Migrant Women in Sex Work: Does urban space impact self-(re)presentation in Hillbrow, Johannesburg?

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A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (Coursework and Dissertation)

Forced Migration Studies Programme

University of the Witwatersrand

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2011
I, ELSA OLIVEIRA do solemnly declare that this thesis is a construction of my own work. In addition, this thesis and all of its contents has not been used as a submission for any other degree or submitted at any other university.

Elsa Oliveira

Johannesburg, February 2011
When I saw this group of kids playing netball in Barnato Park, I was reminded of my daughter Karen back home in Zimbabwe.

This is the Telekom Tower in Hillbrow. I took a photograph because when I first came to Hillbrow it was the first thing that I noticed when I got lost.
Sex Work

The whore is despised by the hypocritical world because she has made a realistic assessment of her assets and does not have to rely on fraud to make a living. In an area of human relations where fraud is regular practice between the sexes, her honesty is regarded with a mocking wonder.

Angela Carter

What it comes down to is this: the grocer, the butcher, the baker, the merchant, the landlord, the druggist, the liquor dealer, the policeman, the doctor, the city father and the politician -- these are the people who make money out of prostitution, these are the real reapers of the wages of sin.

Polly Adler

Representation

Nothing puts up so much resistance to representation as the real.

Gaillard

Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with the absolute truth.

Simone de Beauvoir

Self-Representation

As the ego cogito, subjectivity is the consciousness that represents something, relates this representation back to itself, and so gathers with itself.

Martin Heidegger

A lot of artists feel passionately about what’s occurring in the world and they become interested in the question of agency: the representation of the self and the relationship between self and state.

Geraldine Barlow

Photography

While there is perhaps a province in which the photograph can tell us nothing more than what we see with our own eyes, there is another in which it proves to us how little our eyes permit us to see.

Dorothea Lange
Abstract

**Rationale:** Urbanization is rapidly taking place in Africa: fifty percent of the continent’s population is expected to be living in urban areas by 2030 (Kok and Collinson in Vearey 2010b). Both internal\(^1\) and cross-border migrants\(^2\) are moving into South Africa’s urban centers at a faster rate than her neighboring countries; approximately 60 percent of the population is estimated to be urban (ibid). The worldwide increase in urbanization requires that research recognize the trajectories of people moving into these urban spaces, as well as the experiences that people encounter as they navigate urban centers (Kihato, 2010, Landau 2006a, 2006b, Vearey 2010a, 2010b, Venables, 2010). Many migrants in inner-city Johannesburg engage in unconventional survival strategies, including sex work (e.g. Richter 2010). Although sex work is considered an informal livelihood strategy, it is currently illegal in South Africa (UNAIDS, 2009). Research on sex work in South Africa is limited; however, there is significant evidence that sex workers in inner-city Johannesburg experience unsafe, unhealthy- often times violent- working and living conditions (e.g. Nyangairi, 2010, Richeter, 2010). This research is primarily interested in exploring the ways in which “marginalized” urban migrant groups choose to represent themselves versus the incomplete (re) presentation that is often relegated to them. A focus on representation will provide an opportunity for policy makers, programmers and academics to gain insight and better comprehend the experiences of migrant urban populations. In this case, the researcher is looking specifically at migrant women who sell sex as an entry point into the larger issues of (re) presentation among individuals and communities who are often described as “vulnerable” and/or “marginal”.

**Aim:** The aim of this research project is to explore how migrant women who sell sex in Hillbrow, Johannesburg (re) present themselves, and how (or not) urban space affects these self- (re) presentations.

**Methods:** The epistemological framework for the methodologies used in this study was Participatory Action Research (PAR), and the primary data collection methodology used consisted of an eleven-day participatory photo project where the research participants were given digital cameras and asked to photograph the “story” that they would like to share. Upon completion of the participatory photo workshop, five research participants were randomly selected to participate in 2-3 sessions of in-depth, semi-structured narrative interviews where the researcher explored the choice of photos taken, as well as the reasons why the photos were selected to (re) present themselves.

**Conclusion:** This study has shown that use of Participatory Action Research as an epistemological framework is both conducive and appropriate when researching ‘hard to reach’ groups of people residing in complex urban areas. Furthermore, this research signals the need for greater inclusion of participants in studies aimed at understanding individual/group experience, especially when working with marginalized communities. This study also reveals a host of future research opportunities for those interested in exploring: (1) identity in urban space/urban health, (2) livelihood experiences/strategies of people living in densely populated urban spaces, (3) issues of belonging and access to health care, (4) impacts of structural violence on the lives of migrant women sex workers, (6) ways that perceptions and representations are impacted in group settings, and (5) the use of ‘innovative methodologies’ as a viable tool in social science research.

**Keywords:** migrant women sex workers; sex work, inner-city Johannesburg; Hillbrow; Participatory Action Research; narrative interviews; life stories; advocacy; qualitative methods; representation; urban.

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\(^1\) Internal migrants are those who have moved within their countries of birth.

\(^2\) Cross border migrants are those who have crossed borders.
Acknowledgements

This work would not have been possible without the input of people who encouraged and assisted me. I would like to thank my supervisors, Dr. Joanna Vearey and Marlise Richter for their constant encouragement and support. Dr. Vearey is an inspiration and a mentor who has taught me to believe in the power of images as a vehicle for social change. I have never met a professor so creative and diligent. The importance that you place on making sure that ‘voice’ is heard has given me great hope in the world of academia. Thank you. Marlise, your unwavering commitment in your advocacy for dignity and human rights for sex workers is to be applauded and admired. This study was indeed a team effort; I would not have managed to complete it without the constant encouragement, feedback and insight that you both offered; very few Master’s students have the opportunity to engage with such dynamic, fun and committed supervisors.

Many people have been involved in the research and fieldwork process that contributed to this thesis. In particular, I would like to thank Bekie, Matthews, Jacklynne, Tambudzai, and all of the PDP students from Market Photo Workshop. Your work was incredible, but your dedication to social transformation is even more amazing. I would also like to thank Sisonke Sex Worker Movement for your help during the project. A special thanks to Pamela and Sibongile for arranging space and recruiting research participants. Thank you to Emilie for filling in the blanks when we needed you to. Thank you to RHRU for providing the space for the workshop and the interviews. Thank you all-this research would not have been possible without the help, time and support that you offered.

Many thanks to the staff at FMSP, for your work, and your commitment to the field of social research. You have been supportive, and critical when necessary. I also want to thank my fellow classmates for accompanying me throughout this journey. It has been a memorable experience filled with tears, sweat and blood. Literally. The happy hour meetings were not bad either. I want to send a special shout out to Jessica and Hilton. I am not sure what I would have done without you in class. Our daily coffee and popcorn runs have been engraved in my heart.

I would also like to thank my dearest, Sonia. Your support and dedication to my Diet Coke, peanut butter and popcorn habits will forever be appreciated. Thank you for driving me around in the middle of night in search of a computer cord; Thank you for printing thousand’s and thousand’s of articles; Thank you for making me eat when I had forgotten; Thank you for making space for me in your home; Thank you for reminding me of the things that matter in life; Thank you for the border runs in hopes of a visa extension; Thank you for making me laugh when I was falling apart; Thank you for the encouragement and interest that you showed in my work. I am blessed.

A special thanks goes out to my scooter. You never gave up on me. All those groceries runs and trips into Hillbrow and Wits… you have been a loyal little orange and white scooter. I promise to take you on an adventure one of these days, to a place where there are no potholes or bad BMW and Mercedes drivers; a place where you can just be free to roam.

I also wish to thank Rotary International for this opportunity to live and study in South Africa for a year. Thank you always and forever.
I would also like to thank the inventors of the Internet; whoever you are, I am not sure that I would have been able to complete this without search engines for articles, Gmail for communication, Facebook for a healthy distraction, and Skype for all of the calls that I made to loved ones. I have been very fortunate to have the friends that I do. Thank you my bee-keeper Carrie, my sounding board Maggie, my encourager Mihanette, my generous Sierra, my wandering Jamie, my sing-at-the-top-of-your-lungs Rae Anne, and all of the others out there that have accompanied me throughout this process. You have no idea how the pep talks, the emails, and the chats kept me going. A very special thanks goes out to Angela. You helped me get here, and for this, I will always be grateful. A much-appreciated thanks goes out to Jodie. Your willingness to look over my work and your patience with my grammatical errors will send you straight to heaven. In the meantime, I will shower you with nougat until you can’t see it anymore.

And to my parents; thank you. Obrigada. Your stories of migrating from the Azores to Angola, back to the Azores, and then finally to the USA were the inspiration for why I am here. There will never be the words to describe how much I love you. The sacrifices that you have made in your lives in order for me to follow my dreams can never be thanked enough. You have always, and continue, and always will, inspire me. Your kindness, love, and strength have helped me during this journey more often than you know. And, to my two sisters in ‘heaven’. I know that you are always with me, making sure that I don’t take myself too seriously.

Last, but definitely not least, to the eleven women that participated in this study. Thank you for your time, trust and willingness to share your lives with me.

I dedicate this report to: Pinky, Ana, Iketleng, Sbu, Shorty, Mimi, Lety, Confidence, Sku, Thembile, and Monica Mombassa. Your participation and willingness to share your story is what made this work possible. You are all beautiful, and you are all amazing.
Structure of the Research Report

This Masters thesis is being written through a research project that focused on migrant women who sell sex and how urban space may, or may not, influence (re)-presentation. In this section I will provide the reader with a brief breakdown of how this report has been organized, as well as introduce the reader to the methodologies that were used during this research project.

I will begin with an introduction section that will explain the reasons why this study has focused on migrant women who sell sex in Hillbrow, South Africa.

The research question, research aim, and the specific research objectives that this thesis aims to address follow the introduction.

The conceptual framework is then presented. This framework has been developed to assist in unpacking the complexities of migrant women who sell sex in Hillbrow, drawing on post feminist theory as the “glue” that supports the key concepts that make up the conceptual framework for this study: (1) the Photographs, (2) the Narrative Interviews, and (3) the Reflexivity of the Researcher.

I will then present the reader with a short reflection on what it means to be involved in research that focuses on representation. In this section I will address the limitations that such research faces by examining the role of the researcher. Moreover, I will address the importance of reflexivity on the part of the researcher and argue that it is in this very process that social science research can gain insight into the world. I will conclude this section with a brief description of the research sites.

I then move to my literature review where I focus on four main areas that have been chosen in order to 'set the scene' for my research. This section begins by looking at urban space as the umbrella under which gender; migration and sex work are explored, followed by a section on representation and, ending with a section on visual methodologies.

An overview of the methods and data applied is then presented.

I then move to present the four central themes that arose from the analysis of the data, and has guided the culmination of the research findings: (1) The Journey; (2) Structural Violence; (3) Stigma and (4) Visual Methodologies. All of these themes incorporate sub themes that will be explored in depth in the analysis and discussion section.

A discussion section to elaborate on 'findings' follows, where I engage with literature, images, captions and data taken from the narrative interviews and observation.

Finally, the concluding section of this report summarizes the research findings, and concludes with suggestions for future projects.
Methodologies
A participatory photo project and narrative interviews were the two primary sources of data collection during this study. I include images throughout this report as both a way to share data that was generated, as well as to engage the reader in the images that were taken during the participatory photo project.

Photographs
The photographic images included within this report were taken by participants in the participatory photo project held in Hillbrow, an area of inner city Johannesburg (please see the Methodologies section for further discussion on this process). I have included the photographer’s pseudonym with each of the images as well as the captions that were written by the photographers.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>AIDS</td>
<td>Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV</td>
<td>Human Immune Deficiency Virus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FMSP</td>
<td>Forced Migration Studies Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPW</td>
<td>Market Photo Workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non Governmental Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAR</td>
<td>Participatory Action Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDP</td>
<td>Photojournalism Documentary Participants</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>Participatory Photo Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RHRU</td>
<td>Reproductive Health Research Unit, University of the Witwatersrand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTSD</td>
<td>Post Traumatic Stress Disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWEAT</td>
<td>Sex Worker Education and Advocacy Task Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STI</td>
<td>Sexually Transmitted Diseases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations High Commission for Refugees</td>
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1. Introduction

The goal of this study is to look at an inner-city suburb in Johannesburg, specifically Hillbrow, by asking research participants to engage critically with their migration histories, environments, thoughts, beliefs, and self-(re)presentations in relation to the environments in which they work and live. The study has focused its methodologies on participatory involvement (to be discussed in-depth in the Methodology section of this paper).

Social science researchers have contributed significantly to a body of knowledge on sex work; however, the majority of this literature tends to position sex work as a social problem in need of control and/or eradication (Koken 2010, Nyangairi, 2010). Research on sex work has often portrayed women as deviant, mentally ill, and/or as vectors of disease (ibid). More recently, feminists and pro sex work advocates have begun to produce literature that places sex work within labour work; therein, replacing the term “prostitute” with “sex worker”. Although some researchers use both terms interchangeably, I will solely use the term “sex work/sex worker” to describe the occupation of the women in this study.

