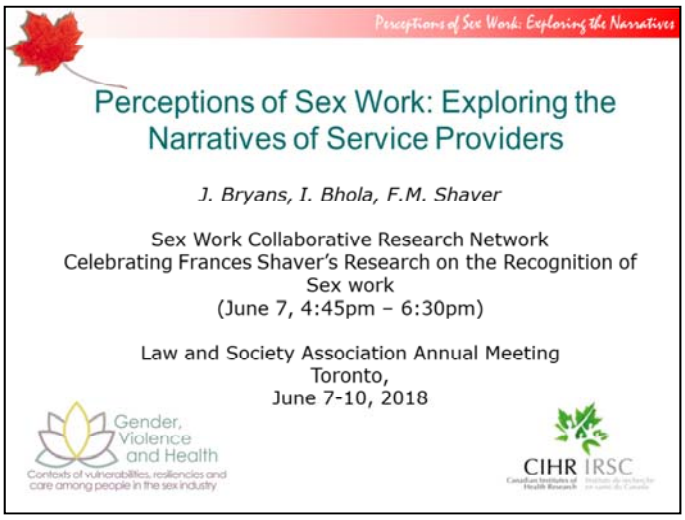
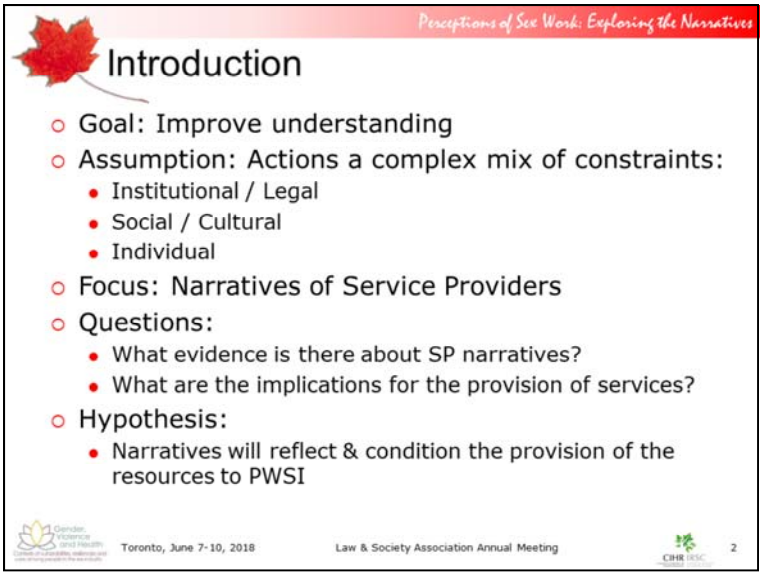


Abstract

Current scholarly work on the sex industry focuses on the predominance of responsibilization and victimization discourses that reinforce the marginalization of sex workers and undermine their human and civil rights. Two spheres of analysis related to these discourses predominate. One focuses on sex workers and their perceptions of and experiences with the police and the other analyses the stigmatic assumptions inherent in the laws that reinforce the vulnerability of sex workers by undermining their human and civil rights. This paper introduces another sphere of analysis by focussing on the narratives of service organization providers and their perceptions of sex workers. Drawing on our non-random sample of service organization workers (N=58) from six Census Metropolitan Areas (CMA) across Canada, we expect to find—as we did with our sample of police and regulatory officials—two additional narratives: *autonomy and vulnerability.* Our analysis suggests that these other narratives open up new options and opportunities for action. The research was conducted in 2013 and 2014, a period when Canada's prostitution laws were being constitutionally challenged by current and former sex workers but before the new laws were enacted (December 2014).



Introduction:

- Goal: We began this research in order to improve our understanding of the treatment of sex workers.
- Our Assumption is that one's actions toward sex workers are a complex mix of institutional, legal, social, cultural, and individual factors.
- Our focus for this analysis is the cultural and personal factors as reflected in the narratives Service Providers have about sex work and people working in the sex industry (PWSI).

  Last year in Mexico, we presented evidence for the relatively coherent and distinct narratives reflected in the discourse of Police and Regulatory officials. In addition to the two discourses most often identified in the scholarly literature—responsibilization and victimization—we found two additional frames: autonomy and vulnerability. These validated new opportunities for action on the part of regulatory officials.

- Questions: Today we are asking the same two questions: What evidence is there regarding the narratives of Service Providers? What are the implications for the provision of these services?
- Hypothesis: Since Service Providers control resources, our hypothesis is that the narratives in play will reflect and condition the interpretation and provision of those resources to sex workers.



