Outing the Stereotypes:

A Comparison of High Track Strolls in Montreal, Toronto & San Francisco

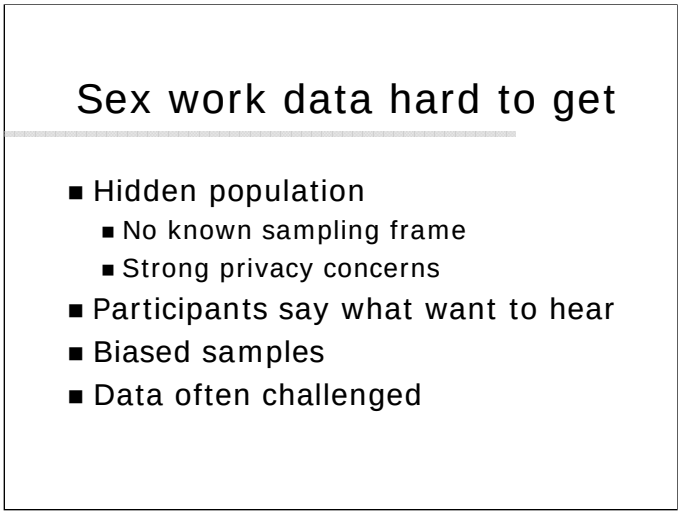
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and
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Program Abstract (original):

GENDERED SEX WORK: A COMPARISON OF HIGH TRACK STROLLS IN MONTREAL, TORONTO, AND SAN FRANCISCO

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This paper examines gender differences in the work of 345 sex workers in four different case studies (San Francisco, 1990; Montreal, 1991 and 1993; Toronto, 1994). Looking at work-specific characteristics, we find that women did not suffer inequalities of income from their sex work. They were, however, more prone than men and transgendered workers to occupational hazards such as arrest, physical assault, and sexual assault: a pattern that is in evidence across all four studies. Interestingly, the extent of the hazards was greater on the three Canadian sties than in San Francisco. These and other comparisons are made using the same instruments and fieldwork techniques across all four sites. In this way we are able to explore the extent to which our findings are valid, reliable, and generalizable beyond the time and place of each individual study.



Data about sex work and sex workers is difficult to access

•**Hidden population:**

- •- no known sampling frame, (can't get random or representative samples)
- •- strong privacy concerns since membership involves **stigmatized (and marginalized)** or illegal behavior (Heckathorn, 1997)

•**Participants say what want to hear**: charged with getting "reporting differences" rather than "true" differences (see Ine Vanwesenbeeck (2001) review for references)

•**Biased sample:** can't generalize

•**In Addition:** the data are often challenged (seen to be suspect) by lay people, by media people, and by academics,

It is no wonder that there are significant misunderstandings about sex work (especially street prostitution) in the media and the research community.

Despite contrary evidence

- Sex work and victimization still linked
- Dichotomies remain prevalent
  - Work or exploitation
  - Good girls versus bad girls
- Prostitution = ‘identity’ & not a revenue generating activity

Despite growing evidence to the contrary

-**Associations between sex work and victimization are still strong** (Vanwesenbeeck 2001:242)

-**Dichotomies remain prevalent**

Work or exploitation (e.g., recent document by le Conseil…)

Good girls versus bad girls

-**Prostitution remains an ‘identity’ rather than as a revenue generating activity** (Vanwesenbeeck 2001:279 citing Pheterson, 1990; Thiboutot reported in Colpron 2000:12).



Overcome distortions:

This research is designed to partially overcome these distortions by

- **Focusing on street prostitution as a revenue generating activity:** this is where most of the most prevalent misunderstandings occur.
- **making strategic comparisons** Prostitution studies rarely examine 'male prostitution' and it is even rarer to find women, men and transgendered workers together in the same study (Weinberg et al 1999 check re rarely done reference). So will include: **women, men, transgendered people in our study AND 4 different field sties.**
- **using a rigorous sampling strategy**.
- **Comparing working conditions by gender and location**
- **Using the same research instruments** (semi-structured interview 30-90 minutes**) and fieldwork technique**.

This approach allows us to describe the gendered structure of sex work even as we test the consistency of those results.

To the extent that we find similar patterns across political, cultural and law enforcement regimes, we can be more confident in our representation of sex work (at least with respect to street prostitution).

To the extent that we find understandable differences across these regimes (or across genders?), we improve our knowledge regarding the processes involved.

In both cases, we significantly improve the power of case study analysis for reliable generalizations.



Research Design

•**4 different field sites** : San Fran 1990, Montreal 1991, Montreal 1993, Toronto 1994

•**Similar stroll characteristics:** Women, transgenders in shared stroll area/ Men in adjacent stroll area / High track stroll / Adjacent to downtown centre

STROLL : the recognized area of streets for communicating (soliciting) for the purposes of prostitution. High track stroll : recognized as the high end (expensive) of the street trade

-**Different political social legal regimes: regarding municipal & policing practices** (prostitution per se not illegal in Canada); **accessibility of social and health services**

•**Different cultural histories: tolerance for diverse sexualities, presence (SF and TO) or absence (until recently Montreal) of strong prostitutes' rights movements**

•**Same field (& sampling) strategies:**

•PR activity (2 weeks – 1 month); Worked in pairs

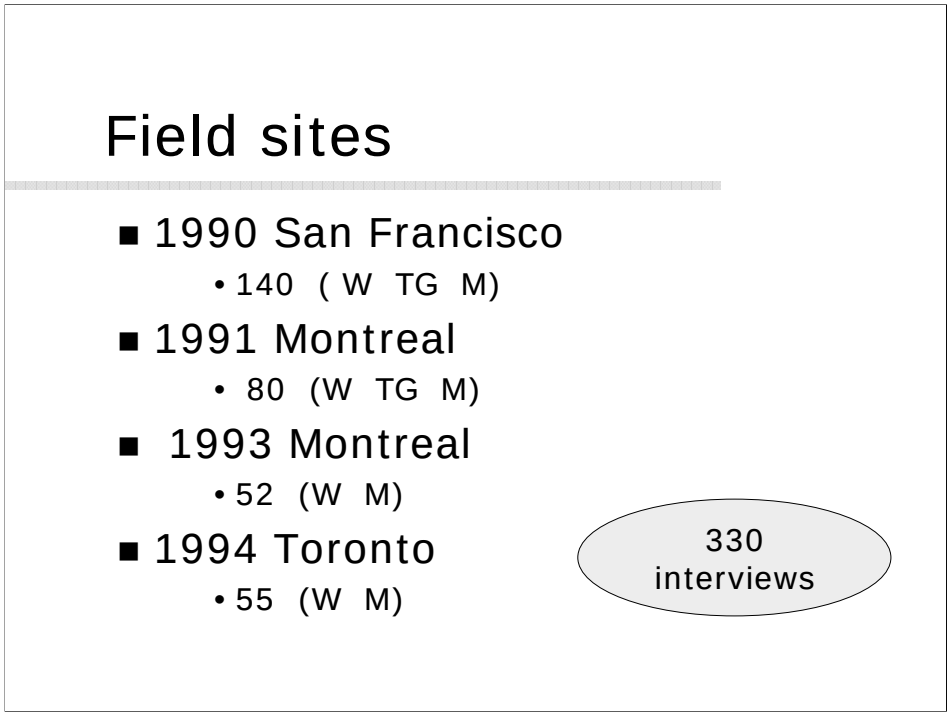
•Straight forward introductions; Sex workers drawn into the study