In this study, I explore how migrant women sex workers\(^3\) represent themselves during transition from culture of origin to culture of adoption, and the influences that exist during these moments of transition. I will use the terms ‘vulnerable’ and ‘marginalized’ as a way to identify and explore the various perceived vulnerabilities of women, migrants and sex workers. I acknowledge that these terms are problematic in this context, as feminist discourse would challenge these labels, and argue that such terms serve to reinforce victimization (Palmer, 2005, 2006, Crawley, 2000). Although I agree with feminist discourse surrounding the dangerous implications of such terms, I will utilize ‘vulnerable’ and ‘marginal’ sparingly in order to capture a group of people, in this case, migrant women involved in sex work. It is my hope that the use of these terms will give voice to and empower these women who-I argue-face multiple barriers in relation to social, cultural and national paradigms. Migrant women, and for the purpose of this study, migrant women who sell sex, are not a homogenous group. Contrary to discourses on human trafficking\(^4\) and abolitionist discourse surrounding sex work, not all migrant women that sell sex are ‘vulnerable’ individuals Richter 2008a, 2008b, 2009a, 2009b, Richter et al., 2010). However, it is my contention that the specific systematic oppressions that migrant women who sell sex face, both politically and socially, invariably leads to a vulnerability factor that differs greatly from women who are not migrants, as well as from their male counterparts.

I am interested in how migrant women who sell sex for work represent themselves, and how urban space influences (or not) this representation. Women, migrants, migrant-women, and sex workers are considered by some to be ‘vulnerable’ and ‘marginalized’ these labels are usually determined not by the women (ibid), but rather by social stereotypes of why women enter sex work. In my research study, I explore and question these stereotypes. Are migrant women that sell sex representing themselves as vulnerable? Are they

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\(^5\) Although this study was not focused directly on the discourse centered on the criminalization of sex work and sex workers, it is contributing to a body of knowledge that aims to promote human right advocacy for all people. In this case, for sex workers, and more specifically, to migrant women who sell sex.

\(^4\) Trafficking is defined as, “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments of benefits to achieve the consent of a person have control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation (Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, 2000)”
representing themselves as marginalized members of society? Do they consider themselves vulnerable? If so, why and in what situations?

This study sought to engage with a socio-political marginalized group: migrant women sex workers, whose choice of work adds yet another layer of complexity that some have described as ‘double vulnerability’ (Moore et. al, 1999). The decision to focus my study on migrant women sex workers should therefore be seen as a way to explore ‘vulnerability’ and ‘marginalization’ through the lens of how migrant women who sell sex actually see themselves, and examine the ways in which the overarching stereotypes of sex workers align (or not) with their individual self- (re) presentations.

Although I am acutely aware of the current debate centered on legal reform of sex work in South Africa, and appreciate the importance and imperative nature of such concerns, I have chosen to engage critically with the intricacies of migrant women who sell sex as a vulnerable group positioned in the literature as facing multiple vulnerabilities. 
1.2 Research Question

How do migrant women who sell sex in Hillbrow, Johannesburg represent themselves, and does urban space impact self- (re) presentation?

I decided to portray myself the way that I did in this self-portrait because my relatives and friends do not know that I live in Hillbrow.
1.3 Rationale

Currently, the amount of research surrounding sex work in South Africa is limited. The research consists mainly of discussions supporting either continued criminalization or legalization of sex work (Richter, 2008a, 2009b) and the public health issues of condom use for the prevention of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) (Campbell, 2000, Fick, 2000, Gangoli, 2001, Kerkin, 2003, Scrambler, 2010). Although this study will contribute to a growing body of knowledge regarding the theme of sex work in South Africa, the main focus of this study will be centered on migrant women sex workers and their perception/representation of the self. Specifically, I explore how migration influences representation and, how urban space, specifically the inner-city suburb of Hillbrow, impacts representation of female migrant sex workers.

The study achieved this by highlighting and examining the evolving processes of marginalization and exclusion of migrant women who sell sex in urban space with special consideration regarding their complex spatial, historical and social geographies (Kerkin, 2004). As population patterns worldwide shift to urban centers, there is an obligation to understand the needs and perceptions of its migrant citizenry. This research is motivated by an overarching desire to comprehend the complexities inherent in urban migrant populations to discover how populations navigate and interact with their surroundings/space, and to understand how this experience influences (or not) (re)presentation and articulation of self.

The self refers to the collective representation of a person. In other words, self refers to how a person represents themselves (or not) physically, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually. This study is interested in not only how the women represent themselves, but also why they do (or not) represent themselves in certain ways that potentially challenge stereotypes of vulnerability and marginality.
How do migrant women who sell sex in Hillbrow, Johannesburg represent themselves, and does urban space impact self- (re) presentation?

1.4 Objectives of the study

The objectives of this are:

1. To review the literature on representation, migration, gender, sex work, and urban space.

2. To examine the self- (re) presentation of urban migrant women who sell sex in Hillbrow, an inner-city suburb of Johannesburg, in order to see how they represent themselves.

3. To explore whether women who sell sex identify/represent themselves as ‘sex workers’ ‘migrants’ ‘women’ and, ‘urban residents’.

4. To determine whether methodologies rooted in participatory action research and visual representation are appropriate for studying (re) presentation of urban migrant women involved in sex work.
1.5 Operational Definitions:

Migrant
I define migrant as anyone who has left his or her place of birth, be it within South Africa or cross border. I include both classifications of migrants in order to gain a deeper understanding of representation of the self, in relation to, and in contrast with, ‘others’.

Women in Sex Work
In this report, I refer to “migrant women sex workers” as a label to categorize the group of people that participated in this study. Although the use of such labels has been contested by many researchers (Anderson, 2002, Bullough and Bullough, 1997) because of the stereotyping that is synonymous with labels such as: whore, migrant, prostitute and sex worker, I use this label simply as a way to capture the single similarity that all of the participants share: all are migrant women and all sell sex for work.

Zetter (1991) states that labels are used for the purpose of “conditionality and differentiation, inclusion and exclusion, stereotyping and control” (p. 59). This study was specifically interested in the conception of labels, and how migrant women who sell sex perceive and (re)-present themselves in contrast and/or comparison to how ‘others’ perceive them. Furthermore, I was interested in how perceptions and representations interact with one another, and how, if, and why, they differ and/or share similarities.

The term “sex worker” is a “heavily stigmatized social status” (Pheterson, 1990: 398). Sex workers are unfairly depicted as socially immoral, and relegated to unfair assumptions about who they are as individuals. Labels such as, whore, prostitute, and sex worker have been used to describe a person who sells sex for work. Although sex workers themselves often use these terms, I have chosen to use the term ‘sex worker’ over the others in order to reduce the stigma and negative interpretations that the other labels carry. Using the term ‘sex worker’ places sex within work professions therefore allowing those in the profession to be individuals with agency versus individuals as victims (Nyangairi, 2010).

All of the participants in this study stated that they solicited and sold sex for work, and stated that they preferred the term ‘sex worker’ to be used when referring to their profession.
1.6 Reflexivity and the Role of the Researcher:
A Personal Reflection

Searching is everything - going beyond what you know. And the test of the search is really in the things themselves, the things you seek to understand. What is important is not what you think about them, but how they enlarge you.

Wynn Bullock⁶

Cromby and Nightingale (1999) define reflexivity as, awareness of the researcher’s contribution to the construction of meaning throughout the research process, and an acknowledgement of the impossibility of remaining ‘outside of’ one’s subject matter while conducting research” (p. 228). Reflexivity urges us, as social science researchers, “…to explore the ways in which a researcher's involvement with a particular study influences, acts upon and informs such research” (ibid).

I grappled with the obvious challenges, as well as less obvious nuances, of undertaking research that focuses on representation presents. As I embarked on this research project I was immediately faced with a clear dilemma- what is my role, as the researcher, when attempting to explain (re)presentation among a group of women with whom I do not share a common history, work or lifestyle? Moreover, how would I engage with the data that I was analyzing from this neutral position? I suppose that all social science research that is based on qualitative methodologies is challenged by these very questions.

On a personal level, this study afforded me the opportunity to scrutinize research more closely. It also allowed me to reflect on the ways in which my own values, interests, experiences, beliefs, and political convictions have shaped and influenced the research. The implicit nature of this research study, a study that focused on representation, required me to engage in analysis via two primary ways: (1) direct quotes from the research participants and (2) my role as researcher. On an epistemological level, I reflected on the design of the study, how the participants answered questions, how the data was interpreted, and what possible findings might an alternative methodology highlight? Participatory Action Research is based not only on the opportunity for the research participants to benefit, but that research itself benefits as well. Without question, I have grown as a result of this study, and will henceforth utilize the knowledge gleaned during the processes.

I acknowledge that it is crucial that I remain solid in my role as researcher, and as such, I must include information that might be contrary to what I feel is ‘correct’. During this study, I have remained committed to the research question and answering it within the professional framework that all researchers should abide to.

This study can be used to gather insight into the lives of the migrant women sex workers with whom I worked, as well as an example that not only highlights the importance of researchers engaging in the process of reflexivity, but also in the richness that such a process requires of us.

⁶ Quote was taken from www.wynnbullockphotography.com
1.7 Scope of the Study

This study focused on eleven migrant women who live and sell sex in Hillbrow, Johannesburg. Eleven research participants were selected: five were internal migrants, and six were cross border migrants from Zimbabwe. Due to language barriers, I chose to limit cross-border migrants to individuals from Zimbabwe. I was able to secure translation support services for Zulu, Shona and Ndebele languages, and felt that given the time restraints of this Master’s research project, limiting cross-border migrants to one country was necessary.

There were two main phases to this research study: 1) participatory project, and 2) in-depth narrative interviews. The first phase of this research study consisted of a ten-day participatory photo project that worked collaboratively with the Market Photo Workshop (MPW). Each of the eleven research participants were given a digital camera and asked to tell their story of Hillbrow (more detail regarding this methodology is available in the Research and Methodology section of this report).

At the end of the participatory photo project, five research participants were randomly selected and asked to take part in the second phase of the research- in depth narrative interviews. Of the five participants that were randomly selected, two were cross border migrants and three were internal migrants. The narrative interviews used the photography images as an entry point into discussions about the women’s migration histories, and trajectories into sex work. Each participant was interviewed three separate times for an average of one hour for each interview.

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7 I have decided to limit my research on migrant women sex workers for two primary reasons: (1) the majority of people engaged in sex work are women (Gould & Fick, 2008), and (2) women fall under the category of ‘vulnerable’ before men. This is not to say that I see male sex workers and transgender groups as less valuable to research, but for the purpose of this study, I chose to concentrate on migrant women who sell sex as a way to explore migration as a category and, the impacts of ‘vulnerability’ on (re) presentation.

8 The recruitment of research participants was made possible by the help of Sisonke Sex Worker Movement- an organization in Hillbrow, South Africa that is a sex worker led movement that was launched in 2003. The movement aims to unite sex workers, to improve living and working conditions and to fight for equal rights for sex workers. Sisonke was pivotal in the recruitment of research participants for this study.

For more information go to: [http://www.sidex.org/site_documents/SX_0016E.pdf](http://www.sidex.org/site_documents/SX_0016E.pdf)

9 Market Photo Workshop (MPW) is a Johannesburg based photography school and resource center for practicing photographers. MPW has supported innovative photography work that uses visual literacy as a tool to bring forth social change. MPW has been in service for over 20 years. For more information go to: [www.marketphotoworkshop.co.za](http://www.marketphotoworkshop.co.za).
2. Literature Review

I will now discuss literature that pertains specifically to my research question and aim. This review includes a discussion on urban space, migration, gender, sex work, and representation. I also include an in-depth review on visual methodologies in order to (1) show the gap in current literature that addresses migrant women who sell sex, and (2) explain my rationale for choosing this methodology.

Map 1: Map of South Africa Provinces, showing the location of Gauteng Province and the City of Johannesburg Municipality

Nations Online, 2010
2.1 Urban Space: a focus on Johannesburg

Although universal definitions of 'urban' and 'urbanization' continue to be disputed, “it is generally accepted that urbanization is the process of becoming urban, and it reflects aggregate population growth in cities, be it through natural population or migration” (Galea & Vlahov, 2005: 353 cited in Vearey, 2010a, 2010b, Vearey et al. 2010). In other words, urbanization is the migration of high numbers of people into urban areas (Galea et. al, 2005, Vearey, 2010b). This includes circular migration, rural-to-urban migration, and cross border migration by those seeking asylum (Garenne, 2006 cited in Vearey, 2010b, Vearey et al. 2010).

According to the World Health Organization, the global urban population will reach 60% by the year 2030 (World Health Organization in Mathers et. al, 2005). In developing countries as a whole, 40 percent of the population currently lives in urban areas (Cohen, 2004). The United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) latest statistics reveals that approximately 50 percent of refugees live in cities (UNHCR 2009).

According to the 1996 South African Census, more than half of South Africa’s population live and work in urban areas with the largest percentage being in the Gauteng Province (Landau, 2009a, 2009b). Urban growth in South Africa is taking place at a faster rate than in any other African country. Almost 60 percent of the South African population is already urban (Kok & Collinson, 2006).

