to command different prices, but some youth provided the researchers with extraordinarily high estimates of their earnings, sometimes in excess of \$1,000 per night. Yet many youth were far more modest in estimating their earnings, and their narratives conformed more closely to what has been reported in other studies of CSEC and sex work performed by adults (Thukral & Ditmore, 2003; Murphy & Venkatesh, 2006)²⁷. The youth said that what they charged customers often depended on several factors besides the duration and the type of sex that was requested, including the outward appearance of the customer, the cost of posting an ad online, and drug consumption needs. Some of the youth charged by hour, whereas others charged per service. Over 50% of the youth surveyed made under \$300 a night, but over 8% (n=9) of girls and 5% (n=6) of boys claimed to make over \$1000 per night. When speaking about what prices they charged, the teens were quite explicit and many said that they were not willing to negotiate. For example, one 18-yr old mixed-race female who said that she started at age 14, was firm about her pricing:

If it's in a hotel, they gotta pay for it. I make the...uh, like a discount. So, basically, I charge them \$250, so I be tellin' 'em to give me \$125. So, it's not negotiable. Now, if it's to their house, they have to pay me \$500, because it's goin' to their place. (1001)

Like most of the youth, a 17-year old Latina who said that she started at age 11, charged customers by the hour and by the type of sex:

²⁶ Thukral, J. & Ditmore, M. (2003). *Revolving door: An analysis of street-based prostitution in New York City*. The Sex Workers Project at the Urban Justice Center; Dalla, R.L. (2001, November). "Et Tu Brute? A qualitative analysis of streetwalking prostitutes' interpersonal support networks." *Journal of Family Issues*, 22(8), 1066-1085; Murphy, A. & Venkatesh, S.A. (2006, June). *Vice careers: The changing contours of sex work in New York City*. In Publication; Bagley, C. & Young, L. (1987). "Juvenile prostitution and child sexual abuse: A controlled study." *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health*, 6(1), 5-26; Silbert, M.H. & Pines, A.M. (1982). "Entrance into prostitution." *Youth & Society*, 13(4), 471-500; Weisberg, D.K. (1985). *Children of the night*. Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books; West, D.J. (1993). *Male prostitution*. New York: Harrington Park Press; Gragg, F, Petta, I., Bernstein, H., Eisen, K. & Quinn, L. (2007, April 18). *New York prevalence study of commercially sexually exploited children*. Rockville, Maryland: WESTAT.

²⁷ Ibidem

For head I charge \$50. To fuck, I charge \$150. And for everything, it's runnin' \$200. For three hours, I am chargin' \$300-\$400. For a half hour, I'm chargin' anywhere between like a hundred...or \$90. (620)

A 16-year old male from California was explicit about his pricing scheme, including his rationale for why prices were sometimes elevated:

A blow job is \$50. If you want the whole package, it's \$100. It depends on how far you wanna go -- or whether or not we go to your place or a hotel -- we work out the logistics. Say you want full penetration -- you're fucking me, and we're in a hotel -- it's \$200...for the simple fact that you're causing me pain and agony, so I'm gonna make money. (490)

Other youth were willing to negotiate their prices depending on whether or not the customer was attractive or appeared to have a lot of money; how desperate the youth was for money, and if the client was a regular or not. An 18-year old transgender who had been in the CSEC market for more than a year described what seemed to be a sliding scale:

I usually go \$150 per hour. Then there have been times when I've settled for less. Like \$100 or \$75, depending on if he's cute -- if I like him -- depending on how needy I was. There was times when I pushed for more and get maybe \$250 or \$300. So, it's negotiable. (1009)

An 18-year old Latino male from the Bronx who had participated in the market for more than two years described what seemed to be a complex, yet well-rehearsed and detailed pricing plan:

Depends on what they want. If they wanna do oral on me, I want \$50. I don't care how long you wanna go. If you want sex, then I want maybe like a \$100, \$150. If I have to go to you, and you want sex, then I want \$150. If they come to me, and they're a regular, then I can bring it down to maybe like \$100. If it's a new person, \$150. If you wanna spend three or four hours with me, then I bring it up to \$300-\$400. (649)

One 18-year old Dominican female from Pennsylvania increased or decreased her prices on whether or not she felt *comfortable* with a customer:

Ninety dollars if they wanna watch me and somebody else or for a strip tease. [I charge] \$200-\$300 for sex. It depends on the people. Some people are..the way I feel...it's more if I'm comfortable with them, that I charge them. If I'm not comfortable, I charge 'em a little bit more. If I'm comfortable, I charge 'em a regular price. (5032)

Some of the teens described a list of services that they refused to provide. One 17-year old mother from Brooklyn said that she thinks of her daughter when setting her boundaries with customers:

I refuse to do oral sex – I’m not trying to do that and then go home and kiss my daughter. I do anal and vaginal sex. The lowest I’ll do it for is probably a buck thirty. (359)

Another 17-year old transgender, who had recently entered the market, refused any penetration:

I don’t do no penetration whatsoever. So sometimes, you get a lotta turndowns because the guys might want penetration. Oral sex is \$40. If you want oral sex on both parts, that’s \$60. If you get into hours its \$100 an hour. (504)

For those teens who advertised their services on the internet, their prices were often dependent on whether or not they paid for the ad, as one transgender youth explained:

For the ones [internet ads] that I have to pay, my rates are this: all the ones that you don’t have to pay to put up (like Craig’s List), I may charge \$150 an hour, \$200 for an hour and a half. For my real expensive ads, you’re getting’ the best deal out of it, so I’m gonna charge you like a lot. If I’m on these expensive ones, I’m chargin’ you like \$300-sumpin’ an hour. (1008)

In echoing this pricing strategy, a 17-year old transgender youth from Brooklyn suggests the degree to which information about the market is shared by both the youth and their customers:

There are two prices. There’s one price which is a higher price, the type that you have to pay for the ad, so I charge more. And then there’s the free ads. If they find me on the free ad, I would probably charge like a hundred for the hour, \$75 for half hour. But on the expensive side, I would charge \$250 for the hour. (875)

Money Shared

Many youth said that they shared money with others, and in most cases, their motives for sharing were clear. Among those they shared with were included: mother, sister, brother, daughter, cousin, fictional family, girlfriend, and street kids. The money the youth shared with their family (6.4%) was used to help pay rent, bills, food, and some of the boys mentioned child support. One 18-year old white male from Westchester who was living in a shelter helped his fellow homeless friends: “I do share my money, because my homeless friends, I buy them food, I buy them clothes, if they need it. I’m not greedy when it comes to my money.” (483) Another 17-year old black girl, who started at 15, would willingly share some of the money she earned with the friends who introduced her to the client: “I didn’t have to but I would give [my friends who introduced me to other friends] money. Since, I mean, they provided me the customer and I’d sometimes stay at their house, so...” (502)

Main Expenses

What the youth cited as main expenses ranged from everyday essentials, such as food, shelter, and hygienic products, to what others might consider luxuries such as sexy lingerie, music, movies and electronics. More than half (53%) said that they spent their money on food, followed by drugs (42%), including cigarettes, weed, cocaine, heroin, ecstasy, and crack. New clothing was considered an *essential* by 37% of the youth; many said that they needed to keep up appearances and maintain a certain image among their peers. Other expenses included: hotel rooms, washing clothes, cleaning supplies, furniture, transportation, dog food, piercings, tattoos, contraceptives and lubricant, hormones, books, and jewelry.

Other Source of Income

Because the youth were 18 or below, the researchers did not anticipate that many of them had a great deal of experience with legitimate forms of work. As one 15-year old African-American female put it:

‘Cause I’m so young. this is all I know since growing up. So, it’s like...I don’t know how to do anything -- and I dropped outta school, so no job is gonna wanna take me. This is the only way I can make money...that I know of. (395)

And yet, 38 youth said that they had other sources of income besides participating in CSEC markets, including panhandling (n=22, 9%) and dealing drugs (n=12, 5%). Despite the difficulties in finding employment, many youth said that they were actively “looking for a job” and that they did not like what they were doing to earn money. Surprisingly, the list of jobs that they said that they had performed or where they were currently employed, was quite lengthy, and included: household chores, babysitting, odd jobs, passing out fliers, selling fake watches, selling fake cigarettes, a fast food restaurant employee, odd jobs at a pizza shop, airbrushing sneakers and jerseys, helping at a suicide helpline, setting up lights at clubs, a waiter, construction work on occasion, restaurant clean up, apprentice tattooer, pedicab driver, tutoring, home aide attendant, cleaning a store, barber shop, warehouse, welder, outreach for a drop-in center, copping for people, massages on the street, braiding hair, selling bracelets in the park, and selling prescription medication like Ritalin.

Money Earned and Spent

Range of Money Made Per Night	Females (n=106)	Males (n=103)	Transgender (n=17)	Total (n=226)
Under \$50	0.9%	2.9%	0.0%	1.8%
\$50-\$100	8.5%	19.4%	5.9%	13.3%
\$100-\$150	12.3%	8.7%	17.6%	11.1%
\$150-\$200	14.2%	15.5%	11.8%	14.6%
\$200-\$300	18.9%	22.3%	0.0%	19.0%
\$300-\$400	10.4%	9.7%	5.9%	9.7%
\$400-\$500	6.6%	6.8%	23.5%	8.0%
\$500-\$1000	9.4%	4.9%	23.5%	8.4%
Over \$1000	8.5%	5.8%	5.9%	7.1%

Youth Shares Money Earned	Females (n=110)	Males (n=98)	Transgender (n=17)	Total (n=225)
Yes	45.5%	36.7%	5.9%	38.7%
No	54.5%	63.3%	94.1%	61.3%

Who Youth Shares Money With	Females (n=111)	Males (n=101)	Transgender (n=17)	Total (n=229)
Friend(s)	11.8%	16.2%	0.0%	12.9%
Market Facilitator	18.5%	6.3%	0.0%	11.6%
Family	7.6%	5.4%	5.3%	6.4%
Partner	0.0%	5.4%	0.0%	2.4%
Other	5.0%	1.8%	0.0%	3.2%
No One	56.8%	50.4%	84.2%	55.8%

Youth Has Other Income	Females (n=103)	Males (n=95)	Transgender (n=18)	Total (n=216)
Yes	32.0%	43.2%	22.2%	36.1%
No	68.0%	56.8%	77.8%	63.9%

Other Source(s) of Income*	Females (n=104)	Males (n=95)	Transgender (n=18)	Total (n=216)
Panhandling	5.0%	13.5%	5.3%	8.8%
Legitimate Job	5.0%	9.9%	5.3%	7.2%
Welfare	6.7%	2.7%	10.5%	5.2%
Dealing Drugs	4.2%	6.3%	0.0%	4.8%
Dependent	4.2%	2.7%	5.3%	3.6%
Theft	0.8%	1.8%	0.0%	1.2%
Other Illegitimate Job	0.0%	1.9%	0.0%	0.4%
Other	3.4%	5.4%	0.0%	4.0%
None	58.8%	48.6%	73.7%	55.4%

Main Expenses*	Females (n=114)	Males (n=109)	Transgender (n=19)	Total (n=242)
Food	49.6%	60.4%	36.8%	53.4%
Drugs	31.9%	55.0%	26.3%	41.8%
Clothing	37.8%	31.5%	57.9%	36.5%
Cell Phone	21.0%	23.4%	26.3%	22.5%
Rent	14.3%	11.7%	26.3%	14.1%
Beauty Products	10.9%	4.5%	42.1%	10.4%
Alcohol	5.0%	12.6%	0.0%	8.0%
Transportation	6.7%	5.4%	5.3%	6.0%
Debt	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%
Other	36.1%	28.8%	52.6%	34.1%

*Youth chose more than one answer

Pimps and other market facilitators

When the research team prepared for conducting this study, pimps were believed to be important, indeed, dominant actors in CSEC markets. As such, the team took special precautions to compensate for the potentially disruptive impact that pimps might have on our ability to recruit and interview sexually exploited children (see methods section, above). While the project did not experience any problems in recruiting a sample of youth who were engaged in CSEC activities, it seems likely that pimped youth – especially girls – were more difficult to recruit than others, and as described previously, the project made extra efforts to include them in the sample. By the end of data collection phase, the project had recruited 41 youth who were currently working for pimps or what we referred to as *market facilitators* when talking with the youth; 31 were girls and 10 were boys. Yet it seemed clear that youth knew pimps more than they worked for them: when asked if they knew any pimps (other than their own) half of those who responded to that question (n=44) said “yes” and half said “no.” But their responses about knowing other pimps varied by gender: 68% of those who said that they knew other pimps were girls, only 30% were boys.

While pimps were not the dominant actors in CSEC markets in New York City, they clearly dominated those youth who found themselves working for one or more of them. The majority of the 41 youth who said that they currently had pimps, said that they were male (n=37, 90%), but somewhat surprisingly, 4 youth said that they had female pimps or market facilitators. More than half of the youth with a pimp (n=21) said that they met him/her “through a friend;” the most frequently mention other categories were “on the street” (n=8) and “at a group home” (n=5, all girls). Others said that they met pimps on the internet, at private parties, and at youth shelters (especially, Covenant House, in Manhattan). Several of the youth said that they or another youth were the only ones working for their pimp, but 31 of the 41 said that their pimp had more than 2 other youth working for them.