•Interviewed known sex workers

•Sample reflects stroll population (based on Stroll Counts which were conducted on a regular basis and which listed all regular workers by name)

•**Same research instruments:** 2 different instruments; face-to-face semi-structures interviews…etc

•SITES include…



Field sites and participants

1990 San Francisco : 140 sex workers:

46 women

48 transgenders

46 men

1991 Montreal: 80 sex workers

30 women

20 TGs (10 TVs / 10 TSs)

30 men

1993 Montreal: 52 sex workers

26 women

26 men

1994 Toronto: 55 sex workers

28 women

27 men

TOTAL: 327 sex workers



Topics to be analysed are driven by the literature and current popular understandings of street prostitution

Demographic image of prostitute as victim still prevalent (Vanwesenbeeck, 2001:279): workers young, uneducated, use drugs, alcohol, etc. So, included:

demographic variables such as: Age, education, relationship status, ethnicity,

Sex workers are still seen to be locked in and as having few opportunities to leave. So,include measures relating to:

ties to sex work

As mentioned above, a deviance/victimization perspective dominates the literature(Vanwesenbeeck, 2001) and so we focussed on:

working routines and earnings

Since looking at prostitution as work must also include an examination of the working conditions. So we have included a series of questions about:

risks and dangers on the job

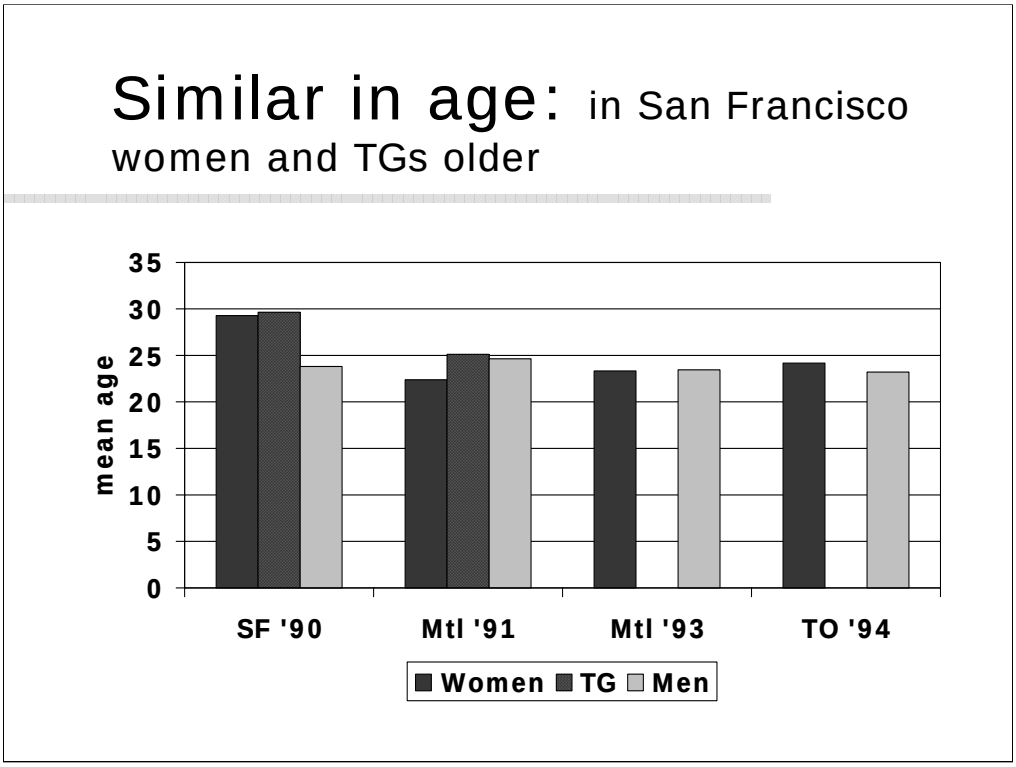
In short, we adopt a WORK focus and try to do some “adequate differentiation” at least with respect to street prostitution.

Demographic variables

- Age
- Education
- Ethnicity
- Relationship status
- Financial support of other

Demographic variables:selected 5 for our analysis:

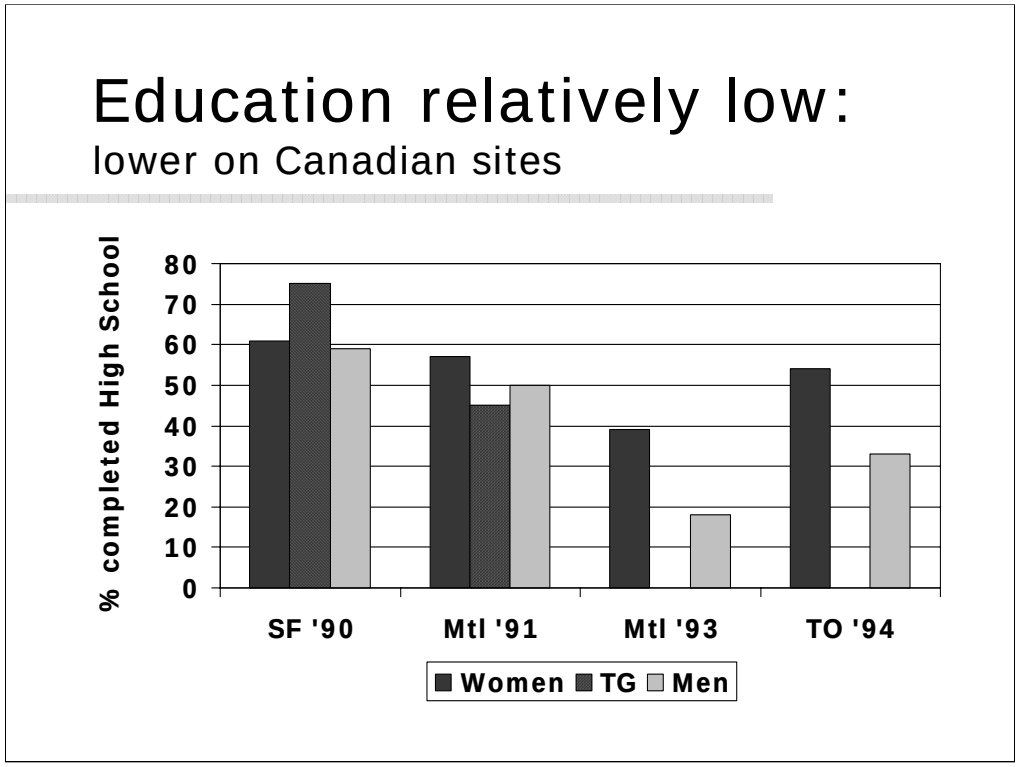
Age
Education
Relationship status
Financial support of other
Ethnicity