As population density in urban centers increases, so too does the demand to understand the intricacies and realities of those who live in these spaces (Kihato, 2010a, 2010b, Landau, 2009, Vearey, 2010a, 2010b, Vearey et al. 2010). Gilbert (2002:4) asks the following question: “How can conditions improve for the growing millions of urban residents?” He continues with the observations that meeting the challenges posed by rapid urbanization will be as important to the future as addressing rapid population growth itself has been in the past half century. As urban growth increases, the need to support this growth via provision of education, social services, health and housing are imperative to the well being of a city, nation, and globe.

In order to understand what the needs of the people in a given space are, it is imperative to build a framework based on voices articulated by the people (Landau, 2009b, Polzer, 2007, Vearey, 2010a).

Since the city itself is in a relatively new transitions period- apartheid to post-apartheid,10 the historical trajectories of the demographics of Johannesburg require us to examine the issue of space and identity/represeantation (Landau, 2009b, Polzer, 2007, Vearey, 2010a). During apartheid, blacks were not allowed to live inside Johannesburg; hence, migration flows into the city were restricted without a pass/permit. However, since the end of apartheid, significant numbers of migrants (both internal and cross border) began to arrive in Johannesburg. Research has shown that despite the protective policies present in South Africa in relation to migrants, international migrants are found to experience limited access to required social service assistance; i.e health, economic, social and physical opportunities (Bailey, 2004, CoRMSA, 2007, Jacobsen, 2006, Landau, 2006a, 2006b, Landau, 2007, Vearey, 2010a, 2010b, Vearey et al. 2010).

Identity and individual autonomy are often in disaccord with one another, especially in areas where high numbers of migrant people are seen. Pressure from the local public to keep migrants out of South Africa, coupled with the demonizing attitudes towards these migrants by both national and local leaders, have left many to grapple with how to serve, fund and reduce continued animosity towards cross-border migrants.

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10 During apartheid, black people had restricted access to many parts of Johannesburg (Saff, 1994). Inner city areas, such as Hillbrow and Yeoville, were reserved for the white population (ibid). During the late 1980’s and early 90’s, as the apartheid regime began to fade, whites moved out of the inner city and into the suburbs (ibid). Lack of investment and maintenance followed, and these inner city areas became urban slums (ibid).
(Black, 1998, Harrell-Bond, 1998, Landau, 2007, 2008, 2009a, 2009b). In Johannesburg many migrants are not only choosing to remain labeled as ‘outsiders’, ‘non south Africans’, but they are also actively engaged in the idea of being as ‘foreigner’ as a means to distance themselves from the negative and unwanted qualities of what they perceive South Africans to represent (Landau, 2006a, 2006b, 2009a, 2009b). Several studies have revealed “invisibility” as a strategy used by many migrants worldwide as a security challenge in hostile host communities (Campbell, 2006, Davies et. al, 2010, Dryden-Peterson, 2006, Grabska, 2006, Landau, 2006a, 2006b, Vearey, 2010a, 2010b, Vearey et al. 2010, Zetter et. al, 2010). Research has shown that migrants living in inner-cities live in conditions significantly worse than those in their home countries (Campbell, 2006, Davies et. al, 2010, Dryden-Peterson, 2006, Grabska, 2006, Zetter et. al, 2010). Urban displacement is characterized by overcrowding, and lack of access to clean water and sanitation (ibid). Although migrants, both men and women, face similar challenges of security and safety, areas of vulnerability between the two differ significantly.

Even though data helps to reveal some of the demographic realities of movement within the continent, migration scholars continue to point out the challenges inherent in accurate data collection in relation to migration. “Much of the migration on the continent occurs outside state-regulated frameworks, making migrants bureaucratically invisible and almost impossible to track or capture in data” (Kihato, 2007:404). Despite the possible flaws in data, recent data indicates that at least 10 percent of migration occurs in Africa and between its urban hubs (UNDESA, 2004).

Migration within Sub-Saharan Africa is not a new phenomenon. However, movement beyond Sub-Saharan Africa into South Africa is relatively new (Landau, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, Kihato, 2007, 2010a, 2010b, Vearey, 2010a, 2010b, Vearey et al. 2010). According to Landau, 6.2 percent of Johannesburg is home to international migrants (Balbo and Marconi, 2005:3 in Landau, 2009b); Legget’s survey (2003, n=1,100) found that almost 25 percent of residents in Johannesburg were foreign born (Legget in Landau, 2009b). Vearey et al. (2010) state, “recent data suggests that in certain inner-city neighborhoods, over half of the residents are cross-border migrants” (p.14).

Migration into Johannesburg, the “city of migrants” (Crush, 2005:113) can also be attributed to past and current political armed conflicts on the continent. Countries such as Angola, Somalia Sudan and Zimbabwe, among others, have produced migrants that come to South Africa seeking refuge from strife in their home countries. The increase of refugees is believed to have contributed to xenophobic violence and anti-foreigner sentiments (Landau, 2006a, 2006b, 2007, Landau et. al, 2009a, 2009b, Vearey et al. 2010). Tensions between refugees and host communities develop from the perception that migrants are a burden on the city (ibid). On the contrary, Dryden-Peterson (2006) argues that urban refugees are self-reliant individuals with agency that promote personal and community development in their local communities. He examined a refugee-initiated community-based organization- Kampala Urban Refugee Children’s Education Centre (KURCEC), and found that a significant amount of assistance to the refugees of Kampala were via programs initiated by the refugees. This disjunction between perception of refugees and the refugee experience is what Kihato critically analyzes in her work with migrant women in Johannesburg (Kihato, 2010b). Kihato examines the intersections between how migrant women are represented in mainstream discourse with how migrant women chose to represent themselves; thereby, revealing a disconnect between the two arguments (Kihato, 2010b).
Their marginality and socio-economic locations create certain subjectivities which are not necessarily subsumed in dominant knowledge and power regimes but which in fact, produce ways of knowing that either counter or reinforce existing dominant discourses. (Kihato, 2010b:6)

Xenophobic attitudes are not unique to cities with large numbers of migrants. Campbell depicts how the government of Kenya widely supports the idea that Somali refugees living in Nairobi should be collectively forbidden from living and working in the city (Campbell, 2006: 396). Moreover, Dryden-Peterson (2006) explains how refugees in Kampala are some of the world’s most vulnerable citizens, while Grabska (2006) argues that although Sudanese refugees living in Cairo are marginalized and face xenophobic violence, they are actively participating “in the transformation of the city” (Grabska, 2006: 287).

As a consequence of xenophobia and the desire for “invisibility” many urban migrants are highly mobile within the city. Their mobility has implications for how they identify with their space and home. Many migrants in Johannesburg do not consider the city their home regardless of how long they have lived in the city (Landau, 2009). According to Landau, “As Johannesburg’s South African and non-national residents address their respective ‘deficits of belonging’, tensions have emerged between rooting and rootless idioms of membership, between those in the process of belonging (i.e., citizens) or becoming (foreigners)” (p. 202). Migrant mobility, the desire to remain invisible, and tensions between migrants and local community push us to examine the implications this has had on migrants’ relationship to their communities and their investment in the city. “In environments as unstable as Johannesburg’s inner city- where neighborhoods exchange their populations in months and years- observers must presume neither the forms of solidarity that exist within them or the forms of belonging desired by those who live there” (Landau, 2009b: 198).

Map 2: Map of Inner-City Johannesburg, showing the location of Hillbrow.
the government, many Yeoville residents expressed feelings of isolation and a limited sense of belonging. According to Harrison, “The lack of community has been exacerbated by the fact that many residents see Yeoville as a temporary stop and feel little need to get involved in the community life” (p. 75).

Mpe (2009) refers to Hillbrow as, “a place of honey, milk and bile.” Highlighting the complexities of inner cities, Vearey offers us another example of migrants as they navigate Johannesburg. Vearey (2010a) explains that Johannesburg is, “a fluid concept, where space can be converted and recycled to suit the needs of different urban residents” (p.44). She argues that migrants often opt to remain ‘hidden’ in order to avoid harassment, deportation, and violence (Vearey 2010a). Such portrayals are not uncommon to literature rooted in identity and migration (e.g., Campbell, 2006, Davies et. al, 2010, Dryden-Peterson, 2006, Grabska, 2006, Loren 2006a, 2006b, 2009a, Secor, 2004, Zetter et. al, 2010). However, as global population trends increasingly become more urban driven it is imperative to understand not only why such trends are occurring, but also who the people are that are moving and migrating, what their needs are, and how they interact with these new spatial surroundings (Kihato, 2007, 2010a, 2010b Landau 2006a, 2006b, 2009a, 2009b, Nyangairi, 2010, Secor, 2004, Vearey, 2010a, 2010b, Vearey et al. 2010, Venables, 2010).

As both rural and cross border migration continues and people find their ways to urban centers such as Hillbrow it is necessary to comprehend who its residents are in order to adequately promote assistance, services and development for all residents. Although it is necessary to understand migration as an area in and of itself, there lacks a substantial amount of information that is specific to the inhabitants of these spaces. I would now like to move onto a discussion around gender and migration, as well as migrant women sex workers.

2.3 Gender and Migration
When seeking to understand the intricacies of self- (re) presentation in migrant women sex workers, it is important to discuss how women are viewed both in public and private discourse. First, I will analyze the legal framework that some migrant women face, and then I will examine literature that has been written about migrant women.

2.3.1 Gender and Law
Refugee Law is meant to be gender neutral however, occurrences or participation specific to women are often times seen as unimportant or irrelevant when it comes to women seeking asylum (Crawley, 2000, Secor, 2004). Conceptualizations by decision makers seriously undermine the protection of the most vulnerable (Bhabha., 2004, Crawley, 2000, Green, 2002, Secor, 2004), by either not acknowledging the ‘gendering of politics’ (Crawley 2000:17); by perpetuating the image of women as victims and ‘apolitical’ (Bhabha, 2004, Crawley, 2000, Palmary, 2005, 2006, Ward, 2001) or, by refusing to see gender-specific persecution as a politically intentional act used during times of conflict as a way for one group to gain control over another (Green 2002, Ward 2001).

According to Polzer, (2007), legal frameworks should manage migrant rights by understanding the reality of migrants’ lives from below; however, the tendency by policy makers is to view women as a homogenous group void of political action and/or as ‘victims’ of conflict (Bhabha, 2004, Crawley, 2000). This way of operating not only perpetuates and reinforces the marginalization of women’s experiences, but also reveals
an obvious need to examine, with great scrutiny, how interpretations of human rights law are being made and why.

Gender-specific violence against women has routinely been used during times of conflict as a strategy to: destabilize populations, sever bonds with community/family members, cleanse ethnic populations, supply sexual services to combat personnel, demoralize and inflict systematic fear, and display hatred towards the enemy. Evidence of this sort of intentional gender-specific brutality has been documented in Rwanda, Bosnia, East Timor, Afghanistan, Vietnam, and Angola (Green, 2000 & 2002, Ward, 2001, Parker, 2004). In Rwanda, the role of ‘hate propaganda’ was used in media as a way to incite genocide and sexual violence against women (Green, 2002). “Tutsi women were portrayed as evil seductresses, transformed into ‘pistols’ to conquer Rwanda” (Green, 2002:33:733).

2.3.2 Gender through a Feminist Perspective

Recent feminist migration research is reflecting advances in feminist theory more broadly (Seager and Domosh, 2001). Early feminist migration research sought to make women visible within a discipline that essentially relegated women’s experiences to that of their male counterparts (Silvey, 2004). Moreover, it portrayed women as individuals without agency, or as victims, or as passive participants (Kihato, 2007). Recently, feminist migration literature has begun to look at the complex intricacies and implications between gender and other axes in order to better understand migration (Boyle, 2002, Elmhirst, 2000, Gibson et. al, 2001, Kihato, 2007, 2010a, 2010b, Mahler et. al, 2001, Nagel, 2001, Palmary, 2006, Richter et al., 2010, Venables, 2010).

Kihato (2007) states, “narrow economistic explanations of migration opened up the space for the exploration of other causal factors of migration” (p. 398). She goes further to say that ethnographic research has brought attention to the social vs. material causes of migration (ibid). According to Kihato, other possible causes for the increase of literature centered on women’s experiences in migration are: the increase of interest in gender studies, which inevitably brought gender analysis to migration, and the increase of women migrants worldwide, which, created a demand for both policy and research towards understanding ‘the feminization migration’ (Adepoju, 2004, Zlotnik, 2003 in Kihato, 2007). The Wits-Tufts survey 11 shows that 58.6 percent of women traveled from their country of origin alone (Kihato, 2007). Only about 35 percent said that they migrated with a spouse, and a similar figure with children (ibid). These figures reflect that not only are women migrating in high numbers, but that women are also active decision-makers. On the other hand, Vearey et al. (2010) argues that violence against migrant and refugee women creates additional barriers that make accessing services and support in their host countries more difficult (pg. 28). As the number of women migrating alone increases, there is a need to accompany this increase with a comprehensive understanding of the migration histories, and experiences in their host countries in order to effectively support the needs of migrant women (Vearey et al. 2010, Palmary, 2005).