Positive and negative aspects of market facilitators

Positive aspects of market facilitators

The youth were not uniform in their describing pimps as violent exploiters of children. Indeed, several of them spoke somewhat fondly about their pimps or *market facilitators*, and portrayed them as protectors or father figures. While it is tempting to offer explanations for why this might be the case, as others have, in this report, we have simply reported what the youth told the researchers when asked about their pimps. Though we remain acutely aware of the spin provided to some of the narratives that praise pimps or seem to exonerate them for what they did/do, these accounts provide further insight into the evolving attitudes and orientations toward pimps that exist among sexually exploited youth. For example, a 17-year old white male from Maryland who said that he started at age 16 was respectful in describing his pimp:

He is in his mid-twenties and always dresses in blazers and dressy clothes. He’s Hispanic. We both realize it’s just business. We both have a kind of respect for each other so he won’t try to violate me. I know that. And there’s a lot of people out there he will, so there’s no point for me to leave. (126)

An 18 year old female of Haitian ancestry from the Bronx, in describing her pimp, said:

He is Jamaican and 40 yrs old. He contacts the clients for me. Sometimes, when I don't wanna do some kinda things, he understands and just gimme the money. So, it's like a father to me, just in a different kind of way. (534)

A 19-year old bi-sexual male, who started at 17, said that he relied on his *market facilitator* for day-to-day survival, even if he seemed to be on a rather short leash:

He doesn't give me shelter or food. But I'm getting his respect, so I don't do it wrong. I don't try and do him wrong or anything. But if I do it without him, I got myself thinkin' that I won't be able to survive in the street. He gives me a walkie-talkie or a cell phone and he'll call me, and I gotta stay close to talk to him. And once he calls me, I gotta go back. (694)

Several teens mentioned that, although they gave all their earnings to their pimp, they felt that they had their needs taken care of and that the business was organized. An 18-year old Puerto Rican male who said that he started at age 16 was typical in that regard:

He buys me clothes and if I need something, he gives it to me. I been with him for 6 months. It's just easier than just going and just bein' in the streets for hours – waitin' for one customer to come out. He goes with me to each date and collects the money beforehand. (985)

A 17-year old female who said that she worked on Main St. in Queens, beginning at 14, talked about shopping sprees with her pimp:

So, it's like, he'll buy outfits for us and stuff like that. We can't keep our own money, but he'll take us out shopping, you know, buy us our shoes. And we wear wigs, and makeup and stuff like that. (5053)

“Friends” were also described as occasionally acting in pimp or *market facilitator* roles, and many youth said that they typically did not ask for a percentage of the earnings. For example, an 18-year old Black/Puerto Rican male from the Bronx who said that he started at age 16, has a female *market facilitator*. According to him, “She has her own business and has at least 5 or more people working for her. (129) Another 18-year old male who said that he started at age 15, has another male who arranges his appointments:

He asks the customers if they would like color or somebody caucasian. He'll tell them to meet him at a certain place and they meet up, they'll talk. He'll tell 'em how much cash due on arrival. (271)

An 18-year old Latina from Brooklyn said that male sex worker that she knows also arranges *dates* for her and other females:

He does it too, but he'll set me up with some clients that want a certain kinda female. Like if they want a Black female, or if they want a big girl or a skinnier type. (389)

Negative aspects of market facilitators

Most of the youth who said that they had a pimp did not have good things to say about their experiences with him/her. Some youth, it seemed, had been with their pimp for so long that they were resigned to working for him, as was evident in the case of a 17-year old Hispanic female who said that she had started at age 11 and was exploited by her mother's ex-boyfriend:

He is Black and 43 yrs old. I don't think too much about him, I just go get the money and then I try and stay away from him after that. Some days we get along, some days we don't. I've tried to leave him, but he always finds me. (620)

A similar account of being with her pimp for an extended period of time was provided by a 17-year old Puerto Rican girl who said that she had recently been put into protective custody to testify against him: "He takes whatever money he wants; he doesn't protect me and gives me drugs. I met him with my mom when I was 14. I basically grew up with him. (1045) A 16-year old Italian male from Brooklyn who said that he had been in the business "for about 5 years," described a female sex worker that he knew:

I know one girl who has a pimp. He's a very mean guy. He doesn't give her any money, he kinda like trapped her, you know, she's just been there with him for so long. Something like 15 years or something. (717)

Other youth said that they had not been with their pimps for very long, but they noted that their relationship had started out quite different at first. For example, a 17-year old African American female was surprised at how quickly her relationship with her new "boyfriend" changed:

I met him... I was over a friend's house -- and she called him over -- that's how I met him. First month or two, we was great. And then...third month, that's when things started to change. He didn't just flip, he did a fuckin' 360. (397)

A 14-year old mixed race girl from Hunt's Point said that she was kidnapped by her friend's ex-boyfriend, who subsequently tried to pimp her out:

He was about 24 or 25. He taught me the rules: that all I have to do is just walk back and forth -- and not to do the business on the block -- like go around the corner, get in the car, and charge the guys. Like in order for them to have sex with me, it'd be like \$90, sumpin' like that. So, I was about to go home and go to a regular job like packin' bags or sumpin' like that -- so he got mad. And that's when he started that whole thing about puttin' the gun to my head, and stuff like that. But I didn't get scared this time since I knew he wasn't gonna do it. (5120)

Reflections on past experiences with market facilitators

Even though only a small proportion of the youth in the sample said that they currently had pimps, several youth said that they had one at one time or another, but that they had learned the hard way that they needed to break away. For example, a 17-year old mixed-race female who said that she started at age 12, said that she had a pimp at one time, but that she quickly realized that he could not protect her:

I used to, for a year, when I was younger. I gave him everything. He talked a good game to me and me, being a jackass, I fell for it. He had other girls, 13-year olds, working for him, but I didn't have a relationship with them since I didn't trust 'em. Also, when you're with somebody or you're solo -- they can't protect you when you're in that car, or when you're in that hotel room. Why? 'Cause they ain't there. (427)

A 17-year old Black female from Brooklyn, who said that she started at age 13, said that she had worked for several pimps, but stopped working for them after giving birth to a daughter:

I was off and on with my first pimp. Within the two years I was livin' with him, I was goin' to see other pimps, which was very wrong and dangerous. I was what they call it in the streets, a Choosey-Susie. It's a person that just..."Oh, you're my daddy." And like, "You're my daddy." Like, you're all over the place, lookin' for a daddy. I was tryin' to see, like...does every pimp do what he do to me? And like, if there is a better pimp out there, let me choose it, you know what I mean? (5114)

One of the primary reasons why youth said that they left their pimp was because they were not allowed to spend the money that they earned, as explained by an 18-year old white male who was working the buddy booths in midtown Manhattan:

I used to have [a pimp]. Basically they ask you for 20% and then they change it. And then they want 50%, and then 75%, and then they wanna try and take all your money. Then when you try to leave them, they try to find you, beat the shit outta you, try to kill you. That's why I had to leave Yonkers. (483)

An 18-year old black female from Brooklyn who once had a pimp, described the demeaning clashes that she had with her pimp over money, and his concern that she was withholding earnings from him:

I'd rather have my \$23 allowance [from the group home] than, you know, have somebody takin' everything I own. And it was like jail: pat you down, you know, make sure you're not stashin' any money on you, make you strip, embarrass you outside. It was just like I was already in jail. I can't go outside on my own. And the girls that I was with, was my only friends. That's who you're allowed to talk to, unless we were recruiting other girls. (360)

Of course, pimps are legendary for their violence and brutality, and many of the youth had stories to tell about their experiences in this regard. For example, one 18-year old Black

female from Queens who said that she started when she was 15, witnessed horrific abuse against the other girls who worked under her pimp:

We all shared a room. Two of the girls in our house...one does coke and the other one is a heroin-crack user. Like, a lotta her dates she goes on, she gets beat because...she's like ten, twenty dollars for this, so that she could get that next high. He beat on the 15 year old...he hit her like she was a man. She's short and small -- so it's like when he hit her, it dropped her the first time. But he didn't stop hittin' her, he just constantly was beatin' her. She was like, "Daddy, I don't wanna go...on the stroll, I don't wanna be on the stroll. I wanna be in a club -- with the rest of the girls -- I can't be out there because I keep getting' arrested. Police keep stoppin' me." He was like, "You gonna go wherever the fuck I tell you to go." And he hit her. My first reaction was to stop him. But I knew if I interfered with that, it was just gonna make the situation worse for me. So my plan was already in motion, and I'm like, "I gotta get outta here." So I left with what I had on my back. (360)

An 18-year old Black female from Brooklyn who had a pimp, told the researchers about the abuse that she and other girls suffered at the hands of her pimp, and her determination to get away from him:

The pimp I was with severely beat one a the girls that worked for him last night. And it just opened my eyes to a lotta things. First, me bein' young, and I have more opportunities than what I'm goin' through right now. So it's like... I had to get out the situation...immediately -- before I be in danger -- and, it's like, death is not a joke. So, I'd just rather, you know, get out. It's extremely hard to get out. It's like a lotta girls, the whole mindset be trapped because they have no assistance. If I leave this person, am I gonna be able to get housin', am I gonna be able to eat, will I have clothes on my back? The 15 year old [subject's 'sister-n-law']... she lived on his block. So, when her father was raisin' her, her father passed away, and he told her that he would take care a her. But he just ruinin' her -- every day -- and beatin' up her self-esteem. She don't even think that she's pretty...unless she has all that gook on her face, and little skimpy outfits, that's the only way she thinks she's pretty. And she's like, "Well, he's the only father I know." And I'm like, "He's not a father figure. He's not. He's the worst man." (360)

Market Facilitation

	Females (n=119)	Males (n=111)	Transgender (n=19)	Total (n=249)
Youth Has Market Facilitator				
Yes	26.1%	9.1%	0.0%	16.5%
No	73.4%	91.0%	100.0%	83.5%

	Females (n=119)	Males (n=111)	Transgender (n=19)	Total (n=249)
Market Facilitator's Gender				
Male	23.5%	8.1%	0.0%	14.9%
Female	2.5%	0.9%	0.0%	1.6%
No MF	73.9%	91.0%	0.0%	83.5%

	Females (n=119)	Males (n=111)	Transgender (n=19)	Total (n=249)
How Youth Met the MF				
Friend	12.0%	6.3%	0.0%	8.5%
Street(s)	6.0%	0.9%	0.0%	3.2%
Group Home	6.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.2%
Family Member	0.9%	0.9%	0.0%	0.8%
Other	2.6%	0.9%	0.0%	1.6%
No MF	74.4%	91.0%	100.0%	83.8%

	Females (n=95)	Males (n=85)	Transgender (n=19)	Total (n=174)
How Many Others Work for MF				
0	5.3%	1.2%	0.0%	3.0%
1	4.2%	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%
2	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%
3	4.2%	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%
4	3.2%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%
5	2.1%	2.4%	0.0%	2.0%
6	1.1%	1.2%	0.0%	1.0%
Don't Know/No MF	77.9%	95.3%	100.0%	87.4%

	Females (n=49)	Males (n=41)	Transgender (n=3)	Total (n=93)
Does Youth Know Other MFs				
Yes	61.2%	31.7%	33.3%	47.3%
No	34.7%	61.0%	66.7%	47.3%
Don't know	4.1%	7.3%	0.0%	5.4%

Customers

When asked if the youth target specific types of customers, 65% of them said that they served white males, and an overwhelming majority stated that they preferred older white males, particularly ones who appeared to have a lot of money. The youth estimated that approximately 30% of the clients were married and 13% were married with children. There did not appear to be a majority of clients that were in any specific age range, but most fell between 25 and 55 years of age. The youths' preference was clearly expressed by one 18-year old homeless Hispanic female, who said that, "I come into Manhattan a lot 'cause there's more money. These white guys make mad money and they're bored with their women." (164) An additional benefit, according to an 18-year old male who said that he worked strictly on the internet, was that white married males were not always looking for sex:

They are polite and the clientele you get are more businessmen that are actually already married - that just like to have fun on the side, you know? You can talk to them as long as you want without actually having to be dealing with them. (393)

Although 33% of youth stated that they had African American clients, a number of teens refused to go with them since they were reputed to be more aggressive, demanding, and abusive than men from other ethnic groups, and they did not always pay for the services. One 19-year old female who said that she started working on the street at 15, talked about her preferences:

Older white guys are the best clients. Black guys are not really the best clients. White guys have the money. They have the wife, so they don't really want, you know, too much. They just give you money. "Oh, my wife doesn't do this, you'll do it, and here's the money." (5083)

A 17-year old female from Harlem who said that she started at age 12, also said that she and her friends preferred to avoid Black men:

We don't really go for Black guys. Black guys are usually the ones who will...try to take your money and beat you up. So we was goin' for the rich, white guys. It's not just fuckin' and suckin', some of them just want you to sit there and smoke with them. Or if you do the type of drug that they do, that's what they like. Or they wanna talk to you -- they can't talk to their wives -- they need somebody to talk to. (5112)

Despite claims that they preferred white males, several youth stated that they often requested the most obscene sex acts and fetishes:

There are crazy people. I had this [white] guy come up to me and he wanted me to rub his knee for \$200 while he jacked off. 382 (18-year old white male, started at 16)

I have had Caucasian guys come up to me, ask about the most outrageous things, like shittin' on 'em, pissin' on 'em. 5111 (20-year old Black female, started at 13)

Usually when I'm working, I'm dressed as a woman. Just because I find I get...a lotta [white] guys -- there are a lotta freaks out there -- like they're into like boys dressed as girls and stuff like that. 487 (18 year old transgender from Deer Park, LI, works on the street and Craigslist)

Almost all of the youth (91%) said that they dealt mainly with male customers, but 11% of the girls and 40% of the boys said that they had served a female client (including 14 boys that said that they exclusively served female clients). The number of girls that reported women as customers was surprisingly high, as was the number of boys reporting female clients, though the researchers suspect that the boys' estimates were significantly overinflated. Boys that participated in CSEC markets almost always found that more men than women sought them out, but for those boys who were not homosexual, or who wanted to avoid what they perceived to be a stigma attached to homosexuality, admitting that one's clientele was exclusively male was difficult. These boys, the researchers suspect, attempted to cloud their participation in CSEC markets by claiming to serve both genders as clients. For example, one 18-year old white male from Staten Island said, "I go with mostly girls, but I don't take it in the ass and I don't suck a dick. But I'll fuck a guy in his ass or I'll let the guy suck my dick. (217) He wanted the researchers to know that he served women and men, but that he refused to participate in the market in a way that, in his mind, might call into question his own sexuality and sexual orientation.