Introduction & Map of Canada:

- The data for this paper are drawn from a multi-project community-based study that occurred in 2013 and 2014 in six Canadian municipalities: **Victoria,** British Columbia; **Calgary** and **Fort McMurray**, Alberta; **Kitchener-Waterloo**, Ontario; **Montréal,** Quebec; and **St John's**, Newfoundland (cf. http://www.understandingsexwork.com/).
- The aim was twofold:
  - (i) to represent the diversity of social, political, and cultural contexts that are likely to affect the organization and practices relating to the sex industry in Canada and
  - (ii) to conduct a 360 degree study of the industry.
- Team members interviewed:

  Sex workers (218)

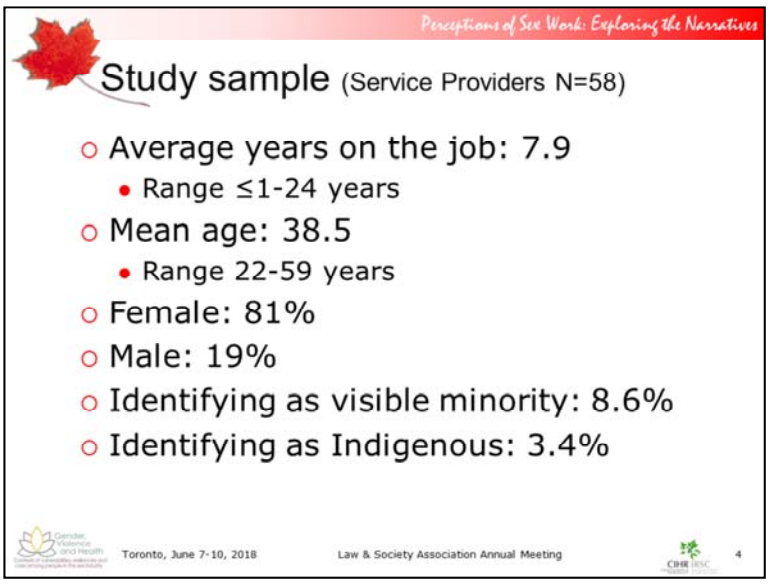
  Clients (258)

  Spouses/intimate partners of sex workers (35)

  Industry owners & managers (55)

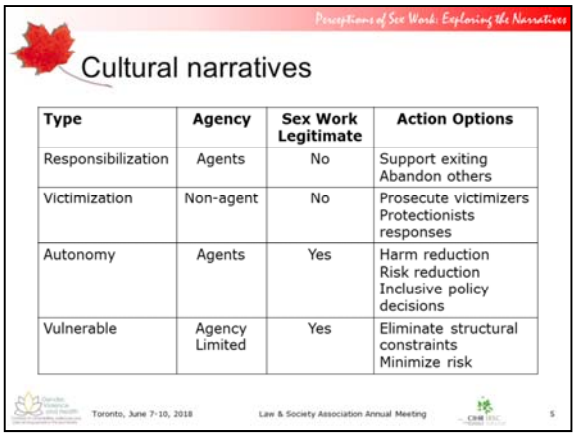
  Regulatory officials (27 police officers, 17 justice and licensing officials, 20 elected city and government officials) and

  Service providers (58)
- The present analysis is based on the 58 participants who made up this latter group (i.e., the Service providers).



Study Sample: Service Providers (N=58)

- Average years on the job: 7.9 years
  (years worked varied from ≤1 to 24 years)
- Mean age: 38.5
  (age range: 22 to 59)
- Female : 81% (47)
  Male: 19% (11)
- Identified as a Visible minority: 8.6% (5)
  Identified as Indigenous: 3.4% (2)



Four Narratives:

In our interviews we found two traditional narratives expressed by the respondents:

- **Responsibilization (1)** – where sex workers are considered as agents **(2)**, able to make their own choices. Looking a little closer at these narratives, we also found these respondents did not consider sex work to be a legitimate option **(3)** giving us indications that choosing to stay in sex work was not acceptable.
- Others felt that sex workers were not agents. Through abuse, drug use, mental health issues, or similar conditions, they were seen as **Victimized (4),** non-agents **(5).** As in responsibilization, staying in sex work was considered to be illegitimate **(6).**