Similar in age:

But in San Francisco women and TGs somewhat older.

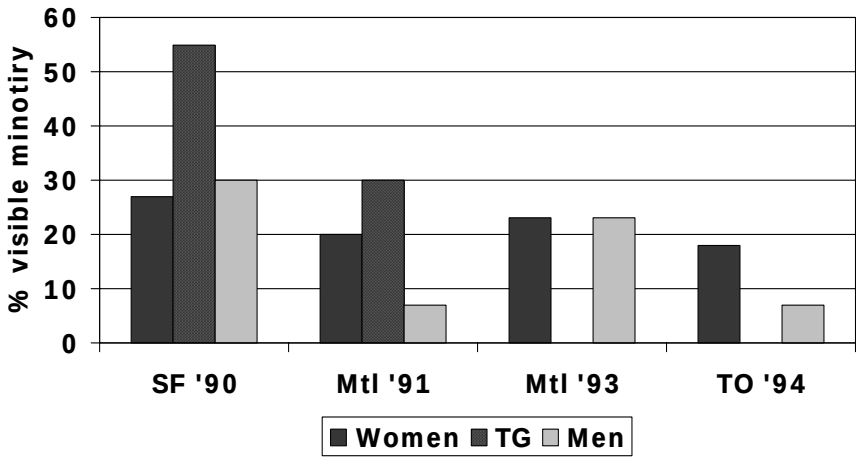
Know that Standard deviation (age range) is wider for women and TGs than for men.



Education relatively low:
and lower on Canadian sites

(histogram shows % completed high school)

Visible minority:
gender and site specific

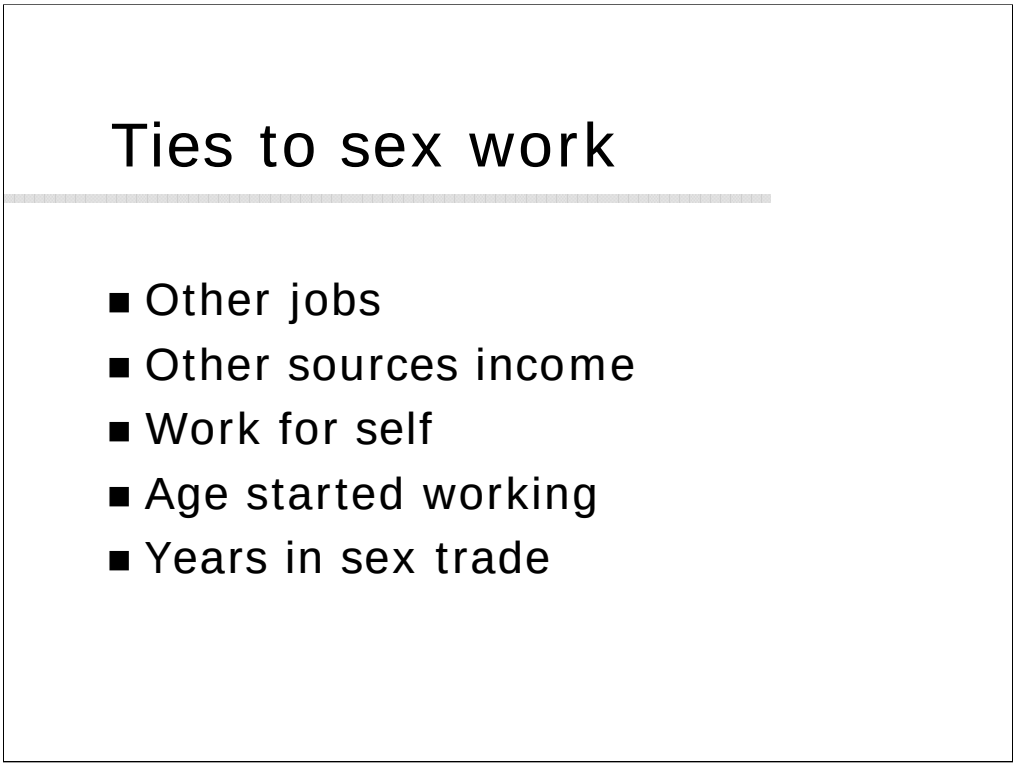


Visible minority: gender and perhaps location specific:

Visible minority status highest among TG sex workers

In San Francisco see a higher % of sex workers of all genders who are members of a visible minority.

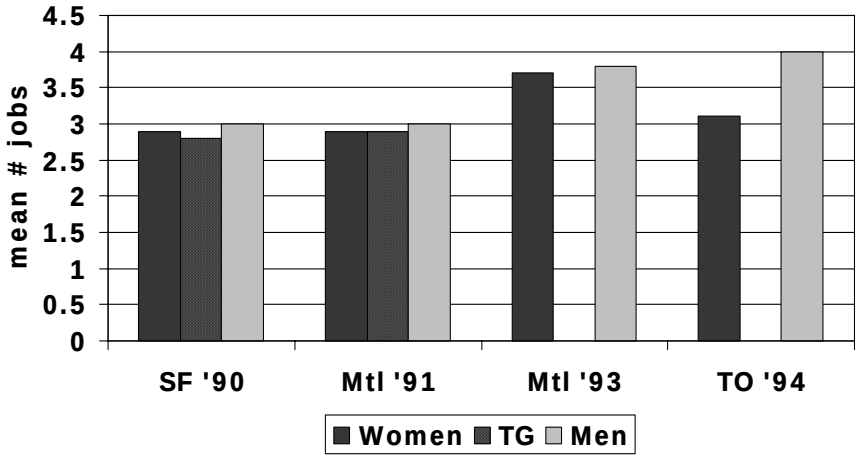
No slides today but: Women most likely to be married or cohabiting & most likely to be supporting someone financially (excluding pimp).