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11 In 2002, a survey that focused on urban refugees was completed by the Forced Migration Studies Program at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa together with Tufts University in Boston (Landau & Jacobsen, 2003).
2.3.3 Gender and Identity

Nencel (2001) argues that patriarchal societies support the ontology\textsuperscript{12} of ‘heteronormative belief systems’ (p.5). She argues that in order to understand gender construction and identity, studies must examine the governing systems and societies in which the women are living. Nencel (2001) examines sex work in Peru and argues that heterosexual paradigms that place women as victims to male sexuality miss the point entirely as they fail to recognize the agency that women exercise as they enter sex work. She goes further by stating that sex workers actually maintain two separate identities: one of the sex worker and the one that is not a sex worker. Nencel (2008) coined the term “discursive explosion” to explain the salient reproduction of the “heteronormative sexual-gender morale” (p. 630). Furthermore, she argues that unless research on female sex workers is solidly rooted in understanding the economic injustices that are perpetuated by misogynistic systems, ontological misrepresentations of women and sex workers will continue to dominate sex work discourses (Nencel, 2001, 2008), Urban growth has challenged historical notions of identity; hence, scholars have been forced to rethink the relationships between gender, space and identity.

As multinational interactions and interconnections multiply and accelerate, it is no longer possible to maintain a modernist imagery of distinct cultural identities nested within a fixed configuration of culture, nation, and space. Cultures and ethnic identities are not isomorphic with particular spaces and specific places are multiply intersected with differences (Drzewiecka et. al, 1998: 20).

Secor (2002) examines space, place, identity and representation by focusing on Turkish women as they navigate the use of the veil depending on what space they are occupying. Her work examines a woman’s decision to use the veil as being dependent on her mobility between secular, religious (Islamic) and urban space, and shows us that particular urban spaces, such as a conservative part of town, have social norms and expectations that women navigate accordingly. Women engage in multiple identities as they navigate their spaces and security within these various frameworks. Secor continues, “space, whether sacred or profane, is not produced in a vacuum, but rather through a web of cross-cutting power relations that are themselves forged at multiple places from the local to the global” (p. 7).

In another article written by Secor, she describes Kurdish identity among migrant women living in Turkey and connects with Michael de Certeau’s notion of “tactics"\textsuperscript{13} by examining citizenship and space. “Every strategic rationalization... is an effort to delimit one’s own place in a world bewitched by the invisible powers of the Other (de Certeau 1984:36 cited in Secor, 1994:353). In this work, Secor (2004) explains that identity and belonging in the city of Istanbul by Kurdish women is a dynamic process that continually intersects informal and formal policing of citizenship (Secor, 2004). Secor illustrates that belonging and citizenship are not a synthesized relationship but rather, identity is fluid and dependent upon the “complex and historically ambivalent notions of Turkish citizenship and nationalism” (p. 365).

Bailey, Wright, Miyares and Mountz (2001) examine gender roles in relation to trans-nationalism of Salvadorans living in the USA. By looking at multiple family and social networks between Salvadoran migrants to their families in El Salvador the researchers are able to describe the complex nature of migrant identity in relation to historical ties of “home” (El Salvador), citizenship, gender, and labor (Bailey et. al, 2001).

\textsuperscript{12} Nencel (2008) defines ontology as, “a singular, essentialist heteronormative version of reality that functions at a profound subterranean level in the collective social mind” (p.2).

\textsuperscript{13} According to de Certeau, residents operate in two ways: (1) the “strategies of the strong” and (2) tactics which are “the art of the weak” (de Certeau 1984 36-37). Essentially, tactics exist where the absence of power is present, and where “the weak” can take advantage of opportunities in order to survive in an urban environment.
They show how networks that stretch national borders influence immigration, identity and representation of self, and that identities are fluid in relation to movement and place. In this way, their writings mirror what Drzewiecka and Nakayama reveal in their work with Polish immigrants in the USA reaffirming that identity and representation are, “formations articulated through configurations of space and that examinations of spatial configurations gives us insights into enactment of ethnic identification and the politics of multiple identifications” (Drzewiecka & Nakayama, 1998: 21).

**2.3.4 Gender and Representation**

On the other hand, Kihato challenges academic, nationalistic and media discourses on representation by critically analyzing ways in which migrant women are being portrayed as ‘marginalized’ and ‘vulnerable’ (Kihato, 2007, 2010a, 2010b). Kihato, among others, criticizes modern mainstream discourse by arguing that the ideas and systems (political, social, cultural) that exist in the complex intersection between individual identity and belonging to a place (or territorialized space) are extensive (Hedetoft, 2002, Kihato, 2010b, Landau, 2006b, 2009, Malkki, 1992, Vearey, 2010a, 2010b).

Malkki (1992) engages in discourse centered on the “taken for granted ways of thinking about identity and territory that are reflected in ordinary language, in nationalist discourses, and in scholarly studies of nations, nationalism and refugees” (p. 25). She questions the use of words such as ‘native’, ‘displaced’, ‘rooted’, and ‘refugee’. Furthermore, she challenges conceptualizations that scholars use in depicting refugee identity by drawing attention to the analytical consequences of the classifications that such terms infer (Malkki, 1992). Landau (2006) looks specifically at South Africa, primarily Johannesburg, by examining Comaroffs analogy of “antiforeigner sentiments and campaigns to uproot alien plant species and prevent others from taking root” (p. 126). Landau contends that in spaces, such as Johannesburg, where mobility and transience are the norm, such analogies can possibly ignore the rewards (status and material) that migrants experience in their choice to resist transplantation. Hedetoft (2002) provides an examination highlighting liberal nationalism and globalization as themes in exploring current debates around identity politics and begs the reader to engage in a critical analysis of why such discourses around belonging are emerging among policy makers, politicians, ethnic communities, and scholars.

Even though significant contributions have been made to highlight women in migration studies, there still remains a tone of ‘victimology’ within the literature, as well as a lack of authentic voice and representation by migrant women themselves (Kihato, 2010b, Palmary, 2005 & 2006). Kihato (2010b) argues, “even literature that explicitly challenges the labels that hide women and make their lives invisible, unwittingly falls back into the trap of dehumanizing migrant women” (p. 399). She examines the work of Bozzolli (1991) and White (1990) as two examples of literature that questioned the stereotypical notions of women as victims. Kihato commends them for challenging views that migrant women are victims, and for constantly illustrating that these women have agency even in oppressive conditions; nonetheless, she argues that the “victim/victor, visible/invisible dichotomies do not adequately describe or explain the lives of migrant women” (p. 400).

Kihato’s insightful critique of gender dichotomies in literature incites researchers to look deeper into the experiences of migrant women. Moreover, research that aims to give migrant women a voice will not only provide a deeper knowledge and understanding of overall migration themes, but will also invigorate current literature centered on notions of identity, belonging and representation. Many academics agree that in order to understand migrant phenomenon’s, such as citizenship, belonging, labeling, and representation, the

2.4 Migration, Gender and Sex Work

I would like to begin this section by highlighting the recent surge in trafficking discourse\(^{14}\). Although I believe that it is important to address this concern, I do however, feel that the trafficking discourse has become yet another attempt to control women’s sexualities and relegate them to moral laws that ignore women’s agency and the right to govern their own bodies.

2.4.1 Sex work in South Africa

As South Africa was preparing for the 2010 World Cup, there was great concern among policy makers on how they were going to deal with sex work. According to Harper et al (2010) the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development shared at a Parliamentary meeting that not a single case of trafficking had been reported during the World Cup. However, the debates on whether to legalize sex work or continue with its current illegal status is an example that exemplifies the two opposing discourses between pro-abolitionists and sex worker revolutionists.

2.4.2 Discourses on Sex Work

Trafficking discourse has been criticized by numerous academics, which are considered to be pro sex advocates, for not making an effort to understand trajectories into sex work (Anderson, 2002, Bindman, 2002, Palmary, 2006, Richter, 2008a, 2009a, Nyangairi, 2010). Within the trafficking discourse, all women that are involved in sex work are automatically victims (Bindman, 1997, MacKinnon, 1995). Not only does this completely negate agency among sex workers by perpetuating a victim stance on a group of people that are making adult decision, but it also puts sex workers in the same category as trafficking victims (Monson et al. 2010). Pro-sex work advocates refute the idea that sex workers are not making conscious choices to enter the sex industry by addressing the issue of exploitation that is often used by abolitionist supporters as a reason to eradicate sex work (Acquin-Asse, 1993, Brusza, 2001, Hunter, 1997, Jennes, 1993). Pro-sex work supporters challenge this issue by claiming that exploitation is a reality in many low skilled jobs such as domestic workers, and janitors but that these jobs are respected and protected under law, and that a woman’s choice to enter into sex work should be seen under the same protective lens (Ava Caradonna, 2008, Aquan-Asse, 1993). Ava Caradonna (2008) states, “there is nothing exploitative about consensual sexual behavior regardless of its motivation” (p. 1). Therein lies the conflict: abolitionist discourse does not acknowledge that sex workers make a choice to enter the sex industry, whereas pro-sex work supporters do.

The abolitionist domain is mainly divided in two categories: those who believe that sex work is immoral\(^{15}\) and (2) radical feminists who believe that sex work is a sign of women’s oppression, and that the eradication of sex work is the only way that women will be free (Anderson, 2002, Bindman, 1997, Buzca, 2004, Clarkson, \(\ldots\)).

\(^{15}\) Immorality and sex work is mainly rooted in religious discourse (Nyangairi, 2010, Richter 2008b).
Bullough and Bullough (1989) contend, “Prostitutes undermine the social institution of marriage and exploit women; it also poisons the country’s moral climate” (Bullough and Bullough, 1989: 3). Anderson (2002) goes further by stating that those who believe that sex work should be de-criminalized have been infected and brainwashed to believe a discourse that dangers not only society, directly questions their moral character:

I think that prostitutes experience a specific inferiority. Women in general are considered to be dirty. Most of us experience this as a metaphor… but the prostitute lives the reality of being a dirty woman… She is perceived and treated as vaginal slime, she is dirty, a lot of men have been there, her anus is torn from anal intercourse, it bleeds… her mouth is a receptacle for semen, that is how she is perceived and treated (p. 753)

What I find particularly interesting within the abolitionist/trafficking discourse are the two main groups of supporters that align themselves within this ideology. The belief that sex work should be eradicated is either supported by a religious/moral conviction or by feminists. The first could be understandable given the framework in which this particular group is arguing, and the historical implications that religion has had in relation to sex, sexuality, and gender, but the latter- feminists- is exceptionally interesting given that the feminist movement was rooted in the idea that women should be free to be their own individuals. In fact, Katherine MacKinnon, a radical feminist, was quoted as stating, “all sex is rape” (MacKinnon, 1987). The foundation of each one of these two groups significantly differ in most other social and political stances, but they found similar ground here, which serves to show the immense spectrum that sexuality takes in society. Whether it be for the protection of a moral conviction or the belief that women are being abused simply because they are having consensual sex with men, an issue of gendered politics that cannot be rebutted is clearly highlighted.

2.4.3 Health and Sex Work

Although not all public health officials support the criminalization of sex work, there is a pervasive belief within the health community that sex workers are unhealthy (Anderson, 2002, Doctors for Life, 1997). The health system has been criticized in their treatment and diagnosis to migrants moreover; the criticism extend further into the realm of sex work, claiming that it fails to treat ‘others’ effectively (Eisenburch, 1991, Harper and Raman, 2008, Grove and Zwi, 2006, Nunez, 2009, Richter, 2009a, 2009b, Thomas, 2006, Vearey, 2010a). Furthermore, many researchers pointing to the micro/macro economic and political systems, which continue to perpetuate stigma, and often- discriminatory diagnoses and treatments of health to migrant and marginal populations, have criticized service delivery to sex workers (ibid).

These assertions highlight the importance of viewing health and treatment through the lens of a broader discussion. The first point that I will make centers on the idea that anytime there is a bureaucracy, one can make a clear assumption that it is contained within a larger bureaucracy, that then gives way to another, resulting a domino effect that gives rise to a sort of social pecking order. Migrant women who sell sex are constantly confronted by socio-economic and structural factors, which they must negotiate through the formulation of complex but ultimately rational survival strategies. The factors may present themselves in various configurations, but responses to them by migrant women who sell sex, may be better understood by exploring the contextually unique power and strategies that exist across all levels of society. Polzer (2008) captures this well in her analysis of refugees and concepts of local integration when she states, "in understanding what actually happens on the ground, we should not start from a perspective idea of what
should be, how states should act and how the law should function, but rather start from a descriptive analysis of how states and communities act and how the law functions” (p.17).