Steady Customers

Having a regular clientele, or at least one steady customer, was considered to be quite important to many of the youth, and 38% claimed to have 1-3 steady clients that they could rely upon for a steady cash flow or when they might immediately need something (e.g., money, food, clothes, or shelter). One 16-year old white male from NYC, living in a homeless shelter, said that he had been doing sex work for 2 years and had made a substantial amount of money from a large number of steady clients:

I have 10, 15 steady customers. They all pay me like \$150-\$200. Most of the time I make my money off of them, but I do pick up new customers every once in awhile. Three out of the steady customers have a boyfriend and therefore their boyfriend chips in on it too, so they can both get some. That's really where I make my money. If there's more than one person, my price doubles, so instead of you paying \$150, you're paying \$300. (490)

A 17-year old Black female from Queens, who started when she was 15, said that she worked only with her steadies: "I only have regulars. I been in this game too long to have just random people." (600) Other youth said that they relied only on one client to meet their basic needs. For example, an 18-year old male who said that he worked the buddy booths in Manhattan had a client – a "sugar daddy" – who took care of many of his basic needs:

I have a sugar daddy. I see him around once a week and he buys me my clothes. I've had him for three years and he took me to Puerto Rico two years ago. He picks me up, but he doesn't call me, I call him. If he doesn't hear from me for a like a couple of weeks, he calls me. He is married with kids. (169)

An 18-year old transgender youth that was living at “Carmen’s Place” [a shelter in Queens] in Manhattan seemed quite attached to one of her “steadies,” and told the researchers that, “one of ‘em I see every night, but we don’t always do something. But if I ask him for money or tell him that I’m hungry, he’ll take me out to eat.” (5058) But another transgender youth who said that she started at age 12, did not feel comfortable getting too close with her steadies for fear of being taken advantage of:

I have a few [steadies], but I don’t really like get to know them. ‘Cause then they start to think, “Oh well, you know, we know each other so long, how ‘bout you gimme a discount?” And its like, I have to eat too, so... If you see me and I happen to be working, then yeah, of course, you know, ‘cause you’re someone I know. But you’re not gonna call me and be like, “Hey, what you doin’?” ‘Cause if I’m not workin’, I’m not workin’! (5056)

Although a number of youth said that they depended on their steady clients for financial security, other teens thought they were too undependable and not worth the hassle, as one black 17-year old transgender from Brooklyn explained: “you can never guarantee they will call back. You could never ever depend on them. ‘Cause a lot of people call you, but some of ‘em may not come.” (875) One 18-year old African American male from Washington Heights believed that by having steady customers, you were essentially accepting this lifestyle as a career choice, and that was something that he feared:

I don’t wanna like... get that beep [from a steady customer]. Because for a lotta people, it just ends up being a crutch, and that’s all they really do as a source of income. It’s not something I am particularly proud of. (123)

Customer Demographics

How Many Customers Seen Per Day	Females (n=96)	Males (n=95)	Transgender (n=17)	Total (n=208)
1	24.0%	38.9%	5.9%	29.3%
2	21.9%	20.0%	29.4%	21.6%
3	18.8%	10.5%	35.3%	16.3%
4	13.5%	9.5%	11.8%	11.5%
5	7.3%	5.3%	0.0%	5.8%
6	4.2%	4.2%	0.0%	3.8%
7	3.1%	1.1%	17.6%	3.4%
8	0.0%	1.1%	0.0%	0.5%
9	0.0%	1.1%	0.0%	0.5%
10	7.3%	7.4%	0.0%	6.7%
Don't Know	0.0%	1.1%	0.0%	0.5%

Number of Steady Customers	Females (n=90)	Males (n=88)	Transgender (n=16)	Total (n=194)
0	25.6%	26.1%	6.2%	24.2%
1	10.0%	13.6%	0.0%	10.8%
2	7.8%	18.2%	25.0%	13.9%
3	12.2%	12.5%	25.0%	13.4%
4	8.9%	4.5%	0.0%	6.2%
5	11.1%	5.7%	18.8%	9.3%
6	5.6%	3.4%	0.0%	4.1%
7	1.1%	1.1%	6.2%	1.5%
8	3.3%	1.1%	6.2%	2.6%
9	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%
10+	11.1%	11.4%	12.5%	11.3%
Don't know	2.2%	2.3%	0.0%	2.1%

Customer Ethnicity*	Females (n=98)	Males (n=87)	Transgender (n=18)	Total (n=203)
Caucasian	59.7%	66.7%	89.5%	65.1%
African American	40.3%	23.4%	42.1%	32.9%
Hispanic (Other)	34.5%	25.2%	63.2%	32.5%
Puerto Rican	1.7%	4.5%	0.0%	2.8%
Indian	2.5%	1.8%	5.3%	2.4%
Asian	0.8%	1.8%	10.5%	2.0%
Dominican	2.5%	1.8%	0.0%	2.0%
African	0.8%	2.7%	0.0%	1.6%
Other	1.7%	6.8%	0.0%	3.9%

	Females (n=94)	Males (n=81)	Transgender (n=19)	Total (n=194)
Customer Age*				
Under 18	2.5%	2.7%	5.3%	2.8%
19-25	30.3%	18.9%	15.8%	24.1%
26-35	36.1%	38.7%	42.1%	37.8%
36-45	37.8%	36.0%	68.4%	39.4%
46-55	32.8%	34.2%	52.6%	34.9%
56-65	16.0%	12.6%	47.4%	16.9%
66-75	5.9%	1.8%	15.8%	4.8%
76-85	3.4%	0.9%	10.5%	2.8%

	Females (n=63)	Males (n=44)	Transgender (n=17)	Total (n=124)
Customer Marital Status*				
Married	33.6%	20.7%	57.9%	29.7%
Married With Children	16.0%	5.4%	36.8%	12.9%
Single	4.2%	9.0%	15.8%	7.2%
In a Relationship	5.9%	1.8%	0.0%	3.6%
Divorced	0.8%	3.6%	0.0%	2.0%
Don't Know	18.5%	12.6%	31.6%	16.9%

	Females (n=116)	Males (n=110)	Transgender (n=19)	Total (n=245)
Customer Gender*				
Male	96.6%	82.9%	100.0%	90.8%
Female	10.9%	40.5%	5.3%	23.7%

*Youth chose more than one answer

Violence and Protection

Fighting Back

Violence at the hands of customers, pimps and other prostituted youth was something that many of the youth said that they had to contend with on a daily basis, and from the accounts that some youth provided of their experiences with violence, there was good reason to protect themselves. Many said that they gave into the abuse to avoid further damage or harm, but others chose to fight back. Of those who chose to fight back, 57% said that they carried a weapon, in most cases a knife or blade (35%) followed by pepper spray (14%); whereas 12% chose to use their fists when engaged in an altercation. But like other facets of the CSEC market, violence too appeared to be heavily gendered. For example, it was hardly a surprise that boys reported using their “fists” to defend themselves more often than girls (21% vs. 5%, respectively), but girls reported using knives and pepper spray far more often than boys (48% vs. 24% for knives; 19% vs. 3% for pepper spray). In addition to these items, other weapons used by youth included “smiley chains” (a chain with a padlock on it), hairspray, and a dog. One 18-year old mixed race female who said that she started when she was 15-years old, described how far an argument escalated with one of her customers and how she defended herself:

We decided to go to his car. That was one of the few times I ever went in a car. I got him at 44th and 9th and we went down to Twelfth Avenue down by the water. He was told he had to gimme a buck-fifty [\$150]. I usually get the money first but I was in a rush...I was tryin’ to get home. So he’s talking and talking and I was like, “Fuck you, gimme my money.” So we were arguin’ and he was a little bigger than me. I wanted to jab him with my scalpel, but he kept pushin’ and pullin’ me. Plus, he had my hair and I had a weave and he was tryin’ to pull my hair out. So, when I went to jig him, he pushed me back. So I just cut him and he crouched down. I just had to leave and didn’t take the money. He almost died. (458)

One 18-year old white male from out of state used a defensive move to ward off an unwelcomed advance:

One time when I was stripping in a strip club and a customer got really, really drunk. The kid wanted a lap dance and I ended up going into the bathroom to change for the next show or whatever and he went in there and grabbed my arm. So he first tried to talk to me. And I said I couldn’t talk since I have to be onstage in a minute. So as I’m walking out the door, he grabs my arm and I grabbed his wrist, flipped him around and broke his arm. I got him thrown out of the club. 631

Other youth relied on their friends or pimps to deal with abusive clients, like an 18-year old white female from the Bronx who said that, “I had three stupid assholes that tried to hurt me but I sent my friends after them. ‘Cause these were people from the website, I went to their house, hello!” (1010) An 18-year old white female from Manhattan who said that she started at age 12, noted that usually travelled “with friends. It’s safest to have more than one person there, ‘cause you don’t want the guy to be too forceful...you wanna make sure you have a friend there. Sometimes they stay in the hotel room and watch.” (157) And an 18-year old Puerto Rican male

said that, “My pimp stays close by when I’m doin’ it. So he makes sure nothin’ goes wrong with me. He likes the money up firsthand. And den...whatever happens...if he needs to get into it, he gets into it.” (985)

Although a majority of the youth claimed that they tried to fight back against an aggressive client, pimp or sex worker, 23% said that they tried to avoid physical confrontations, often running away from dangerous situations. But none of these methods were foolproof and the youth had numerous accounts of violent incidents. Customers tended to be the youth’s greatest threat.

Violent customers

Even if some youth were armed and capable of defending themselves, or they had their friends nearby, many still provided accounts of violent incidents at the hands of customers. As traumatic as these incidents must have been, most youth rattled off the accounts in somewhat emotionless terms, and they seemed to accept them as part of the danger of the business. For example, one 20-year old female who said that she started at age 13, tried to downplay the severity of a recent incident:

I wouldn’t call it rape because I just actually gave it up to prevent anything -- like from him hittin’ me -- and I was scared. So, I just was like, “Go ahead, just... you could have it, just take it.” (5111)

In a similar fashion, an 18-year old male from Arizona said that he was often the victim of men who took advantage of his inability to defend himself, but he seemed to shrug it off as endemic to the business:

There have been times where I have been raped in the sense they will touch and do things to me, and they will not pay me. Some of them will not pay you and they’ll just rape you. I tend to get raped a lot. (486)

Occasionally, customers do serious physical damage to youth, yet surprisingly, many of them return to the market after a short break. One 17-year old white male who had been in the CSEC market for more than a year told the researchers that, “A couple of weeks ago, I had to go to the hospital ‘cause this guy held me down and he just forced himself on me for like an hour. (533) A similar account of taking a short break from “working the stroll” was provided by an 18-year old transgender youth who said that that she had been sexually assaulted by a customer:

I had one dude tell me that I look cute. And once I got in the car, he locked the doors. And, you know, I’m trying to find out what’s going on. So he said, “Oh we gonna do it like we do it in jail.” So he got on top a me, pulled down my pants, and basically, took advantage of me. After that, I just stayed off the stroll for a couple of days -- maybe like a month and a half -- and then went back out there. (5058)

Other teens told harrowing stories of being kidnapped and held hostage by customers, like this 18-year old female who worked for a pimp in Queens:

He didn't want to let me go. He had me for 2 days. He was like a working guy. He was sniffin' coke, drinkin' beer. And there was this Jamaican guy -- and he was hard but he couldn't cum so I was like doin' my date for like four hours straight -- and I'm like, "Yo, I need a break." And he was like, "No, you not goin'." And then the pimp already had the money, so I couldn't even give him the money back -- so, for like two days I was like stuck. And we went out and I wanted to run out the car, but he had a gun. My pimp didn't know where I was at. So he parked somewhere in Brooklyn and he's like, "Yo, I'm goin' in the building real quick." So I ran out the car and I just called the police. (5078)

A 19-year old female from Brooklyn who said that she started at age 15, recalled an incident that made her extremely leery of stepping into a car with an unknown customer, despite having a pimp that purportedly watched her back:

I had issues where, you know, a guy wants to lock the door, and drive you around. I had one guy punch me in my face before. Like, the vibes -- when we first...we was talking -- it was okay. We drive around some more. And then the vibes wasn't -- right. I told him, "Let me out." But before he let me out, he punched me in my face...I was kidnapped before... But once you're in a car with a guy, no one can save you or help you. It's just you and him. Even though I might have a guy out there looking out for me -- I can call him, and he'll be like, "Where you at? I'm comin' to get you" -- but if the guy really wanted to try anything, like drive me far away and do anything, I'd just be fucked, really. (5083)

It was impossible to predict if or when a customer might become violent, but several youth said that they avoided "dating" Black men (African Americans, in particular) because they believed them to be more aggressive than others. For example, 18-year old transgender youth who said that she started at age 15, had a bad experience with a Black man shortly after arriving in New York from California.

The second week I was in NYC, I got raped by a client and I think he gave me herpes. I met him in the Village and he really wasn't the type I normally deal with. I don't deal with Black men 'cause they are very violent and aggressive. And they intimidate me. (696)

Another 18-year old transgender youth had a more visceral experience with a Black man:

I don't do black dates no more because a gun was pulled out on me -- I was scared to hell. I left my shoes, my bag, everything in the car, and I ran. My pants halfway fallin' off, my underwear is halfway on... (451)

Violence from other youth

Customers were not the only source of violence for the youth; several said that they were attacked and robbed by other prostituted youth over issues of stealing customers and turf. One 15-year old Black female from Brooklyn who was typical in that regard, said that, "The other

girls that work [on the stroll] always try to fight me, 'cause they say I'm taking their customers.'" (395) An 18-yr old mixed race transgender who said that she started at age 15, described the level of competition:

There's a lotta jealousy out there. Other sex workers, all day, trying to make more money than you. Other trannies want to rob other trannies when they find 'em vulnerable and weak. They feel as though you're young and stuff like that, they can take advantage. (595)

An 18-year old African-American male from Brooklyn said that he suffered a serious stab wound when he stole a customer from another worker in a club:

I be in a club and there be other people doin' the same thing, and that's how I got stabbed in my back and cut on my finger. I took the guy away from another guy. Then they came after me when I went to the bathroom, 'cause I was gonna bring the guy to the bathroom -- and he was gonna give me \$50 for oral sex. They jumped me in the bathroom and stabbed me in the back. I was rushed to the hospital. (629)

Another 18-year old male from the Bronx who described a confrontation with another male worker on the stroll, explained that there were unwritten "rules" that governed the business, and violations of those rules were like to be met with a swift and unpleasant response:

About two weeks ago, I got picked up. I was on another person's turf and we got into a confrontation. They were like, "What are you doin' gettin money in my area? What are you doin' takin my customers?" There are certain areas, certain places in Manhattan, you just can't go over there and say "let me go over there and take his customer." There's just rules you got to follow. (090)

Violence from pimps

Almost every youth that had been involved with a pimp at some point in their lives (16% of the girls), provided accounts of mental and/or physical abuse at their hands. In some cases, the abuse seemed severe from the very beginning, as described by a 14-year old mixed-race female who said that she met her pimp through a school friend:

I was kidnapped for 4 days and he [my pimp] threatened to kill me. He finally let me go home, but I didn't tell my aunt 'cause I didn't think she would believe me, and I didn't call the cops neither. That's when I was goin' to the store and they...and he saw me with my friend, and he told me to get in the car or he'll kill me in front a my friend, and stuff like that. So, I got in the car and he took me to his house again. And then -- that time -- that was when I came home and was on probation. I told him that I had to see my probation officer in the morning, and he was like, "No, you're not going nowhere." So that night, he forced me to have sex with him again. And this time I told him to put on a condom, but he didn't. And he let go...inside me. And then he was, like, how he wanted me to have his child or sumpin' like that. (5120)

In many instances, it seemed, pimps became violent with youth when they did not want to work. One 17-year old African-American female from New Jersey put it bluntly: “I didn’t want to go out to the stroll, so I got beat and put out there anyway.” (397) And for many youth, once this pattern of abuse began, it seemed to continue, as one 17-year old female from Brooklyn who said that she started at the age of 13 described:

He used to hit me a lot. And one time I got tired of it. And we got into a fight. I left him. Then I came back. And I left him again. Then I came back. I finally left him at 16. (5114)

In other instances, the youth reported witnessing a great deal of violence against other teens, but they felt helpless to do anything about it, as one 18-year old African-American female who said that she met her pimp outside her group home in Brooklyn when she was 15, explained:

Sometimes [my pimp] makes us [“my sister-n-laws”] fight against each other. He’d treat one better than he treat the other. Or if this person makes this amount a money, they get preferential treatment. He never beat me because I listen, and I won’t say nothin’. So it’s like..he had no reason to be physical with me. But some girls, they have that, so it’s like he has to feel like a man -- keep everything in check, ‘cause he can’t have anyone embarrass him when he’s outside. (360)

Protection Against Violence

Protection Used*	Females (n=111)	Males (n=102)	Transgender (n=18)	Total (n=231)
Blade	47.9%	24.3%	21.1%	35.3%
Avoids Confrontation	15.1%	27.9%	21.1%	21.3%
Pepper Spray	19.3%	2.7%	47.4%	14.1%
Fists	5.0%	20.7%	0.0%	11.6%
Box Cutter	3.4%	6.3%	5.3%	4.8%
Gun	2.5%	1.8%	0.0%	2.0%
Runs Away	1.7%	0.9%	0.0%	1.2%
Scissors	0.0%	0.0%	10.5%	0.8%
Other	21.0%	15.3%	26.3%	18.9%

*Youth chose more than one answer

Arrest History

According to the youth in the sample, encounters with the police were frequent, but they rarely led to an arrest. When it came to arrests, 39% (n=87) had never been arrested and 21% (n=48) had been arrested only once, but 8% (n=19) had been arrested ten or more times. The average number of arrests for the entire sample was 2.5. Drug possession was the most common charge (18%, n=44), followed by prostitution (12%, n=29) and theft (11%, n=28). Other arrest charges included: manslaughter, attempted murder, assault with a deadly weapon, assaulting a cop, weapon possession, drug trafficking across state lines, grand larceny, petty larceny, auto theft, identity fraud, violating order of protection, resisting arrest and promoting prostitution.