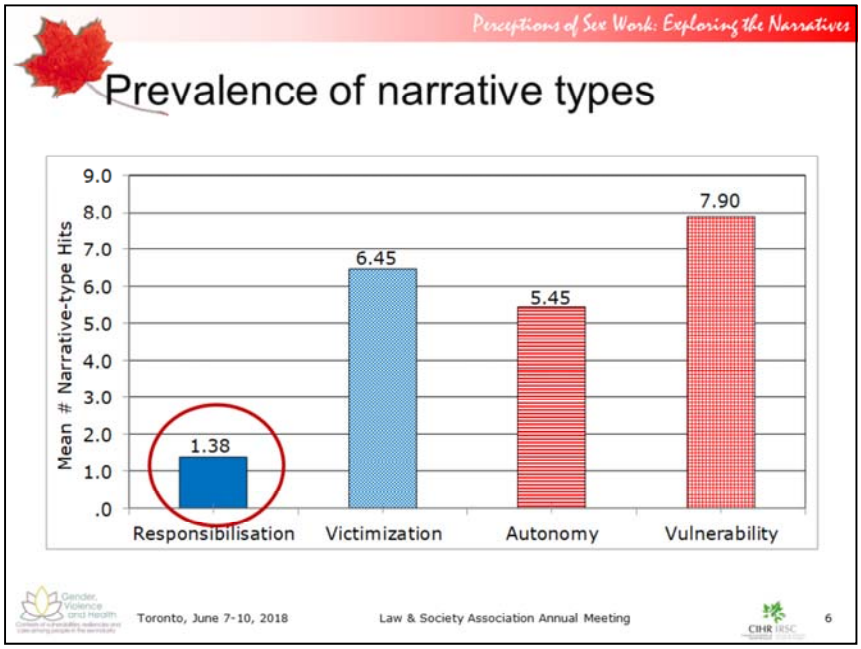
  (Note: See Benoit et al. (2016; Krüsi et al. (2016); Scoular & O'Neil, (2007; Sherman et al. (2015), and Williamson et al. (2007) on sex workers perceptions of police. See (Bruckert & Hannem (2013); Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network (2007), and Sampson (2014) on stigmatic assumptions inherent in the laws).

Two additional narratives came up among respondents who identified sex work as a **legitimate activity**. Their understanding of agency created **two other narratives (7 8).**

- The label **Autonomy (9)** represents those narratives where sex workers are seen as **agents (10)** and choosing to work in the sex industry is seen as legitimate work.
- The final one, **Vulnerability (11)** assumes sex workers have agency but that it is **limited (12)** in many ways through legal, social-structural, or systemic constraints.

We were also able to identify **action options** implied by each narrative:

- **(13)** Responsibilization: Action Options and responses include convincing sex workers to exit and supporting them in this endeavour, abandoning them to their own devices ("*you made your bed so lie in it*"), and minimal harm reduction initiatives.
- **(14)** Victimization: Action options include teaching individual safety strategies, prosecuting the victimizers (clients, sex business owners and managers), and other paternalistic or protectionist approaches (e.g., incarcerating them for their own good).
- **(15)** Autonomy: Action options include harm reduction, risk reduction, and the inclusion of sex workers in policy decisions.
- **(16)** Vulnerability: Action options include the elimination of structural constraints and the minimization of risk.

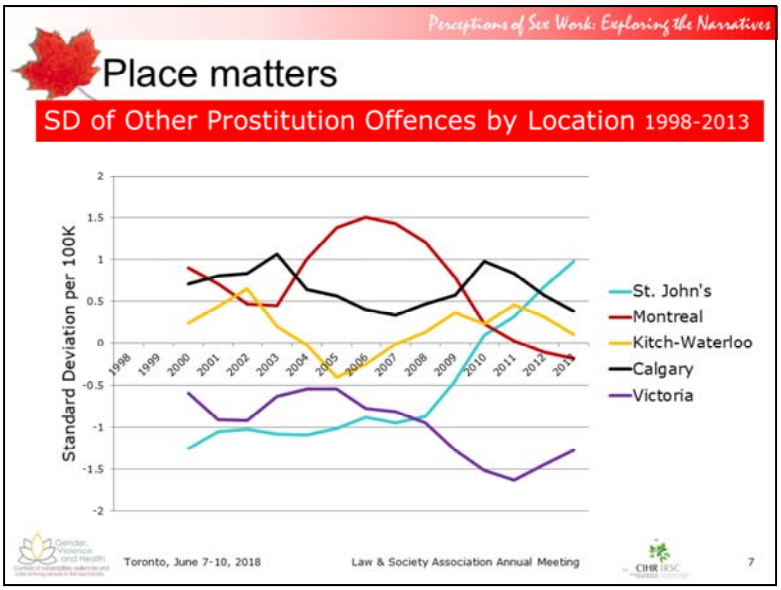


Prevalence of narrative types among Service Providers:

This histogram shows the mean number of narrative-type hits per respondent.