Standler and Delaney (2006) offer insight into the challenges that sex workers face when attempting to seek public health care by highlighting a case in Hillbrow, Johannesburg. By discussing the numerous challenges\textsuperscript{16} that sex workers and health care professionals face in receiving and giving treatment, the reader begins to understand the health impacts that stigma and the criminalization of sex work has on the population. Standler & Delaney state, “Hillbrow is a densely populated suburb... over 50,000 people live in approximately 200 high rise apartment buildings and hotels spread over one square kilometer” (p.54) Furthermore, their data from 1999 estimated that there were between 5000 and 10,000 sex workers in Hillbrow and that sex workers are extremely vulnerable to HIV infection. In a survey of 247 sex workers in 1997, 45% tested positive for HIV (Rees et. al, 2000 in Standler & Delaney, 2006). Although it is important to ensure that sex workers are not blamed for the spread of HIV, a stigma unfairly relegated to sex workers, it is however, important to recognize that a lack of access to health care increases the risk of ill health. In this case, we can see how macro level policies that criminalize sex work impact service delivery. Richter et al. (2010) argues that sex workers commonly experience violence and, due to criminalization laws, sex workers are less likely to report rape, abuse and/or seek medical care. The criminalization of sex work can perpetuate already inflated notions of migrant hostility, sex work abuse, as well as pose incredible challenges for public health officials attempting to prevent/reduce the spread of HIV. Almedom, a medical anthropologist, explains that in many contexts, health providers essentially say, “we’re going to make an assessment of the problem and tell you what to do” (McNeil, 2010). The question therefore is- what does a health provider working within a system that discriminates against migrants and does not recognize sex workers as legal do in order to meet the needs of his/her client who may be a migrant sex worker?

2.4.4 Migration, Sex Work and Representation
I have found it frustrating at times to engage with literature that seems to exist in polar opposite extremes. I have found the same to be true during discussions when sex work is placed at the center of the conversation. Unlike any other topic, discussions on sex work usually result in inflated emotions, which ultimately dominate the subject. Agustin (2006) criticizes current migration research claiming that it ignores migrants who are involved in sex work, leaving it at the hands of feminist scholars to battle out. Research rooted in victim/hero binaries often seen in abolitionist dialogues and/or sex worker revolutionist discourse- mainly focused within feminist scholar circles- not only tends to ignore male, transgender and transsexual sex workers but also begins from a moralizing position (Agustin, 2006: 43). This stance ultimately ignores the complexity of realities that lead migrants into sex work, and ignores the nuances that selling sex inevitably has on society at large. Brewis & Linstead (2000) attempt to describe how identity is negotiated amongst women selling sex in Australia. Although I found the article interesting to read, I was ultimately disappointed with the attempt that it made in defining women as the “commodity that is consumed” (Brewis & Linstead, 2000:84). I would argue that perhaps the consumption is not exclusive to the client, but rather a mutually symbiotic relationship that is occurring between (and, within) each consenting adult participant- in this case, the sex worker and the client. A sex worker is not the only professional getting consumed and

\textsuperscript{16} Standler & Delaney (2006) discuss various challenges in getting sex worker’s in for regular medical screenings by addressing: the high population in Hillbrow, ill treatment by health practitioner’s, fear of deportation that left many sex workers feeling afraid of going to the clinic, and stigma to name a few (Stadler & Delaney, 2006).
having to negotiate identity while at work: most people, regardless of profession, engage in the dance of identity and representation on and off the job (Nyangairi, 2010, Venables, 2010).

The Judeo-Christian framework of good/evil has dominated perceptions and beliefs relating to sex work, ultimately negatively impacting de-criminalization efforts. I appreciate Augustin’s (2006) concluding sentence stating that, “research that looks at the lives of women selling sex in a variety of ways could contribute to how society at large considers them and facilitate Western societies’ acceptance of its own desires to purchase so much sex” (p. 43). The fact is that sex is inherent; thus, perpetuating the good/evil dichotomy will serve only to facilitate bigotry in laws resulting in negative consequences on health, and the right to live with security and protection (Richter et al., 2010). Simply stated, “…all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent, and interrelated. The criminalization of private, consensual sexual conduct between adults infringes on not only the right to health, but also various other human rights, including the rights to privacy and equality” (Human Rights Council; Fourteenth Session: Agenda Item 3: “Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development”, 2010)

What is evident at the end of this section is the lack of research that focuses on what migrant women who sell sex think and feel about the work that they do. Nencel (2005) argues that in order to understand cultural meanings and the construction of identity that research much allow for ‘feeling’ (pg.345). She goes further by stating, “the use of this dimension [feeling] in fieldwork have insight into the relational construction of gender identity-the author’s own, and that of the women” (Nencel, 2005: 345). In the case of this study, I am specifically interested in how migrant women that sell sex (re) present themselves; therefore, my work is focused on the historical trajectories of migrant women into sex work, and will offer insight centered on livelihood strategies, agency and choice by focusing on ‘voice’ with inevitably correlates with Nencel’s notion of ‘feeling’ in research (Aquan-Assee, 1993, Fick, 2005, Nencel, 2005, Richter 2009a, 2009b, Richter et al., 2010, Scambler, 2010, Venables, 2010).

2.5 Representation

Although I have touched on representation throughout the literature review, I will now provide a more in-depth and concentrated analysis by arguing that representation, specifically migrant representation, is an ever-shifting concept that is connected to broader social, political and historical movements; therefore, representation of a group and/or individual must be situated within the political and social paradigms that are present at the time. In order to understand a ‘group of people’ or an individual, it is important to understand how perceptions in micro-realities17 are experienced, and how these perceptions and representations are navigated within their macro geographical and political environments. In this section of the report, I will provide examples, based on literature, which highlight the reasons why representation must be placed within objective and subjective spheres in order to unpack the multiple intersections that lead to a group/person’s representation. I will do this by engaging with research that nuances issues of representation, as well as literature that speaks directly to this concept.

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17 I use the term ‘micro-realities’ to refer to the direct relationships that are present in the lives of the women: family, friends, myself as a researcher, and clients to name a few. Hillbrow, as an urban space spans both micro and macro realities depending on the context.
Dyer (1993) states, “reality is always more extensive and complicated than any system of representation can possibly comprehend” (p. 2). As we navigate our daily lives we are constantly negotiating and translating what is ‘real’. Representation and identity is logically rooted in the notion that each individual wants to belong to a particular place, space or group. How we perceive ourselves is an attempt to understand and be understood by the environment that we live in at a given moment (Gaillard, 1984). As we navigate our daily lives we are constantly negotiating and translating what is ‘real’. Extensive literature on notions of representation has been written and discussed, reviewed and challenged by social science researchers, literature, and the media (Palmary, 2005, Gaillard, 1984, Kruger, 2001). Amossy and Heidingsfeld (1984) state that representation is a model rooted in context and culture that is used to “perceive, interpret and describe reality” (p. 689).

As nation-states change politically and economically, so too does the perceptions that once appeared to be infallible. Riccio (2005) explains that as political and social conditions changed in Senegal, and as emigration into Europe increased, so did the stereotypes of the *moudou moudou*18, “in the past they were stigmatized for their ignorance, now migrants are seen as contemporary heroes” (p. 105). Due to droughts and political instability the economic system of Senegal changed resulting in high unemployment rates; hence migration became a survival strategy for many Senegalese. The majority of migrants were rural workers, *moudou moudou* people, and their skills almost guaranteed employment in Europe and America (Roccio, 2005). As a result of this, the educated elite that once referred to the *moudou moudou* as ignorant soon became dependent on the repatriations sent from overseas (ibid). In this case, we see how economic and political realities impacted the representations of the *moudou moudou* by Senegalese communities that remained at home. The *moudou moudou* were no longer considered ignorant, but were acknowledged for their skills and abilities to support their families back home. However, Roccio (2005) goes further by highlighting the dynamic process of identity and representation by sharing the sentiments of Ibrahim, a migrant that had recently returned from Italy to his hometown in Senegal:

> Everybody wants money, but I have changed in Italy, I want to do things and cannot distribute everything… I have brought 80 football t-shirts with me, and have all of them away, but I still find people complaining because they did not receive one (Ibrahim *taken from* Roccio, 2005: 114).

Here we begin to see how identity and representation are relative to one’s cultural, and political histories, as well as to individual migration experiences. As a migrant that was forced to flee Angola and then moved to the United States, I have often times felt similar to Ibrahim. In other words, I recognize that I am part of *them from that place*; however, I am *here and therefore I am different*. Although I will move into a discussion that focuses on broader social systems such as immigration laws, health and educational systems, and host country sentiments that significantly influence migrant representation, I will interlude that there is an important difference between how I feel and think (self-representation) and how others view me (representation). Depending on context, the two will vary greatly. Self-representation is constantly changing. For a migrant, self-representation can be dependent on who one is speaking to and why, the motivations for the conversation, and the reasons for self-representing differ accordingly. Representation, on the other hand, usually serves to explain how *others* think. The two do not share a symbiotic relationship; however, they are not mutually exclusive either. In fact, how others think can have an impact

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18 Abbreviation for the term Mamadou Mamadou. This term is used to describe rural tradesmen from Senegal. The *moudou moudou* were often relegated to a lower social class by the educated and society at large (Riccio 2005).
on how one self-represents, and conversely, how one self-represents may be motivated to influence (or not) others.

Nencel (2008) describes how women sex workers in Peru navigate their representations and identities by how they accept/reject heteronormative standards of sexuality. She argues that a masculine lens defines sexuality; therefore, women must abide by this lens and use it according to their needs/wants (ibid).

Furthermore, she argues that sex workers in Peru actively engage with the stereotypes of ‘whore’ in order to gain clientele (ibid). A schism between how the sex workers perceive themselves and how others perceive them is grounded in a patriarchal view of the gender-sexual morale (ibid). She goes further by explaining that the ontological heteronormative views of sexuality are shifting and that young men and women are moving away from the traditional views on sexuality. She states, “Objectification has become a form of expression no longer reserved for young men but also for young women. It is in this domain, where young women are expressing and acting differently than how the social collective mind believes it to be” (Nencel, 2010: 4). Nencel argues that the socio-political system that has defined sexuality historically is being radically altered by younger generations; however, these new paradigms are still based on a notion that masculinity is the norm (ibid).

2.5.1 Political Systems and Stereotypes

In South Africa, political systems have come under scrutiny for recent xenophobic violence and anti-foreigner sentiments (Landau 2006, 2009). In the USA, political and immigration reforms have resulted in a flurry of controversy as to what to do with the illegal aliens. There is a common myth amongst many Americans that “undocumented immigrants are exploiting the United States economy” (Lipman, 2006: 1).

However, Lipman (2006) states, “this belief is demonstratably false” (Lipman, 2006: 2). He goes further by asserting that, “Every empirical study of illegals’ economic impact demonstrates the opposite… undocumented migrants actually contribute more to public coffers in taxes than they cost in social services” (ibid). Roccio (2005) explains how Italy is running an anti-immigration campaign “trying to convince the Senegalese to stay home” (Roccio, 2005:110). As a result, the representation of undocumented migrants is generally delegated to migrants being criminals and unwanted people that take away jobs from the citizens in the host countries. Lipman (2006), states although undocumented migrants in the USA pay taxes into social services “many will not even access these few critical government services because of their ever-present fear of government officials and deportation” (Lipman, 2006: 6). Regardless of these facts, many Americans still express significant concern that undocumented aliens are dangerous to the social, political and cultural values of the USA (Lipman, 2006). Although such stigma is perpetuated amongst undocumented immigrants, what results is that those who are documented but share national ties are also stigmatized for the same reasons. For example, Mexican Americans are often lumped into the same stereotypes as undocumented Mexican migrants. To go even further, depending on the context, a person like myself- from Mediterranean Europe- can appear, due to similar physical features, to be Mexican therefore relegated to the same stereotype’s as a group from an entirely different country and continent. In this case, we see that not only does the political system create misrepresentations of undocumented migrants, but also perpetuates already inflated racist notions of who belongs (and who doesn’t) to a country or space.
2.5.2 Health, Stereotypes, and Representation


In the United States, refugees and migrants feel extreme pressure to assimilate (Bracken et al., 1997). Ong states, “some health workers consider it necessary to root out non-Western cultural beliefs as a strategy to gain acceptance and achieve assimilation” (p. 1248). In these examples, we can see how different levels of interactions between medical staff and patient stem from greater bureaucratic pressures or ideas rooted within each context. Andersen points out that differential treatment by medical staff is a conscious choice rooted in the Ghanaian concepts of power; i.e., higher education equals more power/higher ranking in society, as well as within the inherent hierarchical structure of a hospital. Lurie (2000) highlights the connection between xenophobic attitudes towards migrants by focusing on the fallacy perpetuated by governmental policy that foreigners are draining the South African system. Andersen (2004) addresses the stressful working conditions of the medical staff by stating, “Serious resource deficiencies, poor working conditions, underpayment, understaffing, etc. are important and obvious catalysts of malpractice” (p. 2003).

Although I have focused primarily on the implications that bureaucracy has on migrant treatment, it is equally important to note the immense hierarchy and power structure that exists in biomedicine as a whole.

2.5.3 Belonging

Nation-states differ in their motivations to create and preserve homogenous identities. Economic, political and/or religious ideologies of a nation, and ethnic identity are possible reasons explaining why there is an interest in forming or maintaining a collective identity (Hedetoft, 2002, Landau 2006 & 2009). Ong (1995) captures this clearly by stating, “health workers in the USA have constructed Khmers as a people carrying exotic diseases as well as suffering from ‘mental illness’ who must be treated, and ‘transformed’” (p. 1245). In contrast, Mechanic (1992) argues, “health is a product of culture and social structure, and derives from the belief systems and patterned activities reinforced by the ways of life of particular communities” (p. 1345).