Ties to sex work

Other jobs
Other sources income
Work for self
Age started working (data available but not presented at SSSS)
Years in sex trade

Other work experience: all have had at least two other jobs



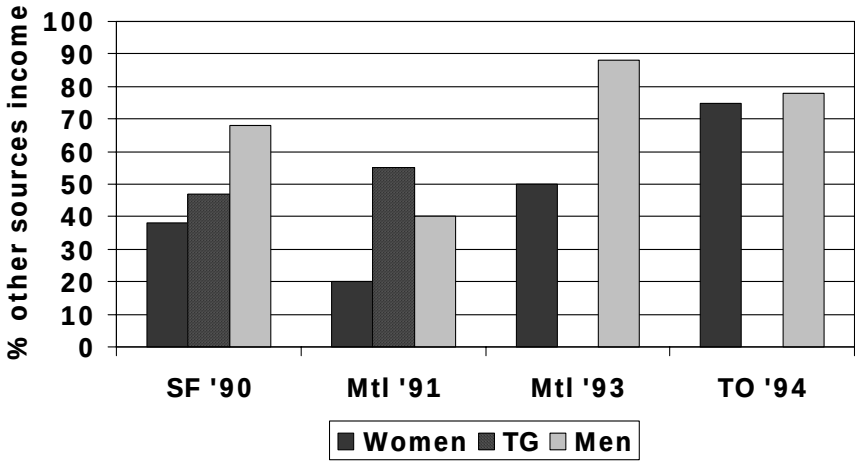
non sex work jobs:

All have had experience with at least three other jobs either before or while doing sex work.

SF & Mtl based on listing of non sex work jobs “up to three”

Mtl & TO based on number of non sex work jobs in the “last five job periods”.

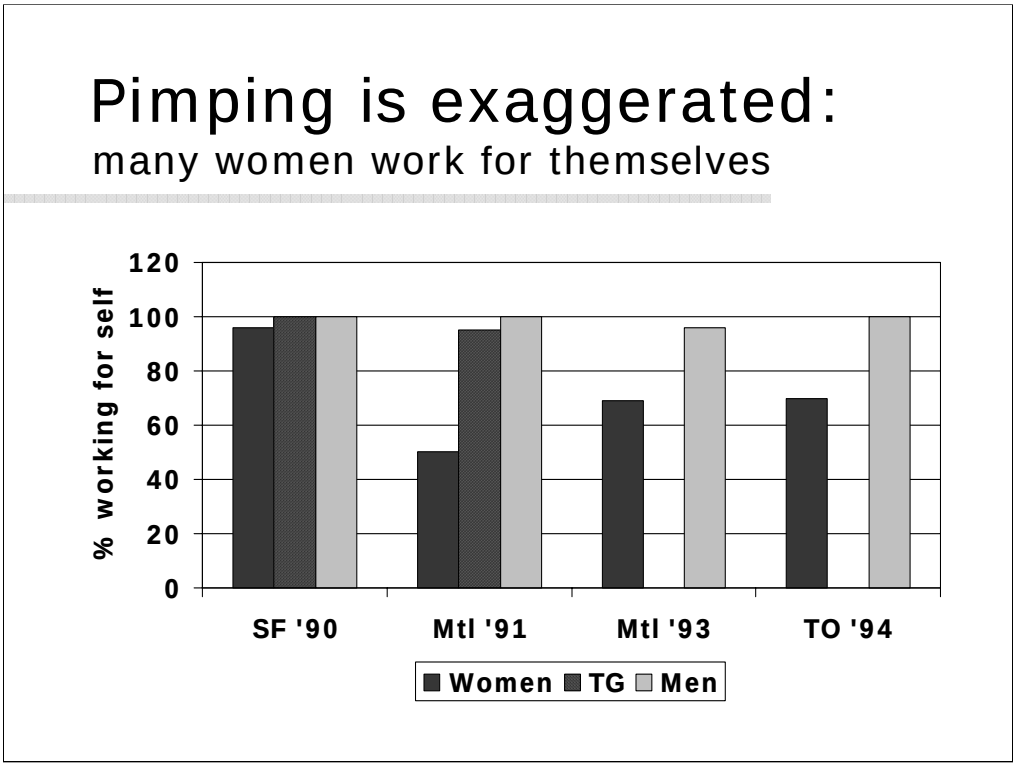
Women least likely to have other sources $$



Other sources income: varies by gender and location

-women least likely to have other sources on 3 of 4 sites (in TO ‘94 seems equitable)

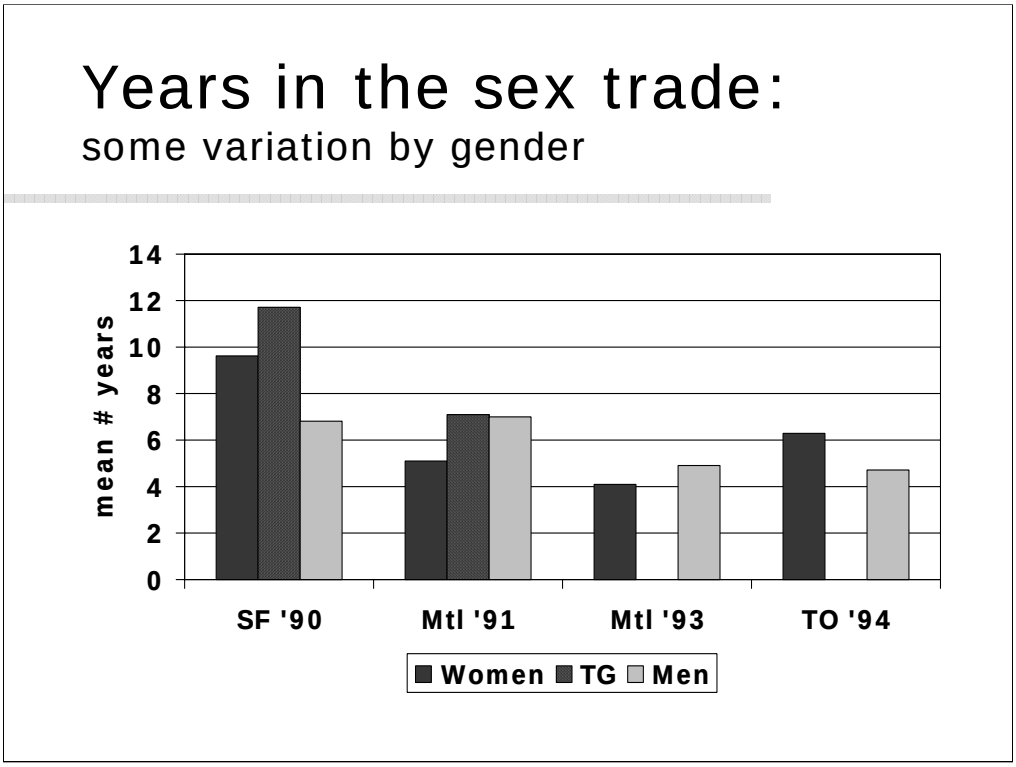
-other sources more available on Canadian sites, at least for men (?)