- All four narratives are found in the respondent interviews, but
- Responsibilization *("blame the victim")* is the outlier narrative (i.e., the least prevalent) among service providers. This is an encouraging result.
- By comparison, the prevalence of the other three is surprisingly similar.

To what extent is this variation a feature of location? This question arose when analyzing the Regulators when we noticed that Place Matters…



Place Matters:

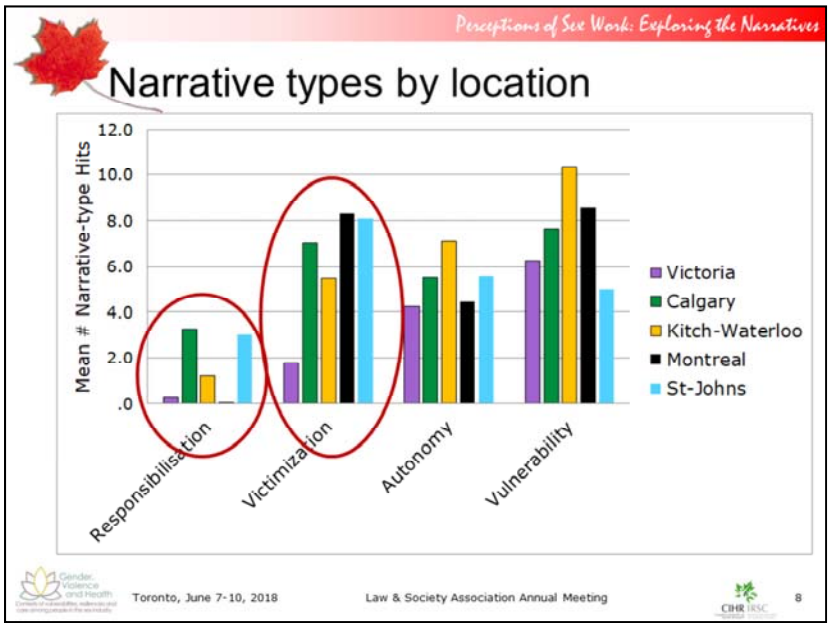
Certainly, place matters when it comes to arrest rates. Canadian prostitution laws apply across all provinces and territories. Yet, official data show selective variation in the enforcement of the law among different municipalities across Canada (Shaver et al. 2015; Wagenner & Altink 2012).

Using only the data on "other" prostitution offences (primarily communication (s.213)), this figure allows a comparison of the arrest rated across 5 of our 6 locations. [Data adapted from Statistics Canada *Table 252-0051 Incident-based Crime Statistics*. Data are available for Wood Buffalo (a census division) but not specifically for Fort McMurray.]

The graph plots the standard deviation (SD) of the average number of incidents per 100k for each year in each location from 1998-2013. Lines above the zero represent arrest rates above the average; those below the zero represent arrest rates lower than the average.

- In **St John's**, for example, the rates began below the average in 2000, but become higher than the average by 2013.
- In **Montreal,** the reverse happened, they began above the average and they dropped below the average.
- There are some fluctuations in the **Kitchener-Cambridge-Waterloo** region but they tend to hover close to the zero (i.e., there was little change over the years).
- The arrest rate in **Calgary** is always above the average over the years considered.
- In **Victoria** it is always below the average.

- For this reason, we expect to find that place matters with respect to narratives. That is to say, we expect there to be some diversity in the narratives of service providers both within and across the research sites.



Narrative type by location:

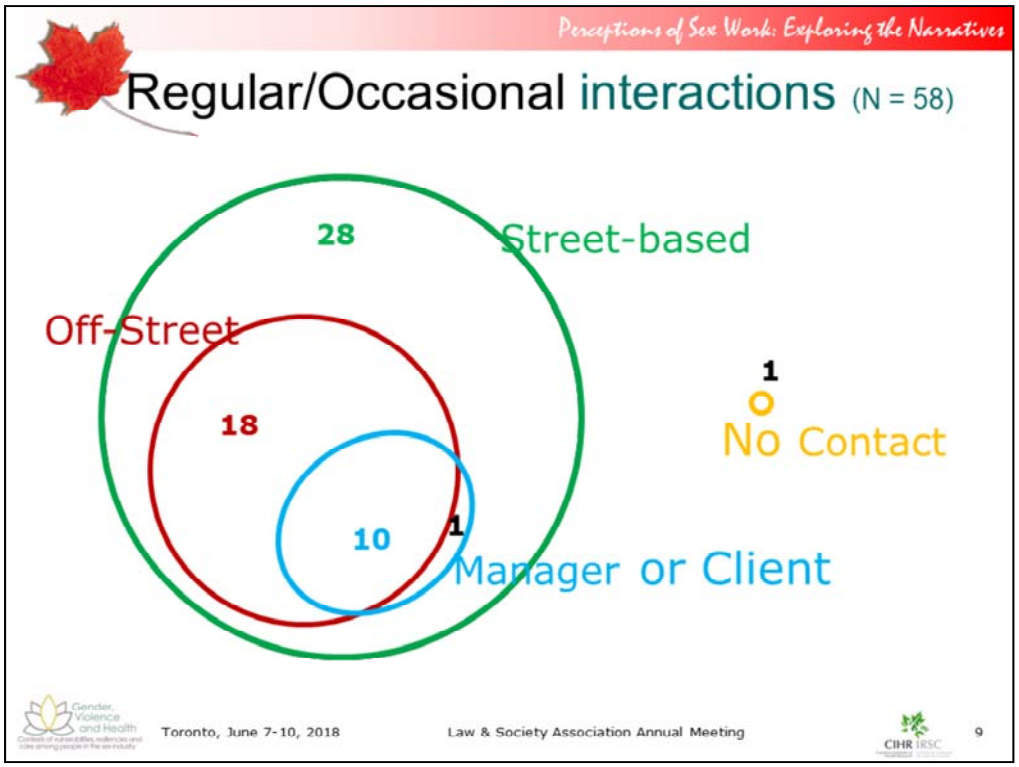
This histogram shows the mean number of narrative-type hits by location (1).

- Two things are striking about this figure:
  - Service providers in Calgary and St John's standout with respect to Responsibilization (the *"blame the victim"* narrative)
  - When it comes to Victimization, service providers in Victoria stand out as being the least likely to adopt this narrative.

We also asked about the extent to which narratives related to the engagement of Service Providers with sex workers.

In this case, we hypothesized that the nature and extent of Service Provider's engagement with sex workers would affect the perspectives the SP adopted.

(1) Fort McMurray was excluded from the analysis by location because there were too few participants for a reliable comparison.



Regular or Occasional Interactions with people involved in the sex industry:

The Venn diagram in this Figure shows the number of Service Providers having contact with people involved in the sex industry on a regular or occasional basis :

- All but one Service Provider (i.e., 57) had contact with people involved in the sex industry. That said, contacts are with a variety of people:
- The red circle represents contact with both Off-street & Street-based workers.

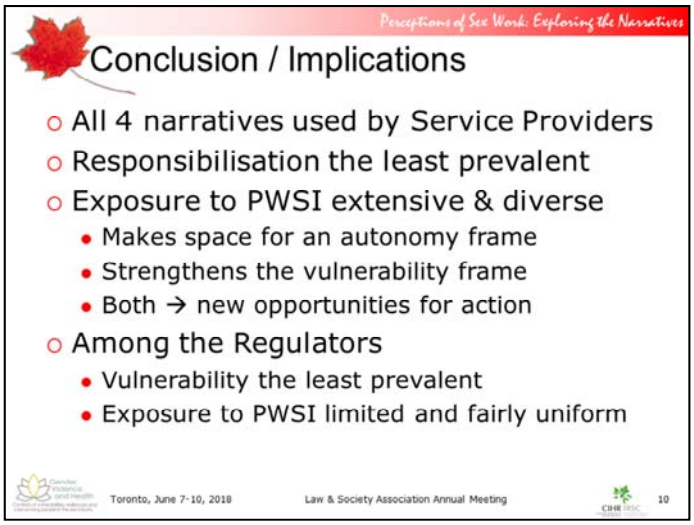
  18 (31%) reported such interactions
- The green circle represents regular & occasional contacts with Street-based workers.

  28 (48%) only reported interactions with Street-based sex workers.
- 10 of the Service Providers (17%) engaged with On- and Off-street based workers as well as with managers/client; while one interacted with a manager or Client & a Street-based worker.

Engagement with people working in the sex industry (PWSI) is diverse and extensive.

This diverse and extensive engagement seems to be in-line with the dominance of the autonomy and vulnerability frames.

Unfortunately, the number of cases does not allow us to conduct more detailed analysis of this line of inquiry.