In addition, Manderson & Allotey (2003) argue that Western institutions working with non-Western communities often discriminate and make inaccurate conclusions of illness based on preconceived notions of what they think the particular group suffers. One example of this is found in the case of the Khmer refugees seeking asylum in the USA. The arrival of the new USA citizens led immigration authorities to invent an illness called ‘Southeast Asian Mental Health’ (Ong, 1995: 1244). This resulted in a method of controlling and reproducing their minority status (ibid).

Another example of how notions of belonging within a health scope can be seen in how migrants are often referred to as mentally ill. A diagnosis of mental illness has been used as a way to control the space and identity of migrant assimilation. There is a belief within the aid and medical communities that refugees suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in great numbers (Anderman, 2002, Englund, 1998, Keyes, 2000, Ong, 1995); however, Englund (1998) clearly challenges this notion. The insistence by medical health practitioners that refugees need mental health treatment indicates a positioning that a refugee is inherently
damaged, as well as indicates racial profiling in diagnoses. This process can be reflected in larger discourses centered in political, economic and legal settings. Andersen (2004) explains this process as stereotypes assigned the status of an objective description of reality. This description serves, among others things, to identify affinity; i.e., insiders who are like us, and foreigners/outsiders are different from us (Herzfeld, 1992 in Andersen, 2004: 2011).

2.5.4 Gender and Representation

England (1996) examines how domestic worker placement agencies reinforce images about which national identities supposedly have qualities that make them best suited to certain types of domestic work (p. 195). On the other hand, Schwenken (2009) shows us how female migrant domestic workers in the European Union are challenging trafficking discourse by unionizing and demanding rights and protection. Both illustrate how gender, specifically female gender, is politicized and racialized. By revealing a ranking system of sorts within the domestic worker placement agencies, England (1996) highlights the lack of clarity that exists when looking at national identity and national stereotypes in migrant women domestic workers in Canada. She goes further by arguing, “national identities highlight the various cultural, economic, political, and social constructs which divide people into different collectives, based on exclusionary-inclusionary boundaries which focus on biological, cultural, or historical claims in common” (p. 196).

I would like to conclude this section with a quote from Bhabha (1990) that eloquently captures the essence of what this section has aimed to do: to show the fallacy of stereotypes, and how stereotypes give rise to racist, discriminatory, and incomplete representations that are made to support a system of beliefs ranging from macro to micro levels. The reality is that representation and self-representation must critically engage with a multitude of factors, and always be placed in context with a critical lens in which to support, oppose or analyze.

Contrary to what the very word ‘stereotype’ might imply, what is at the issue is not a straightforward matter of crudity of the stereotype as opposed to the complexity of the actual people being characterized. The colonial stereotype is a complex, ambivalent, contradictory mode of representation, as anxious as it is assertive, and demands not only that we extend our critical and political objectives but also that we change the object of analysis itself.


2.6 Visual Methodologies

Traditionally research on migrant groups and identity has consisted mainly in the areas of psychosocial, policy analysts and scholars (Ritivoi, 2002). The information, research and associated research, that has been generated surrounding identity in migrants has been notable, and allowed for a depth of understanding that allows us to see for example, that change of environment can cause mental distress (ibid). While drawing from this body of knowledge and accessing different disciplinary approaches such as sociology, anthropology and women’s studies to name a few, this study’s primary focus will center on the individual (the migrant women involved in sex work), and how the individual represents themselves in their urban environment. Approaching this study from an interdisciplinary perspective will offer insight into the specific

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<sup>19</sup> Female migrant domestic workers is automatically considered by various groups, including the European Council and NGO’s such as Anti-Slavery International, to be victims of trafficking (Schwenken, 2009). RESPECTS, a network of migrant women domestic workers in Europe, have joined forces that counteract the discourses centered on trafficking, by demanding rights and labor protection for female migrant domestic workers.
areas of individual experience and shed light on the questions of how and why migrants, specifically migrant women in sex work, adjust to environmental changes.

Although anthropologists and sociologists have been the primary users of visual data in social science research, academics from other disciplines such as Geography, Forced Migration, Public Health and Urban Studies are beginning to use visual methodologies as way to study and actively engage with their research studies. The use of visual data allows a dual perspective to be analyzed there by offering a deeper insight into the research that is being conducted. When using visual methodologies the researcher is not only interested in the actual content of the images, but is also equally interested in the reasons, people and places that are (not) being captured (Banks, 2004, El Guindi, 2004, Schwartz, 1989, Vearey, 2010a, 2010b). A didactic processes between content and context can reveal complexities of what is being represented, as well as what is not being represented in that particular image.

2.6.1 Visual Methodologies: Johannesburg, South Africa

Recently, four studies in the social sciences were conducted in Johannesburg that focused on the use of photography as a tool to explore issues surrounding health, migration and identity. Emilie Venables, Senior Researcher at Reproductive Health and HIV Research Unit (RHRU) has just recently concluded a photo participatory research project in Hillbrow. Migrant men, from both South Africa and elsewhere, residing in Hillbrow took photographs of healthy/unhealthy spaces in Hillbrow in order to address issues centered on public health and urban space discourses, particularly linked to their representations of their Hillbrow - see Emilie Venables protocol for more information (Venables, 2010). Caroline Kihato used photographic methodologies and interviews to explore gender and migration in South Africa, as well as on the African continent.

As an attempt to overcome some of the barriers of oral languages, I added a visual component to my data collection technique. This approach did not seek to replace oral evidence, but to use snapshots produced by migrant women to complement our verbal interactions (Kihato, 2010b).

Joanna Vearey, a researcher in the Forced Migration Studies Programme at the University of Witwatersrand, has conducted, both film and photography, participatory research projects in inner city Johannesburg (Vearey, 2010a, 2010b). The use of photography and film drew on what Tonkiss refers to as, “no resident of the city experiences the same city as another” (Tonkiss, 2005 as cited in Vearey, 2010a). This study highlighted significant concerns of public health issues by revealing areas of the city where people were living that were virtually invisible to policy makers, urban planners and researchers (Vearey 2010a). In this study, Vearey argues the importance of visual methodologies by stating, “The richness of such methods cannot be underestimated as these processes ensure that the voices of otherwise silent populations are heard, and that the ways in which residents represent their own spaces is understood” (Vearey 2010a:51).

The use of visual methodologies provides a way of ‘seeing’ groups of people and places that are often hidden from researchers. Allowing research participants to actively engage with the research echoes feminist discourse surrounding the importance of documenting experience by giving voice to participants.

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20 An initial exhibition on “Visual Hillbrow” was held on Friday 7th of May at RHRU of photographs taken during this study.
21 For more information see Joanna Vearey’s “Hidden Spaces”- a participatory photo project conducted in 2006 in partnership with Market Theatre Workshop, and “Kom Vir”- a participatory film project conducted in 2007 that partnered with Wits University, Market Photo Workshop and Day Fifty Films.
(Palmary, 2005). Furthermore, the use of visual methodologies can be empowering as it allows research participants to have direct control over how they are perceived and represented, and what they want to represent to the researcher and audience. Both Kihato and Vearey articulate clearly that unless visual methodologies were used, important subtleties of space and migrant women’s experiences would not have been revealed in their research (Kihato, 2010b, Vearey, 2010a).

Moreover, the use of visual methodologies can embody the personal concerns of the participants, and can reveal a wide range of expression. As Kihato points out, the migrant women in her study became actively interested in the findings of the research because their participation in the study would, “assist other women or community members to address some of the difficulties they faced in South Africa. It was clear that the women had an agenda as well, and their participation in the group was in part informed by the role they saw themselves playing as the ‘voices’ of their own communities” (Kihato, 2007:8).

### 2.6.2 Visual Methodologies and Representation

Goldstein (2002) refers to the “performative encounter” as a process where research participants actively decide how they want to be represented and perceived in the world (Goldstein, 2002:486). Banks (2004) explains that the process of representation is central to both the participant and researcher since both have autonomous interests in the representation(s) being produced. Whereas, Vearey insists that caution be implicit when using visual methodologies, and encourages researchers to be mindful when exposing individuals of ‘hidden spaces’ and their communities (Vearey, 2010a:51). Furthermore, Kihato engages us to consider the camera as a ‘disempowering tool’ given the possible dangers of making migrant women’s lives visible (Kihato, 2010b:14). Kihato also offers insight into the use visual methodologies by examining the conversations that took place during group discussions (Kihato, 2010b). Socio-political themes centered in identity, representation and space began to unveil themselves as women expressed their fears of being made visible, either by taking pictures and being seen with a camera or by being in the photos (ibid). During these discussions, women shared their personal strategies to remain invisible, which in turn revealed intricacies on how they understood their urban space, and how they navigated the city (ibid). In this case, one must wonder if the images were the most powerful piece of the research findings, or if it was the unintended discoveries made during the interviews in which the photographs were used as prompts into narrative discussions.

“Photographs are thought to reproduce reality in front of the camera’s lens, yielding unmediated and unbiased visual report” (Schwartz, 1989:120). Many critics of the use of photo methodology critique the very nature of the subjectivity of representation by the photographer/participant (Banks, 2002, Schwartz, 1989): however, it is exactly this subjectivity that can unlock insights into the complexities and intersections of migrant women sex workers identities.
Table 1: Bringing it all together: Summarizing the major themes identified in the literature review.

**Urban Space**
- Over half of the world’s population lives in urban spaces.
- Hillbrow is home to one of the highest migrant populations in urban cities in Africa.
- Hillbrow is home to one of the highest numbers of sex workers in South Africa.

**Gender and Migration**
- There is an increasing body of knowledge that centers specifically to women and migration.
- Migrant women are still depicted as ‘victims’ in a majority of the literature.
- As unaccompanied women migrate worldwide, there is an interest to understand migration trajectories.
- A need to move away from the presenting women as ‘victims’ of an abusive paradigm and into an agency based understanding.

**Migrant Women Sex Workers**
- Discourse is mainly rooted in abolitionist/pro sex worker dichotomies.
- Trafficking discourse has ignored the conscious choice made by many migrant women to enter the sex industry.
- Majority of sex work publication comes from the West.
- Limited amount of literature that focuses on migrant women who sell sex.
- Virtually nothing has been written that focuses on migrant women who sell sex in Africa.

**Representation/Self Representation**
- Political, economic and legal systems represent migrants, and this representation can often be seen within the social service systems of the host countries.
- Host country citizens rely on political, economic and legal ideas to shape representations of people.
- Representations are fluid and context based.
- Self-representations are interactive and dependent on multiple social, political and situational variables.

**Visual Methodologies**
- Viable tool for capturing ‘voice’ among ‘hard to reach’ communities.
- Studies have shown that visual methodologies can serve as entry points into further narrative inquiry.
- When seeking to look at representation and self-representation such a methodology allows participants to share and have their ‘voices’ heard in a way that no other qualitative method can.
3. **Introducing the conceptual research framework.**

I have developed a conceptual research framework that has enabled me to investigate the complexities of migrant women who sell sex in Hillbrow, an inner-city urban suburb of Johannesburg. The conceptual framework draws heavily on postmodern feminist theory, which values the notion that multiple realities exist at the same time (Baber and Murray, 2001). Post-modern feminist theory challenges and rejects, the objective construction of experience by recognizing that the subjective is neither unified nor fixed (Weedon, 1987: 22). The conceptual framework makes use of four main methods: (1) the Photographs, (2) the Journals, and (3) the Narrative Interviews, and (4) the Reflexivity of the Researcher. These methods are used to explore the experiences of migrant (internal and cross border) women who sell sex, and how these women choose to (re) present themselves. The methods are described below. The conceptual framework is illustrated at the end of this section, in Figure 1.

3.1 **Postmodern Feminist Theory**

Post-modern feminist theory encourages the use of qualitative methodologies, as well as exerts the belief that universal definitions exclude the complexities of lived experience (Marchand and Parpart, 1995, Paul, 1993, Ebert, 1991). Furthermore, postmodern feminist theory encourages the use of ‘voice’ as central to understanding the multiple intersections that make up the ‘reality’ of a person (ibid). Since this research focused on a ‘marginalized’ group of people, both in society as well as in research, ‘giving voice’ became central to this research study. This desire was motivated by two primary factors: (1) to add to a body of knowledge and (2) to allow for as much ‘voice’ as possible to be shared by the research participants. Both reasons were provoked by my personal and professional conviction to ‘give voice’ to what many consider ‘marginalized’ members of society. In the words of Raggin (1994),

> By giving voice, researchers often are able to show that groups that are considered deviant or different in some way do not deviate as much as most people think (p. 44).

Postmodern feminist theory, can therefore, be seen as the engine behind the conceptual framework that I have developed. I will now explain the three primary concepts that served to form the conceptual framework.

3.2 **The Photographs**

The recognition that innovative research methods, such as photography, as an appropriate research tool in social science research is quickly gaining ground across multiple disciplines (Kihato 2010a, 2010b Vearey 2010a, Venables, 2010). This study utilized the photographs that were taken by the research participants as a way to explore self-(re) presentation, and as an entry point into further inquiry during the narrative interviews.