Pimping is exaggerated:

All men (and TGs) and majority of women work for themselves.

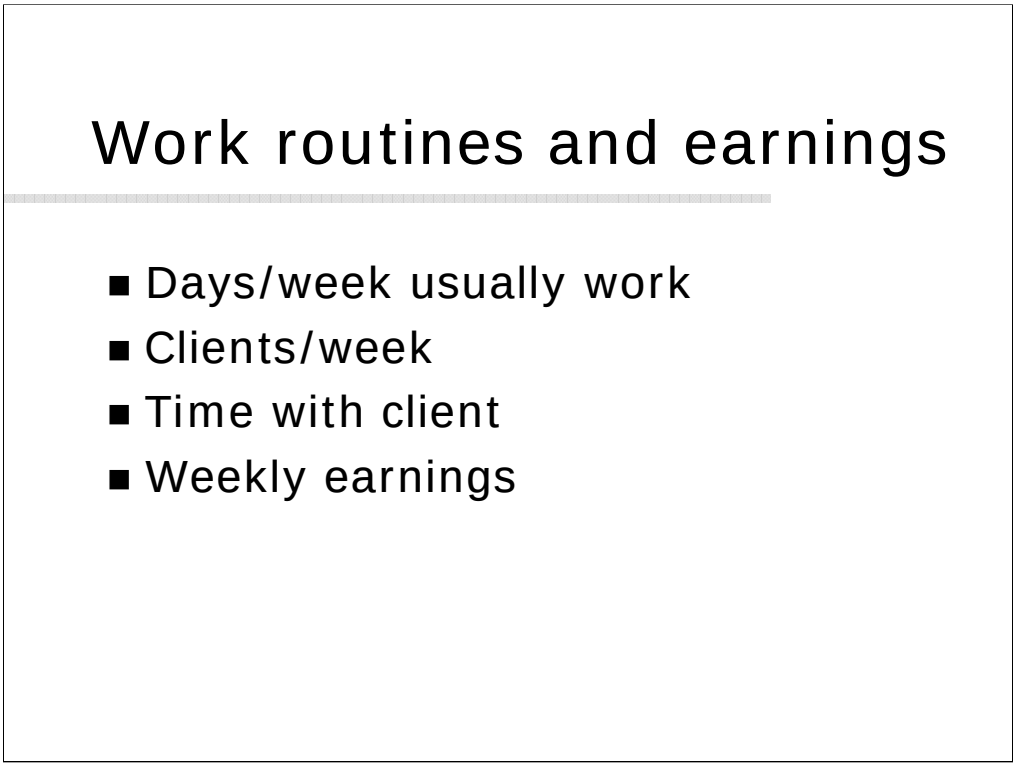
With respect to “reporting” versus “true” differences, we also know that the women who work for themselves are older, have more education, see fewer clients, have shorter hours, are more likely to be single than women who say they work for someone else. They also were older when they left home (see Prostitution Portraits: A Cautionary tale (IASR 2001)).



Years in the sex trade: some variation by gender

-Women and TGs (especially in San Francisco) have been in the trade longer than men

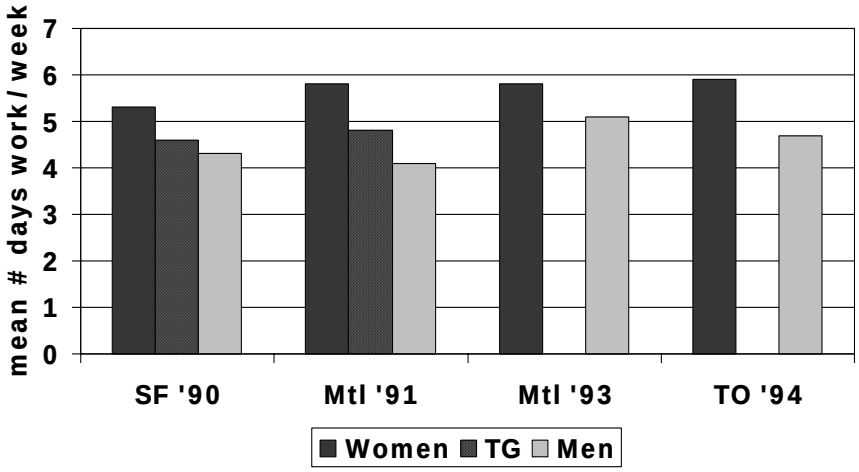
- gender pattern similar on all 4 sites



Work routines and earnings

Day/week work
Clients/week
Time with client
Weekly earnings

Women work longest week

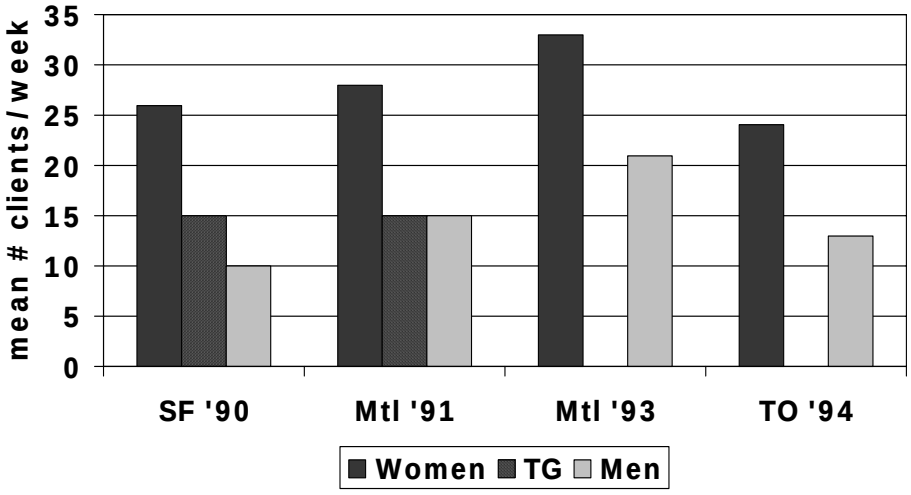


Days/week usually work:

Women(and TGs) work more days/week than men

Gender pattern similar on all 4 sites

Women see more clients

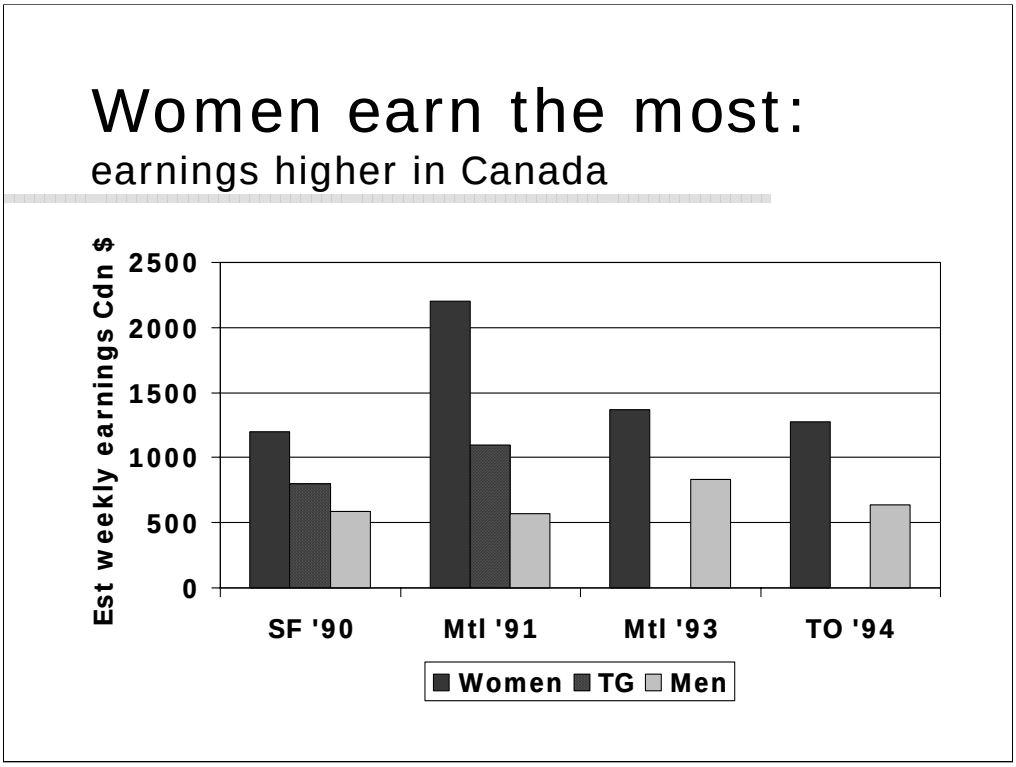


Clients/week:

Women (and TGs ?) see more clients than men in an average week.

Overall gender patters similar on all 4 sites.

Also, women spend the least amount of time with clients on all 4 sites (data available if we need to include it).



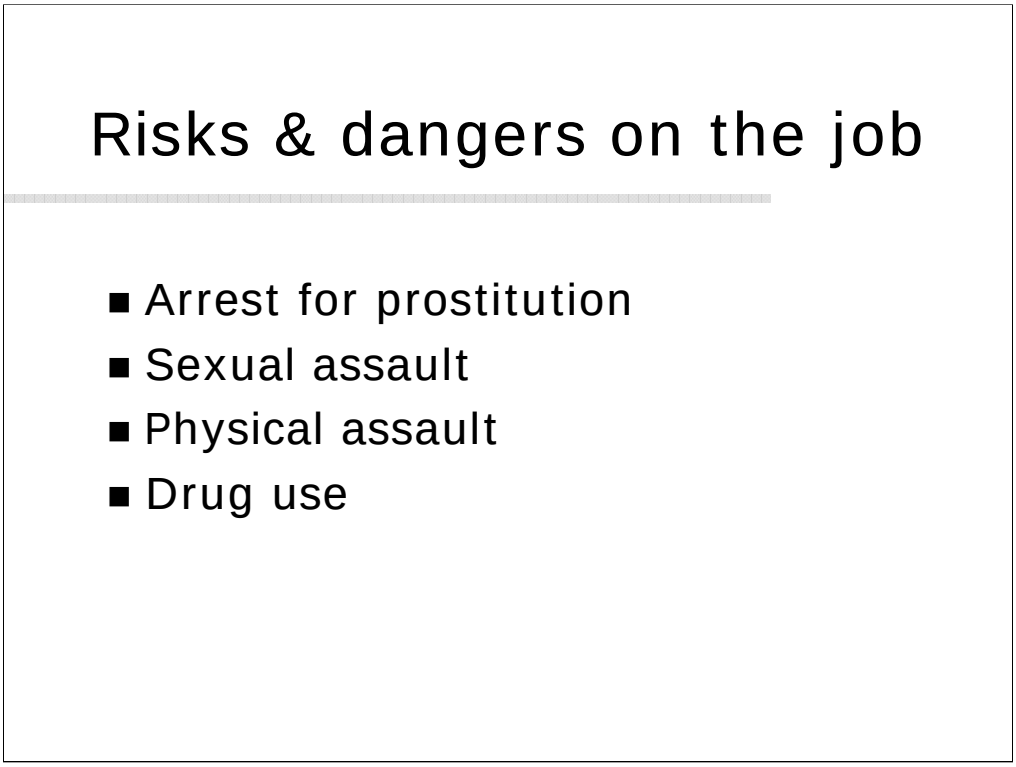
Estimated weekly earnings:

For convenience, the earnings of sex workers in San Francisco is espressed in 1990 Canadian dollars (1$US = $1.16CAN).

- Women (and TGs) earn more than men.