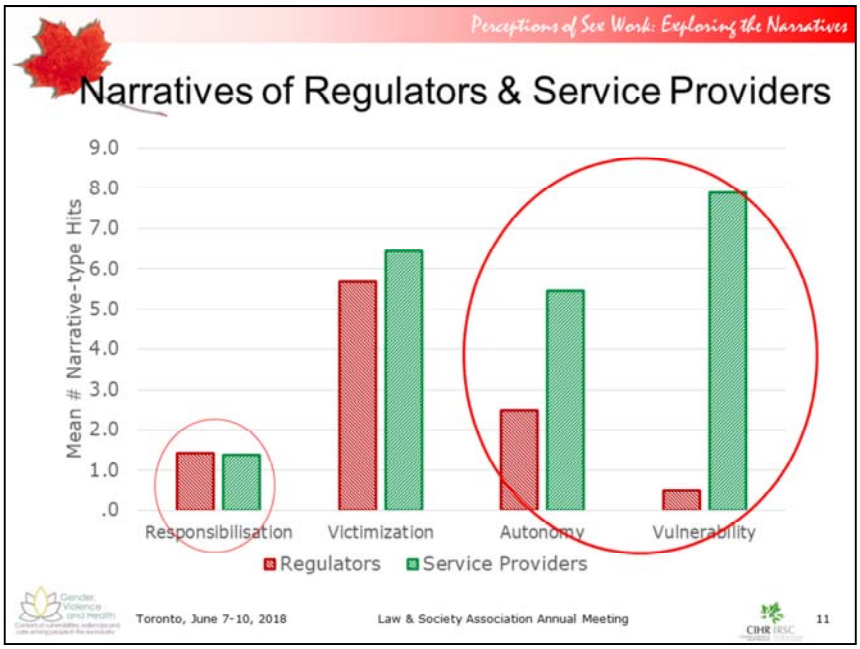
Conclusion / Implications:

The data support the existence of reasonably coherent and distinct narratives used by service providers when describing, understanding, and responding to sex work and sex workers.

- All four narratives were in use by the Service Providers.
- The prevalence of the narratives varied.
    - Responsibilisation (the 'blame the victim' narrative) was the least likely narrative among the Service Providers. This is a good sign.
- Their exposure to PWSI was extensive and diverse. This, too, is a good sign.
    - It makes space for an autonomy frame: one that reflects the acceptance and support for sex workers as agents who enter, exit, or remain in the job by choice.
    - It gives more strength to a vulnerability frame: one that includes the idea that victimization can be a consequence of systemic conditions and constraint—and not just a consequence of the individual-based dynamics of workers, clients, or victimizers.
    - Both give rise to new opportunities for action (e.g., harm reduction, eliminating structural constraints, minimizing risk, and including sex workers in policy decisions).
- These findings differentiated Service Providers from the Regulators (police officers, justice and licensing officials, elected city and government officials):

> The first thing to keep in mind is that in comparison to Service Providers, the Regulators' exposure to PWSI was limited and fairly uniform (i.e., mostly with street-based sex workers).

[…move to the next slide…]



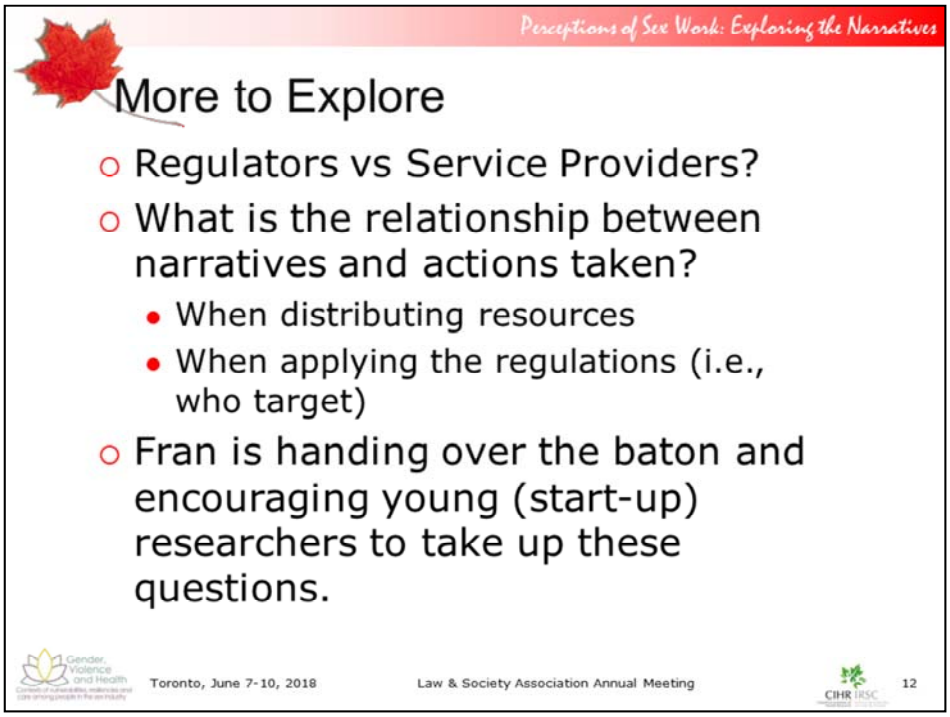
Narratives of Regulators and Service Providers

As before, this histogram shows the mean number of narrative-type hits per respondent.