In reviewing the data, however, it is clear that there was a clearly gendered pattern to their interactions with law enforcement. As might be expected in New York City, where the quality-of-life campaign has embraced aggressive stop-and-frisk tactics as one of the premier methods to nip crime in the bud, boys report significantly more encounters with the police than girls, especially for charges like “disorderly conduct, drug possession, jumping the turnstile in the subway, or trespassing.” Girls, on the other hand, only surpassed boys in two categories of arrest: “loitering for prostitution” (7% vs. 3%, respectively) and “prostitution,” though, somewhat surprisingly, they essentially reported the same number of arrests for this charge. Boys also reported a greater number of arrests and a high frequency of arrest than girls: 13 boys said that they had been arrested “more than 10 times,” but only 4 girls reported exceeding 10 arrests; and 46% of the boys reported an arrest in the previous year, while only 28% of the girls reported the same.

Out of the 29 youth arrested for prostitution or loitering for prostitution, 13 were female, 12 were male and 4 were transgender. Several of the youth mentioned that they were arrested as an outcome of “Operation Spotlight”, which was created by Mayor Bloomberg in 2002, with the intent of targeting misdemeanor repeat offenders who have appeared multiple times (e.g. three arrests leading to at least two convictions) in the City’s Criminal Court system within a year of a current misdemeanor arrest. One 18-year old Black transgender from New Jersey (451) stated, “I have been arrested over 25 times for prostitution and loitering for prostitution. I am on Spotlight which means if I get caught anywhere near that stroll -- on the west side or in Mount Vernon – I’m locked up for a long time.” An 18-year old female from Queens, that worked Rockaway and Conduit and was pregnant with her pimp’s baby when she was targeted by Operation Spotlight, chose to go to jail rather than provide law enforcement with information about her pimp:

They did a sweep and they said I had “Operation Spotlight” -- and then they said, “We’ll let you go right now. It’s either you gimme the person you’re workin for, or you gonna do time.” And I’m like, “Just gimme my time.” So I was in there for like two months until I gave birth. Then my mom bailed me out. My child is 15 months and my mom has custody of him. (5078)

Yet, aside from specific NYPD operations like Spotlight, most youth did not report that the risk of arrest for prostitution was very high. One exception to this was transgender youth, who all reported arrests within the previous six months. Transgender youth appeared to be easy targets for law enforcement, and some of them described being picked up by the police for prostitution or loitering for prostitution, even when they were not working. An 18-year old

transgender from Florida, who started at 16, described how she was unjustly picked up for loitering for prostitution:

But I wasn't even prostitutin' that night. I was walkin' from a park, and I went to the store to buy cigarettes. And I walked from the store to the train -- and the next thing you know, the transsexual police pulls up on the side a me and charged me with loiterin'. (5058)

Another 18-year old transgender youth who said that she had frequent interactions with the police, noted that, "One cop said, "You're lucky I'm off duty but you're gonna suck my dick or I'm a take you in." This has happened to me about 8 times. (451) And once they enter the criminal justice system, transgender youth are also seemingly victimized more than males or females, as one 18-year old described:

I was taken advantage of by one of the prison guards and two of the inmates when I was at Rikers. The prison guard said if I said anything, he was gonna break my face...and put it on the island for everyone to see. (5105)

Problems with the police

Many of the youth claimed that they were verbally harassed and unfairly given citations by the police, but more disturbing was the number of teens, particularly females and transgenders, who said that they were sexually assaulted or forced to provide sexual services for free. One 18-year old Puerto Rican/Trinidadian female from the Bronx, described her encounter with her arresting officer this way:

The DT who arrested me gave me his number after I went through booking. Then after my court appearance, he pulled me into a corner and was like tonguing me down. (449)

A 19-year old Black female who said that started when she was 15 claimed that she was raped by police officers, but was afraid to tell anyone about it:

Police raped me a couple a times in Queens. The last time that happened was a couple a months ago. But you don't tell anybody, you just deal wit it. (5077)

Despite the accounts of strife between CSEC youth and police, the youth, in general, tried to avoid all interactions with police. Yet several of them provided accounts of encounters that taught them that no good deed shall go unpunished. For example, one 18-year old Black female from Queens, who worked for a pimp, recounted how she tried to help another prostituted youth by going to the police to have the girl's pimp arrested, but she was, in turn, arrested for falsifying an incident:

There was a situation where one a the girls -- a young girl -- she wanted to leave her pimp. So me, being the type of person I am, I went to the Port Authority, and I'm like, "He's holding her hostage, whatever, whatever." The police went there, kicked the door in all a that. By the time they came back, I was in cuffs. The guy said that I ran

away and I'm trying to get revenge, and this is why I said that. And how do you ask a prostitute -- in front a her pimp -- do she really wanna leave, you know what I'm sayin? I did three days in Rikers for trying to help somebody else. (360)

Arrest History

Number of Times Arrested	Females (n=112)	Males (n=96)	Transgender (n=17)	Total (n=225)
0	52.7%	21.9%	41.2%	38.7%
1	19.6%	21.9%	29.4%	21.3%
2	8.0%	8.3%	5.9%	8.0%
3-5	11.6%	22.9%	0.0%	15.6%
6-9	4.5%	8.3%	11.8%	6.7%
10+	3.6%	13.5%	11.8%	8.4%
Don't Know	0.0%	3.1%	0.0%	1.3%

Last Time Arrested	Females (n=66)	Males (n=94)	Transgender (n=12)	Total (n=172)
Within the Last Week	4.3%	3.0%	0.0%	3.5%
Within the Last Month	6.4%	13.6%	25.0%	10.5%
Within the Last 6 Months	8.5%	16.7%	16.7%	12.2%
Within the Last Year	8.5%	15.2%	0.0%	10.5%
Within the Last 2 Years	3.2%	13.6%	0.0%	7.0%
Other	6.4%	4.5%	0.0%	5.2%
Never Arrested	62.8%	33.3%	58.3%	51.2%

Arrest Charges*	Females (n=110)	Males (n=110)	Transgender (n=18)	Total (n=238)
Drug Possession	12.6%	26.1%	0.0%	17.7%
Prostitution	10.9%	10.8%	21.1%	11.6%
Theft	10.1%	13.5%	5.3%	11.2%
Assault	6.7%	9.9%	5.3%	8.0%
Trespassing	4.2%	10.8%	0.0%	6.8%
Loitering for Prostitution	6.7%	2.7%	21.1%	6.0%
Jumping the Turnstyle	1.7%	7.2%	0.0%	4.0%
Dealing Drugs	3.4%	5.4%	0.0%	4.0%
Disorderly Conduct	0.8%	6.3%	5.3%	3.6%
Open Container	2.5%	4.5%	0.0%	3.2%
Robbery	0.0%	5.4%	0.0%	2.4%
Loitering	1.7%	0.0%	10.5%	1.6%
Vandalism	0.8%	2.7%	0.0%	1.6%
Public Urination	0.8%	1.8%	0.0%	1.2%
Other	5.9%	21.6%	5.3%	12.9%
Never Arrested	49.6%	18.9%	36.9%	34.9%

Location of Arrest(s)	Females (n=112)	Males (n=96)	Transgender (n=17)	Total (n=225)
Manhattan	12.6%	18.9%	31.6%	16.9%
Queens	9.2%	1.8%	10.5%	6.0%
Brooklyn	2.5%	2.7%	0.0%	2.4%
Bronx	1.7%	2.7%	0.0%	2.0%
Pennsylvania	1.7%	1.8%	5.3%	2.0%
New Jersey	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	0.8%
Other	3.4%	8.1%	10.5%	6.0%
Never Arrested	49.6%	18.9%	36.8%	34.9%

***Youth chose more than one answer**

Health and Substance Abuse

Practicing Safe Sex

When the topic of safe sex was broached with the youth, there was an almost universal agreement that the use of condoms and other prophylactics (e.g. dental dams, lubricant, female condoms, etc.) was a necessity and had become second nature. Over three-quarters of the youth always practiced safe sex and 22.6% sometimes practiced safe sex. Only 1.6% (n=4) never practiced safe sex. The main reason cited for not using a condom was that often times a customer was willing to pay more for a “tip-drill”, which is when the customer does not wear a condom. According to one youth, “If they are paying over \$3000 -- and they don’t wanna use a condom – I’m takin it. That’s how I got STDs doing that.” Other teens stated that they don’t use condoms with their boyfriends or when performing oral sex. Another youth stated, “I look people over and make sure they’re not dirty... I wipe them.” One 18-year old transgender female from out of state who started at 15 had found out that week that she was HIV-Positive:

The thing is... I didn’t really know about that (HIV). Coming from a small town, I didn’t really know about that at my school. I’m from the country so its like we – don’t know about that. We just assumed that if you looked healthy, then you’re healthy. I didn’t really learn about that until like, the second year out on the street. I have no choice but continue doing what I’m doin. But I will use protection from now on. I don’t tell my customers nothing though. (696)

Sexually Transmitted Infections

Because a majority of the youth claimed to practice safe sex, the number of youth that had contracted a sexually transmitted infection (STI) at one point in their life was relatively low, 20.7% (n=50). However, 14 youth did not know whether or not they had an STI since they had never been checked or had not been tested in quite some time. Of the sexually transmitted infections that were mentioned, 6% (n=15) had contracted syphilis, 3.6% (n=9) had gonorrhea and 2% (n=5) were HIV-Positive. It is important to note that due to the uncomfortable nature of this topic, there is a good possibility that the number of youth who had contracted an STI was under-reported.

Most Recent Trip to the Doctor

Frequent visits to the doctor were common, and overall, the youth appeared to be knowledgeable about where they could access free medical services (e.g. youth agencies and medical vans). A number of the youth claimed that they were tested for STIs and HIV every six months, and females received regular gynecological check-ups. Over three-quarters of the youth had visited a doctor within the last six month, and 42.6% (n=106) received a general check-up (which included a gynecological check-up for the females), 34.1% (n=85) were tested for sexually transmitted infections and 20.9% (n=52) were tested for HIV. Youth also visited the doctor for: estrogen, medication, tuberculosis and meningitis tests, Hepatitis C test, full chest x-ray, white blood cells checked, Hepatitis A & B vaccinations,

abortion, bronchitis, pneumonia, asthma, cancer cells removed, foot infection, boil, a cyst, an abscess drained, knee problems, hives, heat rash, stomach-ache, stab wound, cut finger, fainted, cutting and suicide attempt.

The youth suffered from a number of chronic health-related issues, both physical and mental, which included: heart murmur, endocarditis, spina bifida, sickle-cell anemia, diabetes, Tourettes Syndrome, cellulitis in the leg, ulcerative colitis, eczema, bipolar, ADHD, paranoia, insomnia, self-mutilation, nerve damage in left foot, alcoholism, heroin addiction, suicidal and bi-polar. It is unknown how often the youth who suffered from these ailments visited a medical professional or whether or not they were taking the proper medication.

Substance Abuse

Drug use was quite common among the youth, and was not considered as taboo of a topic compared to sexually transmitted infections. Over half (n=134) admitted to using marijuana on a regular basis, followed by cocaine, 26.1% (n=65), alcohol, 25.3% (n=63), and heroin, 13.7% (n=34). 22.9% (n=57) stated that they smoked cigarettes; however, because cigarettes were not considered a “drug” by many of the youth, this number is most likely under-reported. Over half of the transgender youth (n=10) did not use drugs, although among the transgender youth that did, marijuana was most the commonly abused drug (n=6). The number of female and male substance abusers was split almost evenly with more females abusing crack (n=8) and prescription pain killers (n=3) and more males abusing heroin (n=19) and methamphetamines (n=7).