- Gender pattern similar on all 4 sites

- Earnings higher in Canada (at least for women and TGs)



Risks & dangers on the job

Arrest for prostitution

Sexual assault

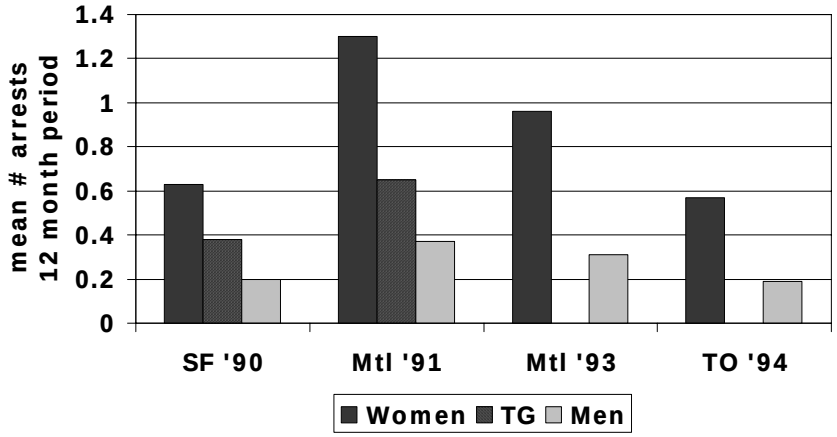
Physical assault

Drug use

$$ spent on drugs (data not presented at SSSS; $$ reflect the same patters as does drug use))

(Robbery: data not presented at SSSS; no real gender pattern but it could be included)

Prostitution arrest: women most at risk, risk varies by site



Prostitution arrests (12 month period)

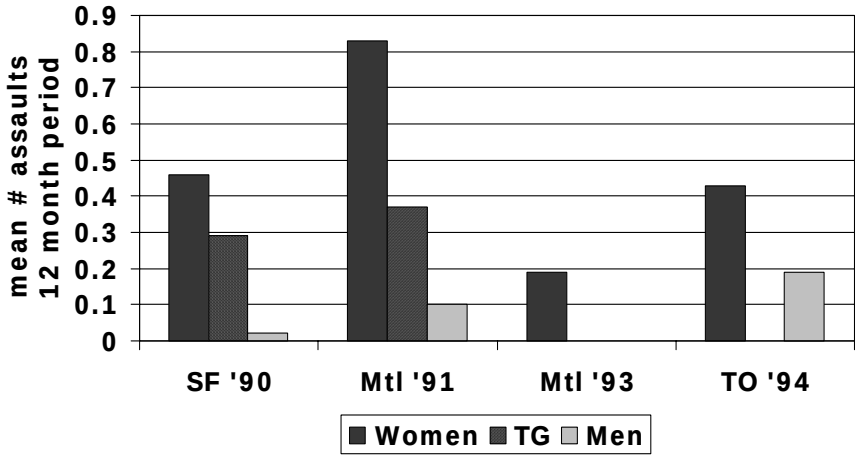
Women more likely than TGs or men to be arrested for prostitution offenses

Gender pattern in evidence across all four sites

Some indication that risk of arrest for prostitution varies by site (higher on some sites)

•INTRODUCE THIS NOTION DURING DISCUSSION: variation most likely tied to local conditions (change in laws, changes in enforcement practices, varying levels of tolerance for 'gay bashing' , residents' complaints, etc.)

Sexual assault:
women most at risk, risk varies by site



Sexual assault (rape)

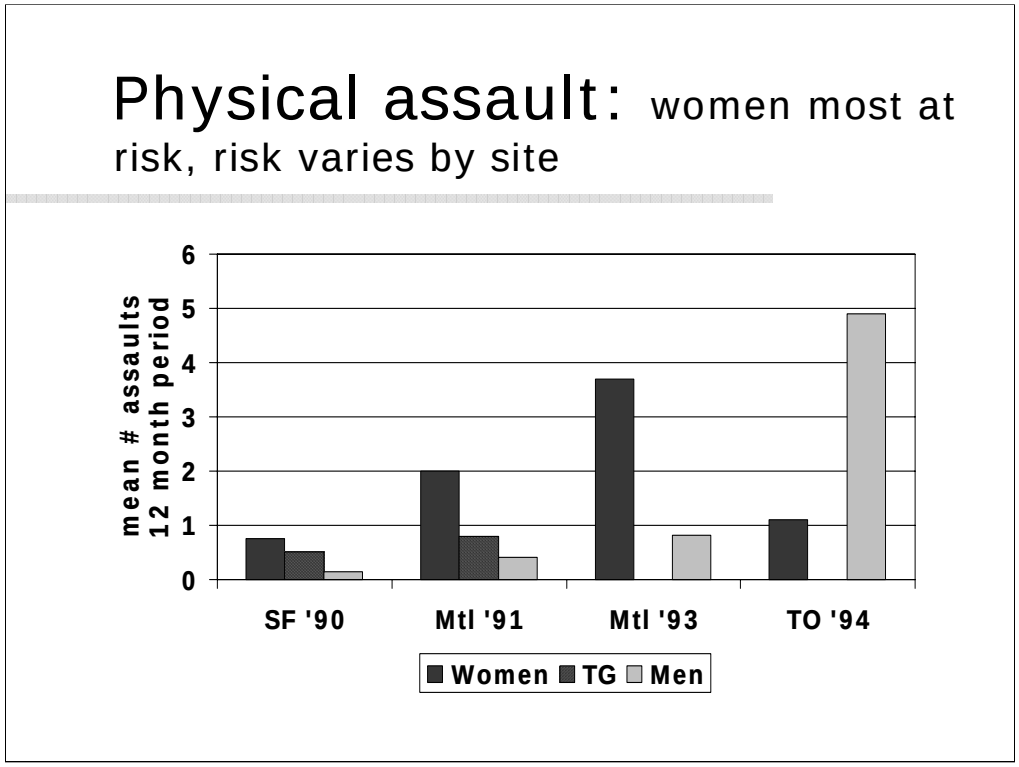
Risk for sexual assault varies by gender:

Women most at risk (TGs follow)

Gender pattern in evidence across all four sites

Some indication that risks vary by site (higher on some sites)

•INTRODUCE THIS NOTION DURING DISCUSSION: variation most likely tied to local conditions (change in laws, changes in enforcement practices, varying levels of tolerance for ‘gay bashing’ , residents’ complaints, etc.)