Each photograph is accompanied with a caption, written by the photographer, that tells ‘the story’ of that image. While the caption reveals the intention behind each photograph, the culmination of the 10-11 images selected by each participant tells another story. Here we begin to see how the use of photography can a means to explore self-(re) presentation by looking at each individual photographs and how it relates (or not) to the rest of the images. Themes, ideas, stories and self- (re) presentations take form among and within
the selected images; thereby, allowing the individual intersections of identity and space, space and 'self', 'self' and (re) presentation to be examined and appreciated.

3.3 Journals
Data taken from the journals reflected sentiments and stories not depicted in the photographs and/or captions that helped the researcher to gain a deeper insight into the lives of the participants.

3.4 The Narrative Interviews
The content that surfaced during the narrative interviews shed light to the emerging themes that were presented in the photographs, as well as new themes and ‘stories’ that were not evident in the photographs. I chose to include narrative interviews in my conceptual framework because it is a central component of my research. Combining the narrative interviews and journals with the photographs allowed me to delve deeper into my research question.

3.5 The Reflexivity of the Researcher
My conceptual framework (Figure 1) also incorporates a key aspect to any research centered on representation, the reflexivity of the researcher. Literature highlighting the importance of reflexivity is extensive in social research literature (Guba and Lincoln, 2005, Ponterotto, 2005, Palmary, 2009, Patton, 1990). Bhana (1999) argues that because social researchers are part of the social world we study, and that there is no escape from reliance on common-sense knowledge, reflexivity on the part of researcher is a foundation that must accompany all social science research, especially qualitative research that tends to be more vulnerable to interpretation than qualitative centered research (p. 18).

By placing reflexivity in the contextual framework I ‘own’ the position of the research. This position allows for a dynamic look at the data and how (re) presentation is explained and articulated in this paper.

These three concepts are motivated by postmodern feminist theory and serve to assist in synthesizing findings from this study. Figure 1 highlights how the three methods interact with one another, and how this interaction then plays with the postmodern feminist theory that there is ‘not one truth to any story’.
Figure 1: The conceptual framework used to explore the complexity of (re) presentation in migrant women who sell sex.

Postmodern Feminist Theory

Photographs
And Captions

Journals

Narrative
Interviews

Reflexivity on
the part of the
researcher

Self (re) presentations of migrant (internal and cross border) women that sell sex in inner city Johannesburg.
4. Research Design and Methodology

In the previous section, I discussed the debates centered on sex work, migration, urban space and representation and, I presented the conceptual framework. In this section, I introduce the reader to the four methods that were used during this study: (1) Literature, (2) Participatory Photography Workshop, (3) Journals and, (4) Narrative Interviews. I explain why I chose participatory action research as the epistemological framework for this study. A table that highlights the demographics of each participant follows. I then provide a breakdown of how the methods were implemented and, a flow chart that clearly outlines the methodologies comes next. I conclude this section with a discussion on reflexivity.

Ethics

Ethics approval was obtained for this study from the University of the Witwatersrand non-Medical Research Ethics Committee: protocol H100715. A copy of the certificate is included in Appendix A.

Below is a brief introduction to the five methods used in this study. Although I will engage more in depth with the methods throughout this section, specifically the participatory photo workshop, narrative interviews and observation, I wanted to provide the reader, up front, with an introduction into the methodologies employed in this study.

1. Literature Review

A review of international, national and local literature was undertaken. This included both published and unpublished work. Key search terms included - urban; sex work; migrant; representation; identity; migrant women sex workers; urban health; gender and migration; labels and stigma of migrant women; governance; visual methodologies; stereotypes. The literature review was informed by the research question.

2. Participatory Photography Workshop

This research project was a collaborative effort with the Market Photo Workshop’s (MPW) Photojournalism and Documentary Photography (PDP) program and the Forced Migrations Studies Programme (FMSP) at the University of the Witwatersrand. Dr. Joanna Vearey, supervisor for this research project, had experience conducting participatory photo projects, and spearheaded the initial collaboration for this research.

Eleven migrant (internal and cross border) women who sell sex in inner city Johannesburg participated in a ten day participatory photo workshop where they were asked to take pictures of their Hillbrow.

Photojournalism and Documentary Photography Programme students at the Market Photo Workshop trained eleven participants in photography and editing skills, and provided added support by accompanying them as they moved about the inner city to capture images. Participants and students together edited images to create the final exhibition.

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22 Students that are interested in Photojournalism and Documentary Photography must complete a “hands on” assignment where they participate in local community projects aimed at teaching photojournalism and documentary photography techniques, ethics, and approaches. MPW and PDP students have been involved in a range of participatory photo projects with different urban populations in Johannesburg. These projects have explored various aspects of urban health, and how urban residents engage with- and navigate- the city.

23 Please refer back to the Visual Methodologies section in the Literature Review for more information on Dr. Joanna Vearey’s participatory photo projects.
3. Journals
On the first day of the workshop, each of the eleven participants were given a journal and asked to write down their thoughts, feelings, and observations. Prior to handing out the journals, the research team explained that at the end of the workshop the journals would be collected and used for data collection purposes. Many of the women wrote about their experiences during the workshop, while others shared stories that were undocumented in their images and captions. I collected the journals at the end of the workshop and used them during the data analysis phase of this study.

4. Narrative Interviews
Once the participatory photo project phase of the study ended, five participants were randomly selected and asked to take part in open-ended narrative interviews.

5. Observation
Throughout the workshop, I observed group dynamics, story telling, and image selection; furthermore, I observed my own personal psycho-emotional experiences. I kept detailed field notes that were used during the analysis phase.
Figure 2- Visual breakdown of the methods.

Participatory Action Research

Methods

Analysis

- Literature Review
- Participatory Photo Project
- Journals
- Narrative Interviews
- Observation
4.2 The Research Sites:

1. Market Photo Workshop (MPW):
Market Photo Workshop is a school of photography located in Newtown, Johannesburg. The initial focus of MPW when it was founded in the 1980’s was to provide photography skills, specifically focused on social documentary, to students that would otherwise not have the opportunity. Since its inception, MPW has adhered to the importance of using photography as a way to educate, explore and engage in social issues. MPW has worked collaboratively on participatory photography projects with the Forced Migration Studies Programme (FMSP) at the University of the Witwatersrand and the Reproductive Health and HIV Research Unit (RHRU). These photography projects helped to generate data for research projects, as well as tools for social awareness that addressed rising concerns within the Johannesburg community (more information on each of these photo projects will be presented in the literature review). Due to the successful relationship that MPW and FMSP built, Market Photo Workshop became one of the logical partners for this research project.

2. Reproductive Health Research Unit (RHRU), Hillbrow:
RHRU is located in Hillbrow. I was introduced to RHRU via the 2010 Sex Worker Research Project that is being conducted by Marlise Richter in the Forced Migration Studies Programme at the University of the Witwatersrand. I had the opportunity to actively participate (May-July 2010) in this research by facilitating focus group discussions during Phase I and Phase II of the research. This exposure linked me to women who sold sex in Hillbrow, as well as to local resources such as: Sisonke and RHRU. Sisonke assisted in identifying research participants and has remained as an active partner throughout this research study. During the ten-day participatory photo project (August 10-28th), RHRU, an organization located in Hillbrow that provides sex work specific health services to sex workers, provided the space to conduct the workshops, as well as the space that I used to interview participants. All of the research participants were familiar with RHRU primarily via Sisonke, and other services are centralized at this building; therefore, it was identified as a safe, convenient location to meet and conduct research activities.

3. Hillbrow:
Hillbrow is an inner-city suburb that boasts one of the largest migrant populations in South Africa and has been referred to as “a place of honey, milk and bile” (Mpe, 2001). I will engage with a significant amount of discourse regarding my choice to center my research within this urban area later in the report; however, I wanted to ensure that the choice to focus my study in this particular space was also directly due to relationships that FMSP, my supervisors, Dr. Joanna Vearey and Marlise Richter, and I had already forged with RHRU and Sisonke.

24 www.migration.co.za
4.3 Methodology for the Participatory Photo Project

In the following section, I will describe the layout of the research. I will guide the reader through the three main phases of the study: (1) pre-Workshop, (2) Workshop, and (3) post-Workshop. I will rely heavily on tables to explain the study. The participatory photo project took place in August 2010, Women's Month. During this phase of the research I worked closely with staff from Market Photo Workshop, and the research team.

One of the key questions that this study sought to understand was how women represent themselves in the eyes of others; therefore, before I present the methodologies and, in order to ensure that the reader has a complete understanding of the methodologies, it is important to point out that an exhibition of the images took place at the Market Photo Workshop Gallery on October 2010. The exhibition played a central role in the methodologies of this study; thereby, setting the scene for how/why the methodologies took place.

Exhibition:

Title: “Working the City”: Experiences of Migrant Women in Inner-City Johannesburg.

The exhibition was a culmination of ten images that each participant selected, along with one self-portrait, produced during the participatory photography project. The photographs taken offer a visual snapshot that each woman wanted to portray and share. The exhibition was a public event attended by the research participants, as well as by academics, City representatives, NGO affiliates, and anyone else interested in attending.

It is hoped that the images selected and displayed, along with the personal narratives, will contribute to an increasing body of knowledge relating to the experiences of migrant women involved in sex work, how they (re) present themselves, as well as their perceptions and experiences of the city.

I would now like to introduce the reader to the eleven participants. On the following page is a table that shows some of the more pertinent information regarding migration into Hilbrow and length of time working and living in inner city Johannesburg.

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25 See Appendix I for a copy of the invitation for the exhibition, “Working the City”: Experiences of Migrant Women in Inner-City Johannesburg.

26 See Appendix J for a copy of the posters that were produced for each participant that includes the images on display at the exhibit. Please note that each poster contains only eight of the eleven images selected by the women. MPW decided to create posters for each participant that displayed their images. Unfortunately, the lack of space on each poster required MPW to reduce the number of images. I highlight the limitations of this process in the limitations section of this report. For the purpose of data analysis, I used the original ten images and captions.
Table 2: Demographical information of the eleven migration women sex workers that participated in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Place of Origin</th>
<th>Length of time in Johannesburg</th>
<th>Length of time selling sex</th>
<th>Length of time selling sex in Hillbrow</th>
<th>Length of time living in Hillbrow</th>
<th>Primary area(s) where work is conducted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ana</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Leidenbeck, Mpumalanga, SA</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>Hillbrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Pretoria, SA</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>Hillbrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iketlang</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Pretoria, SA</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>Hillbrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lety</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>Hillbrow, Sandton, Yeoville, Magalisberg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mimi</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Hillbrow, Sandton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monica Mombassa</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Hillbrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinky</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Eastern Cape, SA</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>Hillbrow, Braamfontein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sbu</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Kabuli Natal, SA</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>Hillbrow, Braamfontein, Newtown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorty</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>Hillbrow, Sandton, Fourways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sku</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>Hillbrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thembile</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>KwaZulu Natal, SA</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Hillbrow, Braamfontein</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4 Study Design for the participatory photo workshop:

Language: How do we refer to one another?:

“Hillbrow participants” and “student participants”

As stated earlier, this study was collaboration with MPW students and the University of Wits FMSP department. Due to this unique partnership, and the sensitive nature of the research that was being conducted, it was necessary to establish appropriate language to identify research participants during the onset of the participatory photo project. In an effort to avoid further stigma, it was agreed by all of the research participants (migrant women who sell sex, PDP students, staff, MPW staff, and research staff) that the migrant women who sold sex would be referred to as the “Hillbrow participants” and the PDP students would be referred to as the “student participants”. Therefore, when I refer to “Hillbrow participants” I am referring to the eleven migrant women sex workers that participated in this study.

Participants: Who is in and who is not.

Eleven migrant women who lived and sold sex in Hilbrow.
- 6 internal migrants
- 5 cross border migrants from Zimbabwe

Please see Appendix F for a breakdown that explains the ‘inclusion/exclusion’ requirements that formed the basis for participation in this study.

Location(s):

Since this study was specifically interested in Hillbrow as an urban space, the Reproductive Health and Research Unit (RHRU) in Hillbrow was the primary location for the bulk of the workshop. During the two days of editing, the project moved to Market Photo Workshop in Newtown.

Length of the participatory photo project:

Three Half Days (9am-2pm)
- Meeting with prospective research participants.
- Introductory Meeting with research participants.
- Introductory Session with research participants, students, MPW staff and PDP students.

Seven Full Days (9am-5pm)
- 5 full days of research conducted at RHRU
- 2 full days of editing at MPW

MPW staff, students and the research team met at 9am to discuss and untangle any concerns, and to strategically plan the day ahead. ‘Hillbrow participants’ arrived at 10am. This process of de-briefing and brainstorming was also conducted at the conclusion of each day as well with MPW staff and the research team. See Appendixes F and G and a for a breakdown of the workshop activities and a sample of a day’s schedule.
4.4.2 Preparing for the Study: Meeting with Possible Research Participants

Prior to the commencement of the participatory photo project, I met with all of the prospective participants, and explained the study in detail (as explained previously, prospective participants were recruited via the help of Sinsonke staff). During the session, I handed out Information and Verbal Consent Forms, a summary of the photography project, and a schedule of days and times that participation in the workshop required. A 100 Rand Pick and Pay voucher was distributed daily as a “token of appreciation” and as partial compensation for their time.