Health and Drug Abuse

	Females (n=116)	Males (n=108)	Transgender (n=19)	Total (n=243)
Youth Practices Safe Sex				
Yes always	72.4%	79.6%	73.7%	75.7%
Yes sometimes	21.9%	17.6%	26.3%	22.6%
No	0.9%	2.8%	0.0%	1.6%

	Females (n=115)	Males (n=107)	Transgender (n=19)	Total (n=241)
Youth Has/Had an STI				
Yes	25.2%	15.0%	26.3%	20.7%
No	71.3%	75.7%	73.7%	73.4%
Don't know	3.5%	9.3%	0.0%	6.4%

	Females (n=112)	Males (n=102)	Transgender (n=19)	Total (n=233)
Which STI*				
Chlamydia	10.1%	1.8%	5.3%	6.0%
Gonorrhea	2.5%	4.5%	5.3%	3.6%
HIV	2.5%	0.9%	5.3%	2.0%
Herpes	2.5%	0.0%	10.5%	2.0%
HPV	3.4%	0.9%	0.0%	2.0%
Hepatitis B	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%	0.4%
Crabs	0.0%	0.0%	5.3%	0.4%
Other	1.7%	8.1%	0.0%	4.8%
Don't know	2.5%	6.8%	0.0%	3.9%
None	73.9%	68.9%	73.7%	71.5%

	Females (n=111)	Males (n=109)	Transgender (n=19)	Total (n=239)
Last Time Youth Went to M.D.				
Today	2.7%	1.8%	10.5%	2.9%
Yesterday	0.9%	0.9%	5.3%	1.3%
Within the last week	18.9%	21.1%	36.8%	21.3%
Within the last month	26.8%	29.4%	21.1%	28.5%
Within the last 6 months	30.6%	26.6%	21.1%	28.0%
Within the last year	10.8%	10.1%	5.3%	10.0%
Other	2.7%	8.3%	0.0%	5.0%
Don't know	4.5%	1.8%	0.0%	2.9%

Why Youth Went to M.D.*	Females (n=111)	Males (n=104)	Transgender (n=18)	Total (n=233)
General check-up	44.5%	42.3%	31.6%	42.6%
STI test	33.6%	32.4%	47.4%	34.1%
HIV test	19.3%	18.9%	42.1%	20.9%
Infection	3.4%	4.5%	0.0%	3.6%
Pregnant	3.4%	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%
Medication	0.0%	2.7%	5.3%	1.6%
Injury	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%	0.4%
Weather related symptoms	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%
Other	13.4%	17.1%	10.5%	14.9%
Don't know	3.4%	5.4%	0.0%	4.0%

Drugs Taken*	Females (n=111)	Males (n=107)	Transgender (n=19)	Total (n=237)
Marijuana	50.4%	61.3%	31.6%	53.8%
Cocaine	20.2%	33.3%	21.1%	26.1%
Alcohol	16.0%	36.9%	15.8%	25.3%
Cigarettes	19.3%	28.8%	10.5%	22.9%
Heroin	9.2%	17.1%	21.1%	13.7%
Hallucinogens	7.6%	11.7%	5.3%	9.2%
Ecstasy	7.6%	9.0%	5.3%	8.0%
Crack	6.7%	2.7%	10.5%	5.2%
Methamphetamines	0.0%	6.3%	0.0%	2.8%
Prescription Painkillers	2.5%	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%
Other	0.0%	2.7%	0.0%	1.2%
None	23.5%	11.7%	52.6%	20.5%

*Youth chose more than one answer

Youth Service Agencies

Experience with youth service agencies

New York City has over a dozen agencies that provide services to runaway and homeless youth, 21 years old and under. The agencies provide a multitude of services that include: emergency and transitional housing, counseling, food, clothing, showers, employment opportunities, educational classes, job training, legal services, medical services and life skills training. Teens hear about these youth service agencies primarily through word of mouth and outreach. Over two-thirds of the youth (68%) had visited a youth service agency, and in most cases, had experience with more than one. Approximately one-third (32%) of the youth interviewed had never visited one of the agencies for various reasons, which included: they didn't think they needed help; were not aware of any of the youth service agencies; and, were too embarrassed or ashamed to seek help. One 15-year old Black female from Brooklyn, who started at age 12, described her inability to speak to anyone about her situation:

It's hard for me to talk about it – I'm surprised I'm not crying right now -- because it's so hard. Every time I think about it, I feel like... so dirty. And, I don't know. I can't explain the feeling that I get, but it's not a good feeling. I really wanna stop but it's so hard. Cause I need to make my money. I need to make a livin' cause I have nobody else to turn to. (395)

NYC youth service agencies

The youth listed a number of agencies that they had visited, and some had been going to one or more of these organizations for several years. Among the agencies were included: Independence Inn, Green Chimneys, Carmen's Place, GEMS, LGBT Center, Callen-Lorde, Project Renewal, Street Work, Safe Space, Neutral Zone, The Door, Covenant House, SAVI, Sylvia's Place and Ali Forney. The most frequented agency was Street Work (38%, n= 95), followed by Covenant House (11%, n= 28) and Sylvia's Place (10%, n= 26). One youth agency in particular, Covenant House- NY, which is the nation's largest youth agency, was consistently criticized, particularly the youth culture that seemed to promote participation in the CSEC market and for being a where pimps recruited youth. One 17-year old male reported that other youth at Covenant House showed him the ropes:

Covenant House is where I got turned onto this. After I got in there -- and didn't have a job or nothin' at the time, some of the kids on the inside told me about how they do this for money. (588)

An 18-year old multi-racial female who said that she started at 15 talked about the flock of pimps that lingered in the area:

Covenant House was a very weak program. 'Cause when I went, I was 14...and I lied and said I was 18. So, I went for five months straight with no I.D. So I wasn't livin' in the Minors Ward and the pimps would have some of their girls... Once Covenant House

became aware of what was goin' on outside, the pimps started having their girls go in there and recruit girls. (458)

A 17-year old multi-racial female from Brooklyn had a similar experience at Covenant House:

A pimp came up to me the other day outside of Covenant House and was like, "Oh, I see that a lot of you girls in there don't have money -- and...I could help you out -- I know a lotta guys that like to...just hang out with girls or whatever, and they'll pay thousands of dollars." (424)

Among other problems at Covenant House was one mentioned by an 18-year old male from Arizona:

I've been raped at Covenant House, three times. It was by guys in the Men's ward..or whatever. The workers didn't do shit. Some workers knew about it, though. (486)

Youth agency services

The youth who said that they had visited one or more of the youth service agencies also maintained that they took advantage of the numerous services that were offered, and many of them built solid relationships with the staff and counselors at those organizations. Almost one-third of the youth (31%) said that they frequented certain agencies' emergency 30-day and 90-day shelters; however, because there were so few available youth shelters, and a limited number of beds, many of the teens were forced back to the streets. Youth also reported visiting the agencies for meals (28%), counseling (28%), and showers (13%). A number of the youth mentioned that they did not always go to the agencies for a particular service, but rather, to hang out with friends in what they considered a safe and friendly environment.

Social Support Systems

Since more than half of the youth said that they were living in a shelter or on the streets, it came as no surprise that their social support networks were thin. Indeed, 17% (n=43) of the youth said that they had "no one" they could go to in times of trouble or doubt, and only 22% (n=55) said that they relied on friends for support. Less than 10% (n=21) felt that they could go to a parent for support, though 17% (n=42) mentioned that they could rely on other family members (e.g. cousins and siblings) and family friends. One 14-year old Puerto Rican male from the Bronx, who started when he was 12, described how the lack of support by his own family contributed to his blasé attitude regarding his own life:

I only have my friends. That's all I have. My whole family is part of what's making me...give two shits. My mother, she's lazy. She wouldn't care. She would care if I died, but that's all she cares about. (497)

Youth Service Agencies & Services Offered

Youth Visited Service Agency	Females (n=119)	Males (n=111)	Transgender (n=19)	Total (n=249)
Yes	68.8%	63.2%	94.7%	68.2%
No	31.2%	36.8%	5.3%	31.8%

Service Agencies Visited*	Females (n=115)	Males (n=108)	Transgender (n=18)	Total (n=241)
Street Work	34.5%	42.3%	36.8%	38.2%
Covenant House	12.6%	9.9%	10.5%	11.2%
Sylvia's Place	8.4%	9.0%	31.6%	10.4%
Ali Forney	5.0%	5.4%	10.5%	5.6%
The Door	6.7%	4.5%	5.3%	5.6%
Neutral Zone	2.5%	3.6%	5.3%	3.2%
SAVI	5.9%	0.0%	0.0%	2.8%
GEMS	5.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%
Safe Space	2.5%	0.0%	15.8%	2.4%
Carmen's Place	0.0%	0.0%	21.1%	1.6%
Other	9.2%	10.8%	15.8%	10.4%
Don't Know	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	0.8%
Never Been	36.1%	30.6%	5.3%	31.3%

Services Used*	Females (n=116)	Males (n=106)	Transgender (n=18)	Total (n=240)
Shelter	22.7%	35.1%	52.6%	30.5%
Counseling	35.3%	18.9%	36.8%	28.1%
Food	26.1%	26.1%	47.4%	27.7%
Shower	10.9%	16.2%	10.5%	13.3%
Doctor	6.7%	12.6%	10.5%	9.6%
Clothing	5.0%	5.4%	0.0%	4.8%
Contraceptives	4.2%	5.4%	5.3%	4.8%
Educational Classes	5.9%	2.7%	10.5%	4.8%
Life Skills Training	7.6%	1.8%	0.0%	4.4%
Job Opportunities	3.4%	1.8%	5.3%	2.8%
Recreational Classes	3.4%	0.9%	5.3%	2.4%
ID/Birth Certificates	0.0%	3.6%	0.0%	1.6%
Metrocards	2.5%	0.9%	0.0%	1.6%
Peer Leadership Opportunities	0.0%	2.7%	0.0%	1.2%
Employment Training	0.8%	0.9%	5.3%	1.2%
Transitional Living	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	0.8%
Other	5.0%	12.6%	15.8%	9.2%
Never Been	37.0%	30.6%	5.3%	31.7%

Go to When in Trouble	Females (n=80)	Males (n=79)	Transgender (n=12)	Total (n=171)
Friend	23.5%	20.7%	21.1%	22.1%
No One	10.1%	26.1%	10.5%	17.3%
Parent	9.2%	9.0%	0.0%	8.4%
Partner	6.7%	0.9%	15.8%	4.8%
Police Officer	3.4%	1.8%	0.0%	2.4%
Service Organization	2.5%	0.9%	5.3%	2.0%
Grandparent	1.7%	0.0%	5.3%	1.2%
Market Facilitator	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%
Fictional Family	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%
Other	14.3%	18.0%	26.3%	16.9%

***Youth chose more than one answer**

Reflections on “The Life” and Future Expectations

Leaving “The Life”

When the youth were asked if they would like to leave “the life”, an overwhelming majority, 87% (n=211), stated that they would like to exit if given the opportunity. In many ways, this was not a surprising finding because the lives that they lived seemed, for the most part, quite difficult and often unpleasant, to say the least. We might also generally expect youth to give a socially desirable response to this question since most of them likely believed that the researchers did not endorse CSEC activities, but rather, were focused on eliminating them. Thus, it was somewhat of a surprise that 32 youth said either “no” (n=17) or that they “did not know” (n=15) whether they wanted to get out of “the life.” Yet despite these denials, the narratives provided by the youth in the sample overwhelmingly supported the idea that most of them wanted to stop what they were doing and move on with their lives in another direction. For example, one 18-year old multi-racial female from the Bronx who had been in the market for more than three years told the researchers that

I think that people should know the only reason why you should start selling your body is if you are...at rock-bottom. And you really don't have anybody. I just wanna advise anybody to please find another way, 'cause it's really not worth it to go through all the crap. (272)

An 18-year old Black female from Brooklyn who said that she started at 16, was decidedly negative about her experience in the market:

The profession is hard. It take away from you every day that you do it. It's not something that you can do with pride. It's like, it eats at you and like you'll get tired of it. And then you're gonna wanna stop. Like, anything can happen. You can end up pregnant with a disease, and you don't know how you got it. You can get killed, 'cause there's a lotta crazy people out here. It's crazy! (389)

Others spoke about their desire to get out of the market, but they were doing what they had to do to survive. A 19-year old Hispanic female from Manhattan who had been in the market for more than four years said that she wanted something different:

My dreams? I wanna be able to have a stable home, being legit. You know, no worries with the police comin' and bust in my house. No worries about me getting caught doing what I'm doin'. I wanna be educated, 'cause I'm smart. But now, I just have to do what I gotta do. I don't have time now. (186)

Despite the fear that many expressed about being unable to escape from the market, there was, nevertheless, a feeling among many that they would survive, and this was simply a stage in their life. A 16-year old mixed-race female was typical in this regard:

Life is life, and you gotta do what you gotta do. It's like everybody can't be a doctor, a teacher or have rich parents take care of us. And it's gonna teach us, like -- when we

get older, we're gonna be stronger, 'cause we know life experience and stuff like that. And we're goin' to know what to do in certain situations because of what we've been through when we were younger. You gotta do what you gotta do to survive. (388)

Money Woes

For many youth who wanted to get out of “the life”, there were deep concerns about finding a job and making money, especially a job that paid as much as they were making and that could support their lifestyle. More than half of the teens interviewed (60%, n=150) said that stable employment was necessary for them to leave the market (followed by education (51%, n=128) and stable housing (41%, n=103)). One 16-year old Puerto Rican female, who lived with her family and supported her siblings with the money she earned from sex work, stated, “If I could find a job that paid \$8-\$10/hr I could support my brothers and sisters.” (495) A 16-year old Italian male from Brooklyn noted that:

If there was another way to make this much money, without, you know, an education. I'm not even graduating high school yet. I have a long way to go in my school career, but if there's another way for a kid my age to make this much money, tell me 'cause I'll do it. (717)

A 17-year old Black/Hispanic female from Brooklyn who said that she started at age 12 said that she felt too entrenched in the market to exit:

I really wanna stop now, but I can't, 'cause I have no source of income since I'm too young. So it's like that I have to do it, it's not like I wanna do it. As I say, I'm only 17, I got a 2-year old daughter, so that means I got pregnant real young. Didn't have no type of medicaid... Can't get a job, have no legal guardian, I don't have nobody to help me but [friends], so you know, we all in this together. (359)

A 14-year old white male who said that he was addicted to drugs could not envision another way to make enough money to support his habit:

I've been to all these drug programs and stuff. And I've learned that there's only one way to stop...is if you really wanna stop. And I don't wanna stop doing drugs. If it was possible to have a pocketful of money all the time so I wouldn't have to go through this kinda stuff... (825)

Feeling the Shame and Stigma

The lack of a job or a place to live were cited by many youth as the primary factors that kept them in the market, but many of them talked at length about the shame, stigma, degradation and loneliness they felt on a constant basis while in the market. Many said that being labeled and stigmatized by their family, peers, and society overall, left them with low self-esteem and self-worth, which often resulted in an inability to leave “the life.” For one 18-year old transgender from the Bronx, it seemed to be a vicious cycle:

There are a lotta dangers. There are health dangers, there are dangers with the law. There are dangers with...yourself, because, it's like...when you're doin' something on a routine basis -- you sort of become what you're doing. You sorta label yourself as what you do. But you're not, you're just a regular person, that's who you are. (566)

An 18-year old Hispanic and white female from Brooklyn worried about the stigma:

A lotta people frown down on it. They frown on what you're doing. But, like, some of them don't know that's like the only way some people can survive. Like, it's another profession. It's been around for decades and people just turn it away. Like it's...unfair. (389)

Another 18-year old white female from Manhattan who lived on the streets said that she was unable to have a healthy relationship with her mother or a boyfriend because of her lifestyle:

Its degrading. Its dirty. Its shameful. I can't tell my mom what I do. And its..hard for me to be in a relationship with somebody when I do that. I have to lie to them and go behind their backs most of the time. (578)

An 18-year old Black male from Brooklyn reflected on his disappointment in living up to the lessons that he learned early in life:

My mother taught me a lesson. If you're ashamed a sumpin' ... don't do it, you know? But at the same time, and I live by that, I live by that rule, but at the same time, when you're in the position that I'm in, it's hard to live by it. You know, because I'm very much ashamed of what I do, you know? (332)

One 18-year old multi-racial male from Arizona who said that he started at age 15, described some of the emails he received regarding his ads on the internet:

The fact that people think that I'm doing it because I want to, I mean, I get replies all the time on e-mail, and they tell me, "You know, why don't you just get a job?" Well, no shit Sherlock! Honestly! I don't know, I would like someone to be able to offer me something. (486)

Hating the customers, hating themselves

About a quarter of the youth (26%, n=65) said that their biggest dislike was providing sexual services to complete strangers. One homeless 18-year old Hispanic female put it this way:

The fact that I have to have sex with somebody I don't know. Like...it's uncomfortable 'cause you don't wanna look at the person...you don't wanna look at yourself - you don't wanna look! The whole time you're doin' it, you gotta think, the money, the money, the money -- 'cause otherwise, I couldn't do it. (164)

An 18-year old white female from Long Island said that the most disgusting aspect of the CSEC market was the customers:

Just the men you have to deal with. Just knowing that you do what you do, you know? It's just like, not a socially acceptable thing, at all. So...it's not like you know, you wanna do it, but it's like you have to, 'cause you don't know what else to do. (662)

Another 18-year female was more descriptive about which customers she hated most:

The smelly ones. The ugly ones...when they're breathin' down your neck. Like the ones that take a year and a half. Those are the worst ones. (458)

An 18-year old mixed-race male from Brooklyn who said that he started at age 15, was deeply disturbed because he identified as heterosexual and yet his clients were all men:

I don't consider myself homosexual at all. I just gotta do what I gotta do and so I can eat every day. I don't like the fact that I have to be with another man, just to survive. That's what I hate the most. (332)

Fearing the danger

Some of the youth (10%, n=22) said that they wanted to get out of the market because they were concerned about the risk of getting harmed by a customer, pimp or another sex worker, or the risk of being arrested by law enforcement. But the risk of being raped or killed weighed most on their minds. For example, one 17-year old white male alluded to a recent event in his life:

Just last week, that was the first time that happened to me in a long time, but it happened a lotta times before -- guys force themselves on me -- and stuff like that. That's what I dislike the most, 'cause sometimes they're really big guys. (533)

A 17-year old Black female from Brooklyn said that her biggest worry was that she might not survive the streets:

The fact that I could go to work and never come home. The fact that I could go out and it could be my last time comin'. You got some crazy people out there. (5114)

A 15-year old Black female from Brooklyn, who started at age 12, feared being raped again, but didn't feel that she had any other choice but go back on the tracks:

I'm scared that somebody's gonna try and rape me again. And I don't... I don't like what I'm doing because it makes me feel dirty. Like, I'm doing this for money, but this is the only way I know how to make a livin'. So, I just do what I have to do, to survive. (395)

How to leave “the life”

Even though the overwhelming majority of youth said that they wanted to leave “the life”, most of them did not have a plan for accomplishing it, and many had difficulty envisioning an exit route. Several of the youth said that reuniting with their family was one potential route, but few of them described their families as offering hope in that regard. For example, one 15-year old black female from Brooklyn who clearly pointed the finger of blame at herself, seemed to suggest that there was only faint hope that her family would help:

Maybe if I re-connect with my family...maybe that will help me change, I guess - I don't know. I don't know anything else that would make me change. Or maybe if I catch HIV -- God forbid-- that would make me change, too, but other than that, I don't think anything can make me change. (395)

A 17-year old white female from Brooklyn who moved in with a “friend” at age 13, seemed to hold out some hope that her family could someday be repaired:

I need a better home life. I want my parents to come to me and really wanna fix whatever problems we have. Whatever problems they have... (716)

But many youth did not mention their family as a possible route out of the market, and their sense of isolation was palpable. An 18-year old white female from out of the city who said that she started at age 16, seemed resigned to staying in “the life” for the foreseeable future:

Death definitely isn't scaring me from it. Maybe if somebody that cared came along, then I could have help. Maybe a counselor or a friend... but it's hard to make friends that aren't doing what you're doing. (952)

Some teens seemed to believe that the only way out was to get away from it all. An 18-year old Hispanic male from the Bronx said that he believed that the only way he could move on was by leaving NYC altogether:

I used to have respect for myself. I always thought I was headstrong and that I was gonna make it -- I had plans. I had plans for my life. And...I'm nowhere. I'm nowhere near that path. I would like to get back on it, but you know, I don't see it happening. If I was to leave New York, I could do it. I know I could do it. (649)

Finding help to get out

Most youth, it seemed, blamed themselves for their predicament, but they also admitted that, with help, they might have a chance to get out, or at least, improve their lives. When asked what was needed to help teens like themselves leave “the life”, they suggested a number of services and outreach initiatives, most of which were in short supply or non-existent. One of the main priorities for many of the youth was finding safe and stable long-term housing. An 18-year old multi-racial male who was living in a shelter offered his opinion about what was needed:

Housing for prostitutes who wanna stop. We can't stop unless someone has something to offer you on the spot. It's hard to figure out what to do about this particular thing, especially 'cause it seems like prostitution is the crime. And I really don't think so. We're out there to make money, we're not tryin' to cause trouble! (486)

A 19-year old mixed race female who said that she started at age 18, had clearly found housing to be problematic and she chafed at the bureaucracy:

There should be more shelters and they shouldn't be so hard to get into. You can't just walk up to them and say, "I need a place to stay." You need to be referred. And if you haven't gotten referred early enough, you can't get a bed. (616)

Another veteran of the shelter game, an 18-year old mixed-race male, talked about playing musical chairs with several facilities and the need for more beds:

More long-term shelters [are needed]. Them shelters are 90 days. So, I gotta crash at a friend's house, stay in a open-door type, and get my name back on the list to get another 90 days. (722)

In addition to a stable place to stay, many youth also felt that non-judgmental counseling could be valuable. A 17 year old multi-racial female from the Bronx said that:

They should set up a program with counseling -- or someone like a motivational speaker -- someone that will help them. A lotta people go out on the street at a young age and don't know nothing about the real world. They have a lotta self-esteem issues. (5033)

Other teens said that counseling might be useful, but they complained that the few counselors that are currently available, too often have large caseloads or they don't provide the kind of support that teens need, as described by an 18-year old white female:

I just think a lot of the counselors -- since they see so many people -- they do so much, it's not like on a one-on-one basis. Especially for the people that are underprivileged and don't really have the money. I think they should be caring and open-minded and accept what we're doing. But let us know that someone cares. I mean, that's the main thing, that somebody cares -- and you have somebody to turn to help. Just not be judgmental; just not tell us what to do. I mean, just try to help the best they can, and understand that, not all of us are gonna change. (952)

Some youth noted that their peers were often unaware of services that might be available to them, and that without effective outreach, their situation was unlikely to change. An 18-year old Black female who worked for a pimp talked about the need for more outreach to young girls like herself:

I think that if more girls knew about programs that were available to them... Like you know, Queens Blvd., Hunts Point, East New York. If they had flyers or even if they posted them on a tree they could walk by and glance, without, you know, really puttin' theyselves out there with the evidence. It's like you have a lotta young, ignorant guys who fill girls heads with the hopes and dreams that they gonna be something...successful. And they're gonna have the big house and they're gonna be drivin' a nice car. But once you leave them, they have no money. You are their source, you know? And a lotta girls, they don't realize that, 'cause the guy make them think that without them, they wouldn't be nothin'. They think the money is good, but they don't understand that they never see none a the money that's comin'. When thing's done, they done for you. When you shop, you're shoppin' is done for you -- when you eat, your food is bought for you -- it's not like you have the option of what do you want to eat. And eventually it doesn't matter how nice the person is in the beginnin', the abuse always comes, you know? (360)

“Positive” attributes of “the life”

As mentioned above, 32 youth said either “no” (n=17) or that they “did not know” (n=15) whether they wanted to get out of “the life.” The reasons they gave often tended to be vague, and it seemed that some of the youth were trying to justify why they continued to be involved in the market, but there were several themes that characterized what youth saw as the positive attributes of “the life.” First and foremost, sex work was fast and easy money according to many youth. One 17-year old White female from Queens summed it up: “You know, the money is 1, 2, 3. I get paid when I want. And when I wanna do it, I do it. (223) A 19-year old female from Brooklyn expressed misgivings about having sex for money, but suggested that enough money could overcome those feelings:

The money is fast. Like, regular square people, y'all work for two weeks for a check for \$500, \$600. And I can get that in one night. Even though the things I have to do for it isn't, you know, rightful, but it's money at the end of the day. (5083)

One 18-year old Hispanic female from the Bronx who started at 15 and was living in a shelter described how the money lured her back into the game:

It's hard livin' paycheck to paycheck. It makes you wanna fall back into it, just like I did. Like for a couple of months this year, I didn't do it. And then strugglin' times comin' through, I fell right back into it. (503)

An 18-year old Black transgender said that she not only liked the fast money, but also what she considered to be the glamorous side of the game:

The money is fast. And “the life” is more glamorous than a superstar. Because you get to go to parties, you're a dates #1 girl. And anything you want, they give it to you, long as you give it up. (696)

Many teens said that they found the customers distasteful, but a few boys and transgender youth said that they liked the attention they received from the men. One 18-year old multi-racial transgender who said that she started at age 17 told the researchers that:

I do like it. Sometimes I like, um...sometimes the men are pretty good. I like being lust over... I like the attention. (1009)

An 18-year old black male who had been in the market for more than 4 years said that having customers fawn over him was “a huge ego boost!” (450) Another 18-year old Black/Puerto Rican male said he derived pleasure from acting as a therapist to his customers:

I like getting to know the person and seeing what makes them tick and helping them. I feel it’s a service, not just for the sexual act but more to replenish what they’ve lost, like mentally. You know, psychologically and emotionally. (129)

Finally, it came as no surprise that the teenagers who comprised the sample pointed out that “freedom” from adult supervision was a positive attribute of the lifestyle. In this regard, however, they did not sound much different than how other teens might have reacted. For example, an 18-year old white male (402) told the researchers that “not havin’ to worry about things...no curfews anymore, bein’ able to drink” were the things that he enjoyed about his current life. An 18-year old female from the Bronx echoed that feeling when she noted that, “I’m a free spirit and I like to do what I wanna do. I don’t want anyone tellin’ me what to do. I don’t like rules at all. (361)

Reflections on “The Life”

	Females (n=117)	Males (n=107)	Transgender (n=19)	Total (n=243)
Youth Would Like to Leave The Life				
Yes	87.2%	85.0%	94.7%	86.8%
No	6.8%	8.4%	0.0%	7.0%
Don't Know	6.0%	6.5%	5.3%	6.2%

	Females (n=118)	Males (n=105)	Transgender (n=19)	Total (n=242)
Things Youth Like About The Life				
Fast Money	38.7%	38.7%	42.1%	39.0%
Nothing	31.1%	19.8%	31.6%	26.1%
Freedom	14.3%	9.9%	0.0%	11.2%
Everything	3.4%	6.3%	15.8%	5.6%
Customers	2.5%	5.4%	5.3%	4.0%
Drugs	2.5%	0.9%	10.5%	2.4%
Sex	0.8%	3.6%	5.3%	2.4%
Other	10.1%	17.1%	15.8%	13.7%
Don't Know	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	0.8%

	Females (n=116)	Males (n=105)	Transgender (n=19)	Total (n=240)
Things Youth Dislike About The Life*				
Sex	28.6%	24.3%	21.1%	26.1%
Everything	20.2%	9.9%	21.1%	15.7%
Customers	16.8%	8.1%	26.3%	13.7%
Being Homeless	8.4%	13.5%	0.0%	10.0%
Risk of Getting Harmed	6.7%	4.5%	10.5%	6.0%
Nothing	5.0%	5.4%	5.3%	5.2%
Addiction	0.8%	6.3%	0.0%	3.2%
Risk of Getting Caught	0.8%	1.8%	21.1%	2.8%
Money	1.7%	0.9%	0.0%	1.2%
Other	19.3%	28.8%	26.3%	24.1%
Don't Know	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%	0.4%

	Females (n=118)	Males (n=109)	Transgender (n=19)	Total (n=246)
Changes Needed to Leave The Life*				
Steady Employment	61.3%	56.8%	73.7%	60.2%
Education	52.9%	49.5%	52.6%	51.4%
Stable Housing	39.5%	45.0%	31.6%	41.4%
Quit Addiction	9.2%	13.5%	10.5%	11.2%
Maturity	8.4%	7.2%	5.3%	7.6%
Positive Support System	6.7%	3.6%	0.0%	4.8%
Other	3.4%	2.7%	10.5%	3.6%
Don't Know	4.2%	5.4%	5.3%	4.8%
Don't Want to Leave	5.9%	6.3%	0.0%	5.6%

*Youth chose more than one answer

Chapter Four

Conclusion

To gain a better understanding of the CSEC population in New York City, the John Jay College research team recruited a sample of 329 youth using RDS methods to 1) make estimates of the size of the population, and 2) to provide a reliable and ethnographically rich description of the characteristics, experiences, and service needs of the local CSEC population. The project challenged the researchers in several ways – methodologically, physically and emotionally – that were not fully appreciated at the beginning of the study.

Methodologically, the initial definition of the problem that was based upon previous research and others' experience with the CSEC population led the John Jay College research team to plan for a study that was substantially different from the methods and techniques that were eventually employed during the data collection phase of the project. The adjustments to the research plan that were made in the field – such as the abandonment of the idea of meeting the youth where ever they pleased and interviewing them inside of a rental car, in favor of meeting youth in a conveniently-located public park where their friends could linger nearby and provide safety – challenged the researchers to quickly shift gears and abandon many of their notions about who the youth were, where and when they could be engaged, and what they were willing talk about.

Physically and organizationally, and partially because of our misconceptions about the population, the research team was not prepared for the large number of youth who were recruited to the study when the data collection phase began. The initial deluge of recruits – on some days, more than 20 interviews were completed – overwhelmed our capacity to collect data fast enough: the maximum amount of cash withdrawals given by ATMs were exceeded almost on a daily basis, the digital recorders became filled to capacity, the batteries wore out in the recorders, and the mosquito-bitten researchers were exhausted by the end of many evenings.