When we focus on the Regulators (police officers, justice and licensing officials, elected city and government officials) it is clear that:

- Vulnerability (the recognition of structural constraints) was the least prevalent and Victimization the most prevalent.
- We add in the Service Providers for a closer comparison, we learn that:
  - The prevalence of Responsilisation (*"blame the victim")* is similar among both Regulators and Service Providers.
  - However, what stands out when comparing the two is the dominance of the Autonomy and Vulnerability narratives among the Service Providers in comparison to the Regulators.

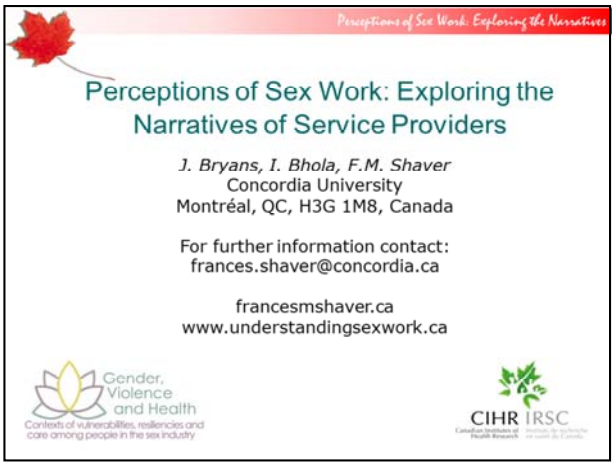
This is a difference that needs to be explored….[transition to next slide]



More to Explore

Clearly, there is more research to be done. [Still to be developed; perhaps with your help]

- a closer comparison of Regulators vs Service Providers?
- further investigation into how place affects the narratives?
- a closer look at types of organizations that provide services to PWSI?
- What is the relationship between narratives and actions taken?
  - When distributing resources
  - When applying the regulations (i.e., who target)
- Fran is handing over the baton and encouraging young (start-up) researchers to take up these questions.