Physical assault: women most at risk, risk varies by site

Risk for physical assault varies by gender:

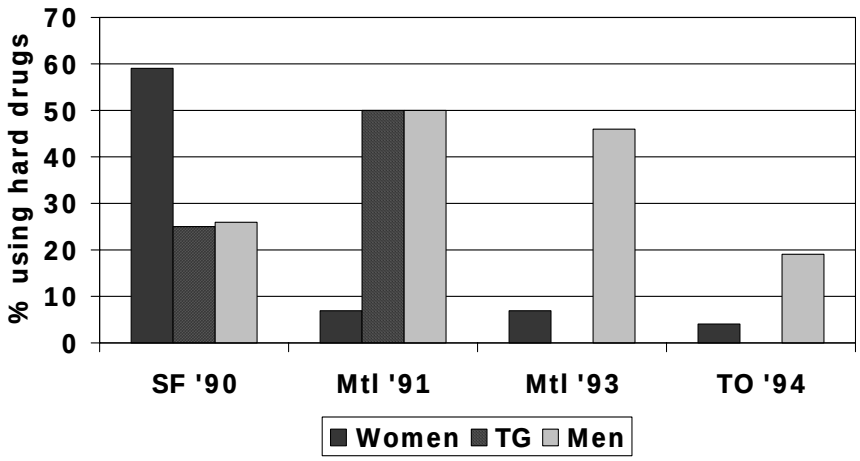
Women most at risk (TGs follow)

Gender pattern in evidence across three sites (Toronto 1994 the men were very much at risk)

Some indication that risks vary by site (higher on some sites)

•INTRODUCE LATER DURING DISCUSSION: variation most likely tied to local conditions (change in laws, changes in enforcement practices, varying levels of tolerance (for 'gay bashing' , residents' complaints)

Hard drug use:
gender & site specific



Hard drug use varies by gender and site:

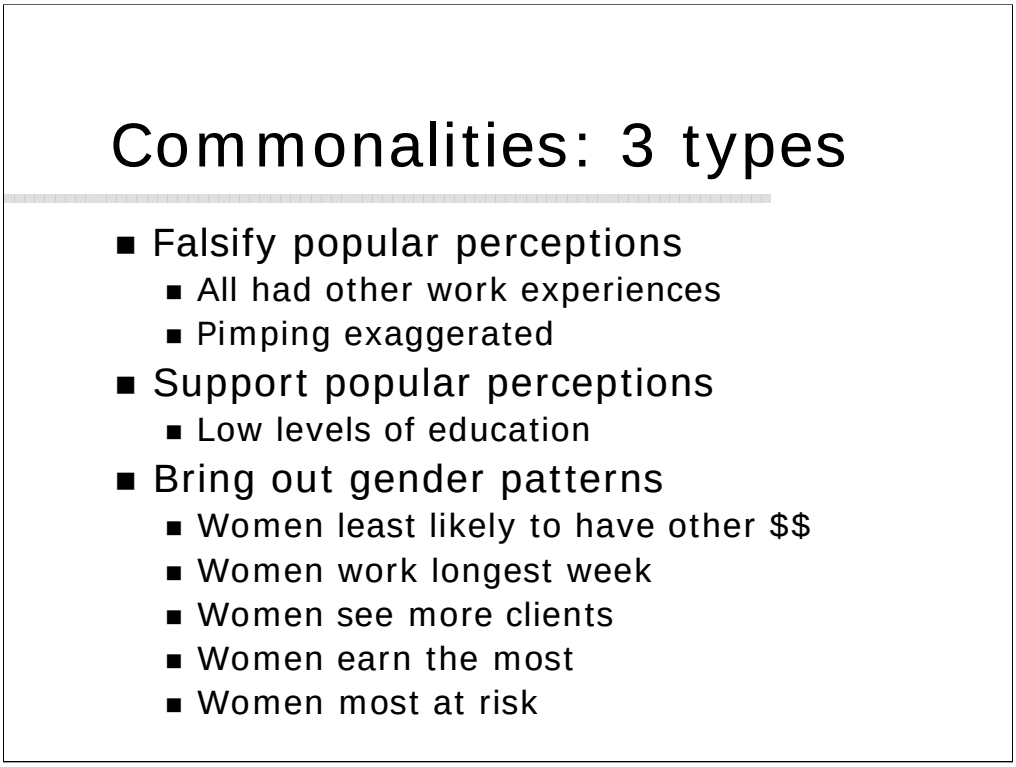
-women the heavy users in San Francisco

-TGs and men the heavy users in Canada

-Clearly hard drug use is NOT a given

-Similar drug-use pattern reflected in $$ spent on drugs (slide not shown at SSSS)

Hard drugs include heroin, crack, and other forms of cocaine.



Commonalities: 3 types

Falsify popular perceptions

All had other work experiences

Pimping exaggerated

Support popular perceptions

Low levels of education

Bring out gender patterns

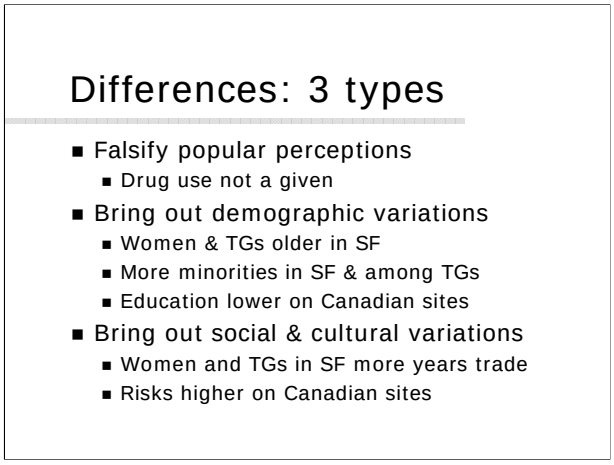
Women least likely to have other sources %%

Women work longest week

Women see more clients (but spend least time with clients)

Women earn the most

Women most at risk (for prostitution arrests, sexual assault and physical assault).



Part D: Results and Discussion

Differences: 3 types

Some Falsify popular perceptions

Drug use not a given (hard drug use varies by gender & site)

Some Bring out demographic variations

Women & TGs older in SF

More minorities in SF & among TGs

Education lower on Canadian sites

Some Bring out social & cultural variations (histories)

Women and TGs in SF more years trade

Risks higher on Canadian sites and vary across Canadian sites

•DISCUSSION: develop idea that variation most likely tied to local conditions (change in laws, changes in enforcement practices, varying levels of tolerance for sexual diversity; access to prostitutes' rights groups (for 'gay bashing' , residents' complaints etc.)

When writing paper and discussing differences : provide possible interpretations and specific research questions arising from them.

Comparative approach valuable

- Commonalities allow for generalizations
  - Some falsify our perceptions
  - Others bring out gender patterns
- Differences improve our understanding
  - Many are site and gender specific
- Lead to refined research agendas

Part E: Summary and Conclusions

Comparative approach valuable: (comparative case study, same instrument, systematic and strategic sampling)

Commonalities allow for generalizations

Some falsify our perceptions

Others bring out gender patterns

Differences improve our understanding

Many are site and gender specific

Both lead to refined research agendas and in the end, more appropriate social and legal policies.

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