Emotionally, the impact of recruiting and interviewing the youth was substantially greater than the researchers had anticipated, but it seemed not so much on the youth. Indeed, the IRB had worried about the traumatizing effect that a truly probing interview might have on the youth, and because of that concern, the researchers had purposively developed a questionnaire that did not attempt to “dig too deep.” In that regard, the research team did well and only one or two youth who were interviewed had an adverse reaction to the interview process (none required professional consultation), but no one had considered the impact that the work might have on the members of the research team. The researchers were clearly affected by what they saw and heard, and most reported that over the course of several weeks when it finally abated, they had disturbing dreams and difficulty sleeping.

Strengths and limits of the methods employed

This project broke new ground in the study of hidden populations. In using Respondent Driven Sampling (RDS) methods to recruit a sample of youth, the study demonstrated that the CSEC population was highly networked rather than composed of isolated pockets of youth who were connected by a few fragile bridges. The experience that the research team had in conducting this project helped spark our interest in further exploring the potential of combining

RDS and Social Network Analysis (SNA) to understanding social networks in general, and the CSEC population in particular. In the summer of 2007, Kirk Dombrowski organized a symposium on RDS and SNA that was held at John Jay College, that attracted several prominent researchers in the overlapping fields of RDS and SNA.²⁸ The purpose of the symposium was to explore ways to generate network topologies from the partial spanning-tree graphs produced by the RDS methodology. The RDS spanning trees by definition lack cycle data and differential degree evidence (estimated for the population, but lacking for individuals themselves). Several methodologies were discussed including a new randomized edge assignment protocol (repeated over a large number of iterations) that was developed by the John Jay research team. This protocol was able to estimate accurately a number of network parameters on already known networks (Khan, Dombrowski and Curtis 2007²⁹). We are continuing to develop this methodology for application to partly sampled networks such as the CSEC population in New York City.

Yet for all of the innovations that the research team made implementing cutting-edge research methods in the recruitment of sexually exploited youth, they were also forced to make some compromises that weakened the quality of the data. In particular, the original number of 200 youth that the project intended to recruit via RDS proved to be too small to adequately represent some portions of the CSEC population that were known to exist (especially pimped girls), and thus, the project extended its recruitment goal beyond the original target to help ensure that subgroups within the CSEC population were adequately represented (i.e., that there were a sufficient number of them to perform meaningful statistical measures). At the end of the data collection phase, 329 youth had been recruited by the project, but the limitations of time and money and our desire to ensure that some sub-populations were included in the sample, led the researchers to discontinue expanding the various recruitment trees according to the rules that govern RDS recruitment near the end of the project. As the project approached the target of 200 interviews, the researchers became concerned about an insufficient number of girls versus boys in the sample, especially pimped girls, and they eventually instructed subjects that they could no longer recruit boys, only girls. This, of course, considerably diminished the capacity of the project to sustain recruitment trees, and while it did boost the number of girls recruited into the project, it did so at the expense of the quality of the RDS data, which was skewed by this new directed recruitment strategy. One remedy to this problem would be to recruit a much larger sample (as was the case with recent CDC studies of HIV that aimed for at least 500 research subjects) so that recruitment trees grow long enough to ensure adequate representation from subgroups in the larger network (or determine that sub-groups are not sufficiently connected to make them part of the extended network), but this project did not have the luxury of time or money to recruit such a large number of youth.

In focusing the questionnaire on current market conditions and avoiding questions that might lead the youth to feel emotionally distressed, the project also compromised the depth of information that might have otherwise been collected about their lives. Yet we would also argue

²⁸ Frost, Simon "Modeling Recruitment Dynamics and Homophily in RDS."; Gile, Krista and Mark Handcock "Fitting Social Network Models to Partially Observed Network Data."; Wendel, Travis "Using and Implementing RDS Research Protocols."; Goel, Sharad and Matt Salganik "RDS Sampling among Incomplete Networks."; Volz, Eric "Dynamic Infection Models for RDS sampling trees." *Working Papers Presented at RDS-SNA Symposium, John Jay College, August 2007*

²⁹ Khan, Dombrowski, & Curtis (2007). "Preliminary findings on estimating network parameters by sampling completions of RDS forests." *Working Paper Presented at RDS-SNA Symposium, John Jay College, August 2007*

that much of the information that we might want to know about these youth – such as which factors from their childhood were most critical to their subsequent entry into CSEC markets – is not best collected retrospectively because people have very selective memories that may edit out the very factors that were critical in their development while focusing attention on others that were not. But despite our intention of focusing on present-day behavior to avoid the emotional trauma or skewed accounts that asking about the past might elicit, many youth insisted on discussing their past anyway, and they often attempted to rationalize their behavior or their experiences with precisely the types of accounts that the researchers were careful to avoid asking about. We make no judgment about the veracity of many of these narratives, but in offering them as explanatory devices, many youth actively participated in constructing an identity for themselves that was sufficiently at odds with the picture of the CSEC population that we had expected to find.

RDS and Population Estimates

To estimate the size of the CSEC population in New York City, the project used two methods. In the first, using a “capture-recapture” methodology, the RDS-generated sample was compared with arrest records provided by the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) in 2005 and 2006, to calculate a population size of 3,946 youth. In the second, the research staff developed and tested a new population estimation technique – using “special seeds” – to serve as mutual cross-validation against the “capture-recapture” estimate of the population size. The mean value of the population estimate obtained using the special seeds was 3,769, which is comparable to the population estimate obtained by the traditional capture-recapture technique. The application of the new technique in this study shows considerable promise – as is readily seen in the confluence of estimates obtained through classical “capture-recapture” and the special seed technique. The theoretical hypotheses in which the special seed technique can be made to reliably generate population estimates are still under investigation.

One important caveat to the population estimates attempted in this study is that they calculate the number of youth that are likely to exist within the universe from which they sample, that is, they estimate the number of youth who stand a chance of getting recruited into the study, but not those who stand no chance of being recruited. The project demonstrated that it was possible to recruit pimped youth into the study, but there are some CSEC sub-groups that are likely to be excluded from this estimate, e.g., those who are trafficked into New York City from other countries to work in tightly controlled indoor environments, and whose lack of cultural and linguistic skills make it impossible for them to network with the larger universe of CSEC youth. To the degree that these sub-groups exist – and there is no doubt that some do exist – the CSEC population will be larger than what this study has estimated. Unfortunately, the methodology employed here cannot offer any insight into the size of this component of the CSEC population, and none of the youth that were recruited into the study offered any anecdotal information that hinted at the existence or prevalence of these youth. Other methods of investigation are required to gain insight into the number of these types of youth.

RDS Data and the composition of the CSEC Population

The RDS recruitment data called attention to unexpected findings in the research, first and foremost, the large number of boys that were recruited into the project. Even with the

alterations to the recruitment of research subjects that the research team implemented to favor the recruitment of girls, boys still outnumbered girls in the sample. And the RDS data on homophily showed that both boys and girls were slightly more inclined to recruit other boys into the study. Yet the number of boys in the market is likely to be less than what RDS estimated for them because 35% of the boys were determined to be ineligible for the study (because they were too old or not involved in CSEC activities). Because of the large number of boys that were recruited in the initial stages of data collection, the project altered the recruitment process to favor girls, especially pimped girls. But one interesting finding from an analysis of the recruitment process was that non-pimped youth, including males, successfully recruited pimped youth, but pimped girls did not recruit other pimped youth. The project demonstrated that it is possible to recruit a sample of pimped youth, but the patterns of recruitment suggest that pimped youth are not very adept at recruiting each other.

Nearly the entire sample is contained in 5 major “trees,” with the largest tree extending to 12 waves of recruitment, far more than needed to produce a representative sample of the population, and the second-largest tree (begun by a non-eligible research subject!) extending to 9 waves of recruitment. The findings regarding the geographic distribution of research subjects revealed that youth from all 5 boroughs of New York City were recruited into the study, as well as youth from across the country and abroad. A larger sample may produce slightly different estimated population proportions by birth, but the sample appears to have accomplished the goal of geographic representation of youth.

The RDS recruitment process also produced an estimate of the proportions of the various racial, ethnic or national identities claimed by the youth within the overall CSEC population. Black youth were estimated to be the largest single group within the population, but there was a significant presence of other groups, including 23% whites, 23% Hispanics, and 22% of the youth who identified as “multi-racial.” But in terms of who recruited who: white youth were very likely to recruit other white youth; Black youth had a slight tendency to recruit other Blacks, but Hispanic youth were somewhat more likely to recruit non-Hispanics than members of their own group. And multi-racial youth were just as likely to recruit another multi-racial youth as they were a member of another group.

The RDS data include the cases of those youth that were later determined to be ineligible for the study (and whose data were excluded from the CSEC analysis). They cannot be excluded from the RDS database because their exclusion would disable the ability to connect subjects to each other. But besides keeping them in the database to allow the RDS data to be analyzed, these cases were useful (or will be useful) for several reasons. First, from a review of the RDS recruitment data, ineligible subjects were often adept at recruiting youth that were eligible; clearly, they were participants in the web of social relationships that included CSEC youth. For example, of the 64 non-credible males, 21 recruited credible male subjects, and 18 recruited credible females. In addition to their utility in recruiting eligible youth, the data from the non-credible cases are likely to provide additional insights in subsequent analyses. For example, those subjects that were found to be ineligible because they were older than 18 may serve to model the developmental trajectories that youth are likely to follow if they remain in the market, and a comparison of these cases to the eligible youth may offer insight to policy makers and professionals who seek to short-circuit youths’ participation in the market. By closely examining excluded subjects that were not believed to be participants in CSEC markets to see how they constructed idealized images of themselves as commercially sexually exploited children, the researchers will look for narratives that illustrate dominant and emerging cultural norms within

the wider youth culture that enable the expansion of CSEC markets. In short, while the existence of ineligible cases complicates our ability to analyze the data, they also provide unique opportunities for additional analyses.

Demographic profile of a complex and diversifying population of youth

The sample of 249 eligible youth was diverse in a variety of ways – by gender, by race/ethnicity, and by nationality or place of origin. The large number of boys that were recruited was a surprise to the researchers because even though boys had been occasionally mentioned by policymakers, practitioners and some researchers prior to the beginning of data collection for this project, no one focused on boys as a significant segment of the market or said anything about the unique sets of problems – quite different from those of girls – that these boys face. For example, heterosexual boys that described their disgust and shame about having sex with men for money provided some of the most riveting, harrowing and heartbreaking accounts to come out of the mouths of the youth. And yet, they remain almost entirely invisible in the shadow cast by the stereotypical CSEC victims: pimped girls. While we might argue about the relative proportion of boys versus girls in the CSEC market, there can be little doubt that boys are far more numerous in CSEC markets than is commonly acknowledged. Policy makers and practitioners who are concerned about the growth of CSEC markets need to account for and respond to all of the youth that are swept into it, yet there is scant discussion about boys, and no services for them at all.

African American and “mixed race” youth made up nearly half of the sample, while about a quarter of the sample of youth was white or Hispanic. The majority of the youth in the sample said that they were born in New York City, but many were currently homeless, with 32% of them “living in the street,” though girls more often than boys described themselves as living in their “family home,” in a “friend’s home,” or in “another home.” These findings – that many youth are from New York City and less than half of them are homeless – lend credence to the anecdotal reports from the police and others that that have characterized an increase in CSEC markets over the last several years as being fueled local youth rather than youth imported from outside of New York City, especially from “down south.” There are no reliable statistics that can inform us about the composition of CSEC markets in the past, but it seems entirely plausible that there has been an increase in the number of local neighborhood youth that are participants in CSEC markets, and if so, it begs the question of what is going on in New York City neighborhoods to produce these outcomes.

The reason why some youth become participants in CSEC markets is complex, but the chronic lack of jobs, and hence money, for youth in many neighborhoods is an important factor. Despite the difficulties that youth in New York City have in finding employment, many youth in the sample said that they were actively “looking for a job,” and that they did not like what they were doing to earn money. Indeed, 38 youth said that they had other sources of income besides participating in CSEC markets, including panhandling, dealing drugs and a wide variety of odd jobs. Thus, the most obvious explanation about why youth entered the market, and the one that they most frequently mentioned, was economic necessity, and 95% of them said that they exchanged sex for money. Far fewer youth said that they exchanged sex for other things like shelter, drugs, or food and items such as clothing or electronic goods. These findings are similar to those reported in other research (Thukral & Ditmore, 2003; Dalla, 2000; Bagley & Young, 1987; Gragg, et al., 2007; Murphy & Venkatesh, 2006; Silbert & Pines, 1982; Weisberg, 1985;

West, 1993). Clearly, more attention to the well-being of children in poor neighborhoods of color is one prescription for reducing the number of youth that are pulled into CSEC markets.

Entering the CSEC market

Though girls, boys and transgender youth all appear to have entered the CSEC market at about the same age – about 15 and a half, slightly older for transgenders – there appeared to be real differences in how they entered the market. When the research team prepared for conducting this study, pimps were believed to be important, indeed, dominant actors in CSEC markets, including initiating youth into the market. In fact, we did not find that pimps were key actors for initiating many youth into the market or in controlling them once they were in the market. But many youth were averse to describing themselves as having been manipulated by a pimp, and when the researchers began calling pimps “market facilitators,” many youth seemed far more willing to discuss their relationships with them. By the end of data collection phase, the project had recruited 41 youth who were currently working for pimps or what we referred to as *market facilitators* when talking with the youth; 31 were girls and 10 were boys. Yet it seemed clear that youth knew pimps more than worked for them: when asked if they knew any pimps, half of those who responded to that question (n=44) said “yes” and half said “no.” But their responses about knowing other pimps varied by gender: 68% of those who said that they knew other pimps were girls, only 30% were boys. Pimps are clearly more of a problem with girls than boys or transgender youth, and the difficulty that the project had in recruiting pimped girls is perhaps reflective of the degree to which they are not (always) free to interact with others – and that is reason enough for pimps to continue to receive the high level of scrutiny that they get from law enforcement and criminal justice community.

Friends and Peers

Girls, boys and transgender youth all reported surprisingly high percentages of their “friends” as responsible for their entry to the markets (46%, 44%, and 68%, respectively), though some of these “friends” seemed as though they were simply acting as surrogate recruiters for pimps. Still, most friends did not appear to have or need pimps; they were already deeply involved in CSEC markets themselves, and many youth said that their friends put them directly in touch with their first customers. If the role of “friends” in initiating youth into CSEC markets is as large as the data suggest – nearly half of the time – this complicates our view of their victimization, so often seen as the outcome of adult manipulation and exploitation. It suggests that youth turn to their friends first at critical junctures in their lives – perhaps because there are so few choices available to them for help – and that our efforts to short-circuit their entry into the market may benefit from greater attempts to recognize and provide appropriate responses when these crises happen.