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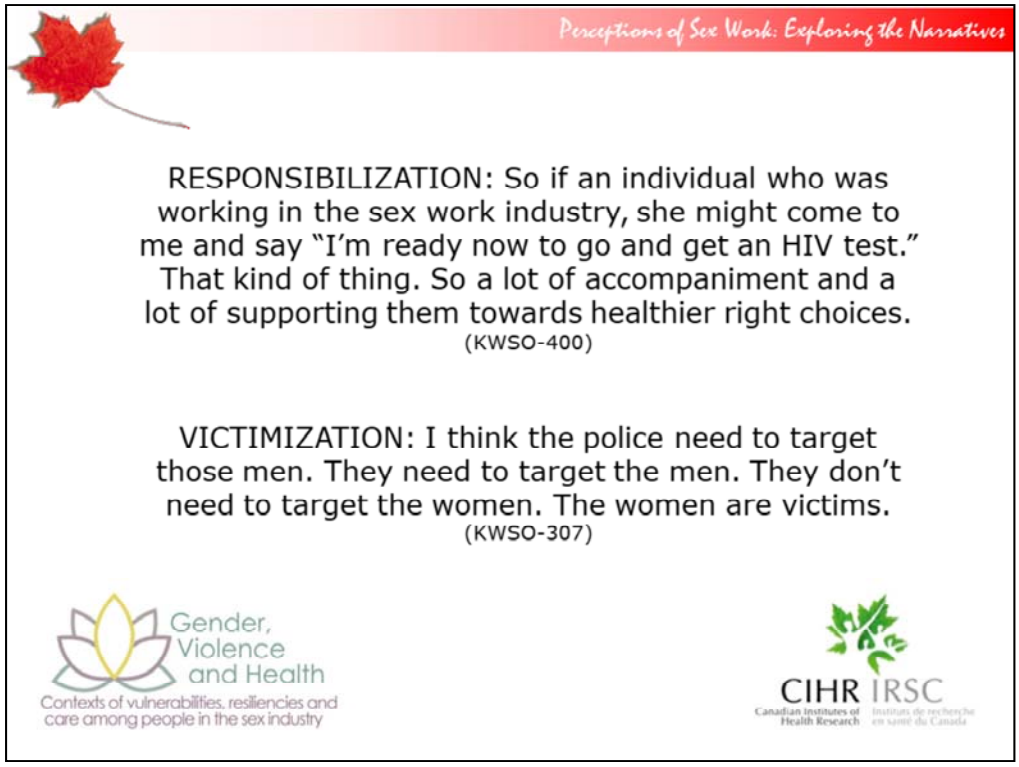
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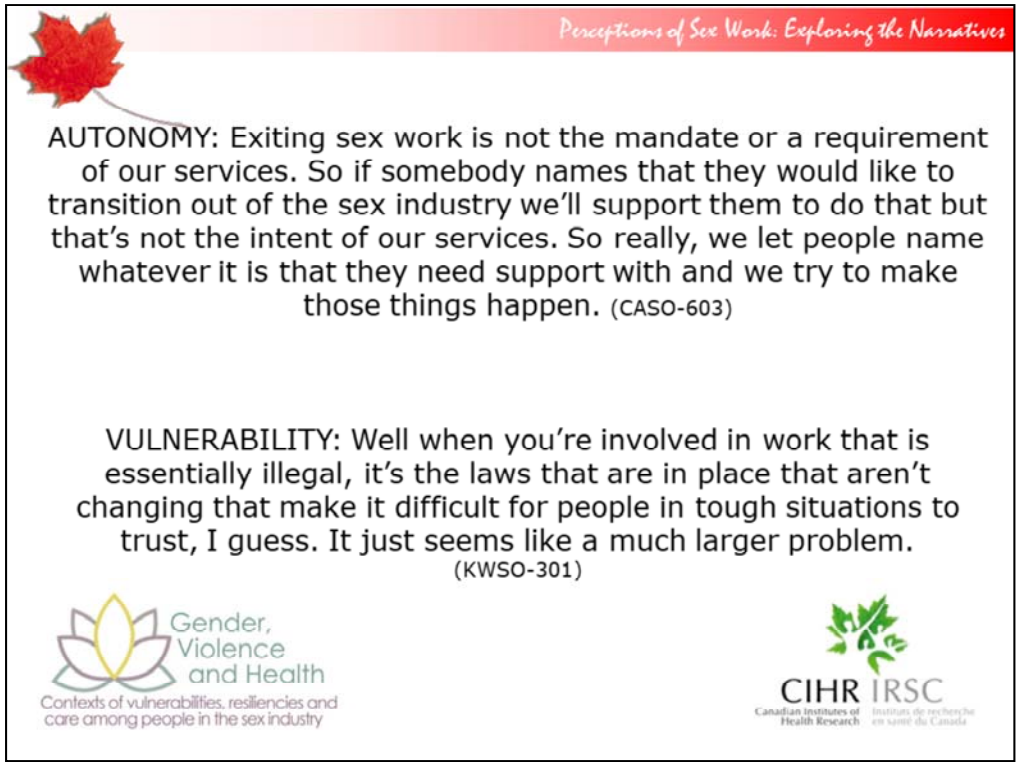
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Perceptions of Sex Work: Exploring the Narratives
RESPONSIBILIZATION: So if an individual who was working in the sex work industry, she might come to me and say "I'm ready now to go and get an HIV test." That kind of thing. So a lot of accompaniment and a lot of supporting them towards healthier right choices.
(KWSO-400)
VICTIMIZATION: I think the police need to target those men. They need to target the men. They don't need to target the women. The women are victims.
(KWSO-307)
Gender, Violence and Health
Contexts of vulnerabilities, resiliencies and care among people in the sex industry
CIHR IRSC
Canadian Institutes of Health Research
Instituts de recherche en santé du Canada


Perceptions of Sex Work: Exploring the Narratives
AUTONOMY: Exiting sex work is not the mandate or a requirement of our services. So if somebody names that they would like to transition out of the sex industry we'll support them to do that but that's not the intent of our services. So really, we let people name whatever it is that they need support with and we try to make those things happen. (CASO-603)
VULNERABILITY: Well when you're involved in work that is essentially illegal, it's the laws that are in place that aren't changing that make it difficult for people in tough situations to trust, I guess. It just seems like a much larger problem. (KWSO-301)
Gender, Violence and Health
Contexts of vulnerabilities, resiliencies and care among people in the sex industry
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