Many youths’ accounts of their initiation into CSEC markets were accompanied by narratives of economic desperation, but some young people did not talk about their need for money; instead, they described social contexts where sex work seemed integral to their peer networks, and these networks seemed to draw in others over time. CSEC peer groups were not only vital to youths’ entry into the market, but also to their ability to engage the market and their decision to remain in “the life.” Some of their networks were quite extensive and over one quarter of the teens claimed to know 20 or more CSEC youth, an additional 20% of the youth

said that they knew between 10 and 20 other CSEC youth. There was a widespread ethos of among CSEC youth of helping each other out, even if they did not know each other very well, and this orientation extended into the market and beyond. Despite the competition that existed in the market, some youth said that they felt an obligation to help their peers find customers, and provide emotional and financial support. This impulse was partially an outcome of the strong bonds that some youth developed with members of their peer group, but was also likely the outcome of the isolation that was so deeply expressed by many youth and the lack of any other source of help to solve their problems. Policy makers and practitioners who seek to provide assistance to CSEC youth should be aware of the impact that peer groups have upon some youth and capitalize upon the network ties that exist among youth rather than always treating youth with secrecy and as individuals.

For many youth, it seemed, the language of prostitution had become normalized, and even though several said that they felt “peer pressure” to join in, in general, their narratives were not so much about being “pressured” to participate in CSEC markets as they were about fascination and curiosity with what appeared to be an emerging “lifestyle.” Some youth stated that the *fast* money their friends were making by prostituting was too good of an opportunity to pass up, so they decided to follow suit. It is difficult for the researchers to know what to make of these narratives: perhaps they were recited as a defense mechanism to avoid talking about painful memories, perhaps they truly believed these things, or perhaps they were trying to impress the researchers with shocking accounts: but whatever it was – and maybe it was all of them – there was a remarkable consistency to many of the accounts that prevented it from being simply the ravings of a quirky individual or two. There was a shared and dangerous narrative here: one that denied their victimization. The proliferation of this narrative poses a real challenge to policy makers and practitioners who are concerned about the spread of CSEC markets: to the degree that this narrative enters the mainstream – and it is a complex narrative fed from multiple sources – the stigma that surrounds CSEC activities is likely to decrease and more youth may be lured into the market.

Customers

There were few surprises with regard to the findings about customers: almost all of the youth said that they served male customers, and the majority said that they predominately served white males between 25 and 55 years of age, with a preference for older white males with a lot of money to spend. Even though a third of the youth said that they also served African American clients, a number of teens said that they would not take them as customers because they feared violence or getting ripped off by them. It would be interesting to know whether these sentiments were truly the outcome of experience or simply reflected stereotypical fears about black men; further study is needed. But regardless of who the customer was, having a steady customer (or several of them), was quite important to many youth for a source of steady cash or when they might immediately need something (e.g., money, food, clothes, or shelter). The prices that youth said that they charged their customers varied considerably and depended on several factors besides the duration and the type of sex that was requested, including the outward appearance of the customer, the cost of posting an ad online, and drug consumption needs.

But one unanticipated finding with regard to customers was that 11% of the girls and 40% of the boys said that they had served a female client (including 14 boys that said that they exclusively served female clients). The number of girls that reported women as customers was

surprisingly high, as was the number of boys reporting female clients, though the researchers suspect that the number of boys was overinflated. Boys that participated in CSEC markets almost always found that more men than women sought them out, but for those boys who were not homosexual, or who wanted to avoid what they perceived to be a stigma attached to homosexuality, admitting that one's clientele was *exclusively* male was difficult. These boys, the researchers suspect, attempted to cloud their participation in CSEC markets by claiming to serve both genders as clients. But regardless of any over-reporting by boys, the presence of women in the market as customers was surprising, though more information is needed on the details of their participation (for example, whether they more often access youth through the internet or other methods that offer some degree of anonymity).

How youth found their customers often varied on how long they had been in "the life", their access to the internet and cell phones, and the density and reach of their CSEC peer networks. About half of the youth found customers on the streets, and this method was often coupled with trolling the internet or using a cell phone network to reach clients. The places where teens said that they went with customers were extremely varied, but over half of the youth said that they went to the customers' apartments and nearly half said that they used hotels throughout the city. Many youth said that they frequented areas throughout the city that were known pick-up spots to meet customers, but of the 139 youth who said that they worked on the streets, only 37% said that they always or sometimes worked the "tracks" (specific streets or corners known for prostitution). By working the same areas (the "tracks") every week, youth were able to forge alliances and friendships with other exploited youth, and establish mentorships with the older, more seasoned sex workers. The youth named a number of different and specific tracks throughout the city, with the West Village the most popular, followed by Hunt's Point in the Bronx and the Port Authority bus station in Manhattan. Nearly half of the youth said that the customer typically approached them with a proposition. About a quarter of the youth said that they approached the customer, though at well-known prostitution strolls these methods seemed interchangeable.

The use of cell phones and the internet to build and maintain networks of peers and customers appeared to be a growing phenomenon among some youth, particularly those that worked in Manhattan. Some teens said that they were active participants on a variety of internet sites, and several said that their initial entry into the CSEC market had been through the internet. Those that used the internet said that there were a variety of benefits to working online, including the reduced risk of arrest, the convenience of arranging to meet customers online, the anonymity (though customers' internet addresses provided, in some youth's opinions, a measure of safety), greater control over working conditions, greater ability to screen customers, and more control over negotiating prices.

The evidence seemed to suggest that this segment of the market was growing much faster than others, and many youth expressed interest in managing their participation in the market through the internet, often in partnership with others. For example, on one occasion, as the researchers approached a large group of youth waiting for the interviews to begin for the day, they overheard three boys planning to place an ad on the internet. When asked about it, they explained that each of them already had an ad on Craig's List (where ads can be posted for free), but they wanted to place an ad on "rentboy.com" in hopes of attracting more customers, which they planned to share. But rentboy.com was a pay site, and placing an ad there cost \$68, and they were trying to figure out how to pay the fee. Like these boys, the existence of a large number of youth who use the internet to meet customers is another fault line that challenges our simplistic

views about the sexual exploitation of youth: removed from the street and having a measure of independence and control over their working conditions, it becomes more difficult, indeed impossible, to cast them in the classic mold of the victim. And yet they were victims, maybe the perfect victims, who thought that they were living “the life”, when “the life” was living them. For policy makers and practitioners, these youth represent very difficult cases, but one starting point is low-threshold, drop-in services that offer a safe and nurturing environment for them, a place where they can be incrementally brought back into the mainstream. A few such places currently exist in New York City, but more are needed.

Pimps and Market Facilitators

While pimps were not the dominant actors in CSEC markets in New York City that the researchers had imagined to be at the outset of the study, they clearly dominated those youth who worked for them. The majority of the 41 youth who said that they currently had a pimp, said that most of them were male, but 4 youth said that they had female pimps or market facilitators. More than half of the youth with a pimp said that they met their pimp primarily “through a friend,” “on the street,” “at a group home” (for girls), and less often on the internet, at private parties, and at youth shelters. Several of the youth said that they or one other youth were the only ones working for their pimp, but 31 of the 41 said that their pimp had more than 2 other youth. Despite the somewhat low number of current and former pimps that were reported by the youth in the sample, it seems clear that pimps play major roles in some parts of the market, especially in the outer boroughs of New York City, where they are able to exert influence over specific “tracks” and use local “hot sheet motels” to conduct business.

The researchers expected that most of the youth who said that they had a pimp would not have good things to say about their experiences with him/her, and with a few exceptions, that was the case; many of the youth recounted harrowing experiences at the hands of pimps, and they reported witnessing a great deal of violence against other teens and feeling helpless to do anything about it. In many instances, pimps became violent with youth when they did not want to work, but they did not seem to need an excuse to get physical. Yet despite the violence and abuse, some youth said that they had been with their pimp for so long that they were resigned to working for him and had difficulty imagining how they could break away. One unanticipated finding that was viewed with skepticism by the researchers was that youth were not uniform in their describing pimps as violent exploiters of children. Indeed, several of them spoke somewhat fondly about their pimps or *market facilitators*, and portrayed them as protectors or father figures. Several teens mentioned that, although they gave all their earnings to their pimp, they felt that they had their needs taken care of and that the business was organized. Others said that they relied on their pimp to handle abusive clients. While we lack sufficient information about the nature of the relationship that these youth have with their pimps, clearly there is a strong bond between them that will require a sustained and robust effort by practitioners to break. For policy makers and practitioners, reaching these tightly-controlled youth is likely to remain problematic and perhaps the job of law enforcement, but several of their peers believed that they could be reached – and helped – by aggressive outreach efforts. Though it is unclear whether outreach can reach and engage the most despondent and tightly-controlled pimped youth, both venue-based and network-based efforts should be attempted.

Violence

Violence at the hands of customers, pimps and other prostituted youth was something that many of the youth said that they had to contend with on a daily basis, and from the accounts that some youth provided of their experiences with violence, there was good reason to protect themselves. Many said that they ran away from violent situations or gave into the abuse to avoid further damage or harm, but others chose to fight back. Of those who chose to fight, boys more often used their fists to defend themselves, while girls were more likely to carry a weapon such as a knife or blade or pepper spray. Customers tended to be the youth's greatest threat and some teens told harrowing stories of being kidnapped and held hostage by customers. But even though customers sometimes inflicted serious physical damage on youth, many teens said that they returned to the market after a short break. In addition to the dangers of violence from customers, some youth noted that they had been attacked and robbed by other prostituted youth over issues of poaching customers and turf. And of course, pimps, as described above, were also a source of considerable violence, and this was clearly one reason why so many youth were leery of them.

As traumatic as these various incidents of violence must have been, most youth rattled off the accounts in somewhat emotionless terms, and they seemed to accept them as part of the danger of the business. It is difficult to gauge the psychological impact that these events might have had on their attitudes, orientations and behaviors, but it seems clear that most of them had little place to find solace, comfort or real help in dealing with the aftermath of them. Clearly, these youth could benefit from individual and group counseling to allow them to openly discuss and deal with their experiences with violence.

Law Enforcement Encounters

According to the youth in the sample, encounters with the police were frequent, but they rarely led to an arrest. Though youth did not report many arrests, many claimed that they were verbally harassed and unfairly given citations by the police. Still others said that they were sexually assaulted by police or forced to provide sexual services for free. When it came to arrests, nearly 40% said that had never been arrested and 21% had been arrested only once, 8% had been arrested ten or more times. Drug possession was the most common charge, followed by prostitution and theft. Aside from specific NYPD operations like *Operation Spotlight*, most youth did not report that the risk of arrest for prostitution was very high. But in reviewing the data, it is clear that there was a clearly gendered pattern to youths' interactions with law enforcement. Boys reported a greater number of arrests and a high frequency of arrest than girls. As might be expected in New York City, where the quality-of-life campaign has embraced aggressive stop-and-frisk tactics as one of the premier methods to nip crime in the bud, it is hardly a surprise that boys reported significantly more encounters with the police than girls, especially for charges like "disorderly conduct, drug possession, jumping the turnstile in the subway, or trespassing." Girls, on the other hand, surpassed boys only in two categories of arrest: "loitering for prostitution" and "prostitution," though, somewhat surprisingly, they essentially reported the same number of arrests for the latter charge.

The high frequency of encounters with police coupled with the low number of reported arrests by the youth in the sample may reflect the ill-defined position that CSEC youth occupy vis-à-vis the police and the limited number of options that police officers have with regard to dealing with the problem. Police officers could clearly benefit from training by service providers

about the scope of the CSEC problem and the resources, albeit limited, that are available to the youth. Of course, greater coordination between law enforcement source and service providers is urgently needed to ensure that problems areas that are identified by the police are responded to quickly via aggressive outreach by service providers.

Current Services for Youth

Many CSEC youth lack social support networks, like families, to help them cope with problems. Among the youth in the sample, less than 10% said that they could go to a parent if they were in trouble, and another 17% said that they could rely on other family members or family friends to help them out. Fully 17% of the youth said that they had “no one” they could go to in times of trouble or doubt, and only 22% said that they could rely on friends for support. To fill this wide gap, New York City has over a dozen agencies that provide services to runaway and homeless youth, 21 years old and under. Among the services that are provided are included: emergency and transitional housing, counseling, food, clothing, showers, employment opportunities, educational classes, job training, legal services, medical services and life skills training.

Youth reported that they heard about these youth service agencies primarily through word of mouth and outreach, and over two-thirds reported that they had visited a youth service agency, and in most cases, had experience with more than one. In many instances, youth reported that they went to agencies to “hang out with friends” in what they considered a safe and friendly environment – though there were some notable exceptions to this – and they took advantage of a variety of services that were offered at some agencies. Many youth reported that they built enduring relationships with the staff and counselors at those organizations, though there were a few complaints from youth about the lack of attention that they received from overworked staff at some of the agencies. Most of the complaints that youth voiced about their experiences at social service agencies revolved around housing problems and the rules regarding 30-day and 90-day shelters that kept returning them to the streets. Clearly, more shelter and housing for CSEC youth is needed.

Despite the availability of services to youth in New York City, one-third of the youth in the sample said that they had not visited an agency; some said that they did not need help, others said that they did not know about the agencies or that they were too embarrassed or ashamed to seek help. Aggressive outreach efforts – perhaps through peer-directed recruitment – are needed to engage the segment of the CSEC population that is not currently receiving services.

Reflections on “the Life”

When the youth were asked if they would like to leave “the life”, 87% said, yes, but most quickly added that they were doing what they had to do to survive. Many youth talked at length about the shame, stigma, degradation and loneliness that they felt. They added that being labeled and stigmatized by their family, peers, and society overall, left them with low self-esteem and self-worth, which often resulted in an inability to leave “the life.” Beside the self-loathing that they experienced from participating in CSEC markets, one of the youths’ biggest dislikes was providing sexual services to strangers, and the risk of being raped or killed weighed most on their minds.

Despite the fear that they expressed about the violence and dangerousness of the market, there was an attitude among many youth that they would survive, and that this was simply a stage in their life. Many youth said that they wanted to get out of “the life”, but they had deep concerns about finding a job and making money, especially a job that paid as much as they were making and that could support their lifestyle. Even though the overwhelming majority of youth said that they wanted to leave “the life”, most of them did not have a plan for accomplishing it, and many had difficulty envisioning an exit route. Most youth, it seemed, blamed themselves for their predicament, but they also admitted that, with help, they might have a chance to get out, or at least, improve their lives. More than half of the teens said that stable employment was necessary for them to leave the CSEC market, followed by education and stable housing. When asked what kind of help could be useful for teens like themselves, they suggested a number of services, including greater outreach initiatives and more non-judgmental counseling.