During this session, women were given the opportunity to ask questions about the study, work with digital cameras, and look at documentary photography books. A discussion about the power of images and how this project offered them the opportunity to be ‘in control’ of how they were represented in the media followed. Since many sex workers are not open about the work that they do with family and friends, some were skeptical of visual images such as photography because it posed a direct threat to their anonymity. During this part of the session, the research team explained that during the workshop they would learn techniques that they could use while taking pictures that would preserve their (and others) identities.

It was apparent to me that although the women were interested in the research study, they were intimidated by the task ahead of them. Many were concerned about safety, many had never used a camera before and expressed feeling intimidated by the project. The research team reassured them that camera safety, as well as photography techniques would be part of the workshop. Furthermore, it was made explicit that, if at any point, they no longer wanted to participate in the study they could withdraw from the project.

4.5 The Workshop: A breakdown of the Participatory Photo Project

During this phase of the study, research participants were selected, PDP students identified, the location for research secured, and the workshop facilitator hired by Market Photo Workshop.

Workshop Facilitator:

Mathews Baloyi, a reporter and professional photographer, who has worked on numerous participatory photo projects with MPW and the International Organization of Migration (IOM), facilitated the workshop. Matthews speaks various South African languages, as well as Shona (a language spoken in Zimbabwe); therefore, when the need arose to explain a process more clearly, he was able to bridge the language gap.

Workshop Process:

Below is a breakdown of how the workshop was conducted.

- Over a period of one week, the eleven participants were trained in photography techniques by experienced facilitators and advanced students (PDP) from the Market Photo Workshop. This involved both basic photography training and practical sessions in which they took photographs in Hillbrow. The training sessions took place at RHRU, located in Hillbrow. During the workshop, ‘Hillbrow participants’ and ‘student participants’ were partnered and worked collaboratively for the length of the project.

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27 See Appendices C and D for copies of the Information Sheet/Verbal Consent Form, and the Audio Consent Form.
• Participants received training in the ethics of photography, including how to obtain consent from potential subjects in their images.

• Participants were each given a digital “point and shoot” camera to use throughout the week. Participants were allowed to take the cameras home and were encouraged to take photographs during the evening.

• Participants chose a pseudonym if they wanted, and chose whether they were to be addressed by their pseudonyms or by their real names. All pictures and names would use the pseudonym/name that they chose for publications.

• Images were downloaded on a daily basis and reviewed with other participants, students and research staff. This process enabled the participants, in a timely manner, to see the photographs that they had taken, to correct any errors and/or misuse in camera techniques, and to develop their own photography skills throughout the duration of the project.

• During the practical sessions, ‘Hillbrow participants’ and students partners went into Hillbrow to photograph their local surroundings as they developed the ‘story’ that they wanted to tell and share.

• ‘Hillbrow participants’ learned how to take a self-portrait that would be displayed during the exhibition. Techniques were taught that could protect their identities in case they did not want to be revealed in the self-portraits.

• At the start of the workshop, participants brainstormed what Hillbrow meant to them. The research team facilitated this initial brainstorming exercise, with assistance from the MPW students, staff and facilitator. During this preliminary workshop a guide for how to select spaces to photograph was developed. It was necessary to ensure that safety and protection were of utmost importance during this project; therefore, a lengthy discussion around ‘safe’ places occurred. Each ‘Hillbrow participant’ worked with a mentor to develop her individual photography plan.

• Participants were given personal journals. They were encouraged to write down feelings, thoughts and ideas about their images, the workshop, and/or anything that their images evoked.

• At the end of the day, each partnered team would sit down and review the images.

• A gradual selection of images would occur daily.

• On day five of the workshop, participants were asked to select 25-30 images that told their ‘story’ best. Participants were asked to share these images with the group, and if they felt comfortable, share the story that accompanied the images.

• Days 6 and 7 required that each participant select ten images and one self-portrait. Participants were told that these selected images would be on display for the exhibition. During this time, participants were also asked to write a caption for each image. The final editing and selection process was conducted at the Market Photo Workshop School in Newtown.

In order to help the reader gain a deeper understanding of how the workshop was facilitated and conducted, I have included four photographs that I took during the workshop on the following pages.

A discussion on how I selected research participants for the narrative interviews follows the photos. I will discuss how the images served as entry points into narrative enquiry, and how the inclusion/exclusion of the images selected served as a way to gain extensive data into the study.
A ‘Hillbrow participant’ working with her MPW student facilitator. In this image, the two were brainstorming places in Hillbrow that Lety wanted to make sure to capture.

This image shows Mimi explaining the images that she took the day before. During this process, the photographers explained why they took the images and, what it meant to them. They also discussed the photographic quality and techniques of each image.
This is an image of Sku during the final editing stage of the workshop at MPW. In this photo, Sku is writing down a caption for each image in her journal.

This image was taken on the last day of the editing phase of the workshop. PDP students and ‘Hillbrow participants’ worked collaboratively during this phase. ‘Hillbrow participants’ selected their ten final images for the exhibition, and the PDP students assisted in editing the image when necessary.
4.6 **Post-Workshop:** Interviews and the process of using images as entry-points in narrative enquiry.

Once the participatory photo project phase of the study ended, five “Hillbrow participants” were randomly selected and asked to take part in the second phase of this research-in-depth, open-ended, narrative interviews. I randomly selected participants by first dividing the participants into two clusters: internal and cross border migrants. I then created a spreadsheet and assigned a number to each participant. I wrote the numbers down on flash cards and randomly pulled three flash cards from the internal migrant pile, and two from the cross border migrant pile.

The narrative interviews used the images as an entry point into discussions about the women’s lives, stories and trajectories into sex work. Each participant was interviewed three separate times for an average of one hour and a half. Each interview was recorded, transcribed and coded. Participants signed Audio Recording Consent Forms at the beginning (please see Appendix B for a copy of the Audio Recording Consent Form).

According to Patton (1990), small samples for open-ended interviews add depth, details and meaning at a very personal level. Although I would have liked to interview each of the eleven participants, due to the scope of the study, I had to limit the number to five in order to conduct a more in depth narrative. Conducting the interviews three separate times allowed me to study the previous interviews; therefore, I was able to engage with the research participant on a deeper level each time.

This type of interviewing takes skill, as well as a positive rapport. During the course of the participatory photo workshop, I intentionally interacted with each participant regularly. Thankfully, our interactions were always positive; thus, I was able to establish a rapport with the women that greatly helped me during the interview process when more intimate and personal information was being shared (Dawson, 2009).

I would now like to briefly discuss the use of observation, as another methodology that I employed during the course of this study. In this section, I engage with literature that highlights observation as an efficacious tool in social science research and, I provide examples highlighting how this methodology was used.

4.7 **Watching, Wondering, and Witnessing:** Observation as a methodology.

There are many researchers that believe that observation is the most comprehensive methodology in qualitative research (Patton, 1990). The use of observation as a methodology was central to my participation in this study and to the data that was generated. During the course of my study, I had the opportunity to observe the migrant women sex workers, as well as the dynamics that took place in during the workshop between the student participants and staff. Hammersely & Atkinson (2007) state, “The task is to investigate some aspect of the lives of the people who are being studied, an this includes finding out how these people view the situations they face, how they regard one another, and also how they see themselves” (p. 3).

A significant amount of research that has been conducted on sex workers has relied heavily on the use of observation (Nyangairi, 2010). Although I feel that observation helped to enrich my data, and ultimately, it was the multiple methodologies used in this study that resulted in the rich data that has been produced. Sanders (2005) argues that multiple methods in research increases the abundance of data for the
researcher. I believe, that each of the methods revealed different aspects of empirical reality that were central to my study. However, the use of observation enriched the findings and revealed gaps that further studies can pursue.

One of the most interesting observations that I made was during the first day of the workshop when all of the participants, MPW students and staff, migrant women sex workers, as well as the research team, met for the first time. As mentioned before, it was necessary to create appropriate language at the commencement of the study. As this process took place, the research team stood in the back and attempted to guide the discussion. There was a debate on whether the migrant women sex workers preferred “sex work participants” or whether the students would be called PDP students rather than student participants. For many of the students, this was the first time that they had personally engaged with sex workers. Many were excited to be able to work with this group of people. What ensued during this conversation was a process that has left me pondering the following observation ever since.

As the discussion continued and participation increased, many of the researchers in the back of the room became a little uncomfortable with some of the questions and statements that the students were making. Statements such as, “I would like to learn more about sex work”, “I have never met sex workers before”, “I would like to know how you work and how you navigate your work” are some examples of what was shared.

As a research team, we made sure that the migrant women sex workers understood that although we were interested in their work, that this study was primarily interested in who they were, rather than what they did for work. As we stood in the back of the room trying to control what students were saying, a tension grew in the room. Suddenly, I realized that the tension was not from the women, but rather from us, the research staff, the very people who argue vehemently and write stern articles against oppression and stigma. I stood there and realized how complicated everything is... Not a single one of the research team would ever intentionally want to oppress or silence another person, yet that was exactly what we were doing. We were attempting to control a conversation because we were nervous that the women would get upset or insulted. What we forgot, is that the women had the ability to speak for themselves. They were capable of saying “no” to students if they wanted to; they were wise enough to know whether they could take the students to their work places or not; they were strong and independent woman who had the skill set to navigate the statements that we were trying so hard to control.

In the end, I felt that this observation was amazingly and rich and incredibly insightful. I immediately understood the complicated nature of working with a stigmatized group such as migrant women sex workers, and clearly saw that as a researcher, I needed to be careful not to impose the undignified traits that I abhor.

Another pertinent observation came after the third day of the workshop. On day three of the workshop, the women were asked to brainstorm the story that was developing in their images thus far. Each one had the option to either just show their images or to show and tell the story that accompanied the images. As I sat there and watched the majority of the women get up and share their personal stories with the group I noticed a shift occur. As each woman spoke, more questions were asked and input from all of the participants increased in intensity and care. Below is a observation that I made during this time.

I can almost feel how things are shifting. The students are no longer the ones with the power here. The women are becoming more confident. They are leading the discussions and providing the feedback to one another. The facilitator is in the back of the room with hand on his chin nodding his head in disbelief as Pinky tells us about the death of her child. The room is in tears as she breaks down. I am at a loss for what this means, except that I believe that this is good. We all get to learn something. And, these women are no longer just sex workers to the students, they are just people. I am not sure that any
of the students ever really looked at them as just sex workers, but I think that if they did, it has changed. I am amazed at the strength and the camaraderie that I see in the room. Somehow, a shift happened and I am not sure how, but it’s awesome to be a witness to this equalizing of power relationships.

Since an MPW staff member facilitated the workshop, I was able to objectively observe the processes that took place during the course of the workshop. During the interviews, I noted how the women answered the questions, how they moved pictures around and played with some and not others. I observed hesitations and emotions. I was able to monitor group dynamics and how these played a part in the ways in which stories were told.

Mostly, the observation was an organic process; however, at times I was more intentional about being present during certain moments in order to observe specific dynamics. Since there were both internal and cross border migrants in this study, I thought that I would see if any anti-foreigner sentiments were being expressed. I made sure to eat lunch with the women as often as I could in order to examine who sat with whom. I also made sure to ride the taxi with the women when we traveled out of Hillbrow in order to observe how they interacted with me outside of the workshop. All of these moments have enriched the data and study. I kept rigorous field notes and would often write my thoughts and processes during and after the research in my journal.
5. Data Analysis

Data was compiled via the images, narrative interviews, informal interviews, observation, and journal entries. In the previous section, I explained how data was used for this report by providing examples and showing the reader how I analyzed data. Marshal and Rossman (1990) explain that during that data analysis phase of research, data is organized and structured in order to give it meaning. In order to do this, I compiled codes that were applied as I sorted and organized my data. During this process, I relied heavily on both thematic and narrative analysis. Both frameworks were helpful as I unpacked the data in order to find/identify the themes and categories most prevalent in the study. Thematic analysis allowed me to describe re-occurring themes that came throughout the study; whereas, narrative analysis allowed me to go deeper into the analysis as I investigated the intricacies of the data.

According to Shaw and Gould (2001), narrative analysis allows the researcher to examine the ways in which stories are created and how these stories are used to interpret the world. I was not necessarily interested in whether or not the stories were true, but rather, I was interested in why they were told, how they were told and, who was the intended audience in the minds of the “Hillbrow participants.” In order to gain insight into the images and the stories, it was crucial for me to develop an understanding of each woman in relation to who they felt the audience was. The following questions drove the investigation and analysis of the data:

Was the audience the community of Hillbrow? Were the women, themselves, the audience? Was it policymakers? Was it the attendees of the exhibition? Did the women consider the audience as they selected their images and captions? Did they care who the audience was, and what were they trying to reveal and represent about themselves to the audience? I was interested in exploring the subjectivity of their images and stories, as I attempted to understand how they wanted to be represented, and why.

Once the data was transcribed and organized, I developed categories/codes based on the themes that were highlighted in the study. As language is central to a system of meanings and practices that construct reality (Nyangairi, 2010, Vearey, 2010a), I paid close attention to the verbiage that the women used.

Refer to Appendix H for a sample of how I coded the data for this study.
6. Analysis and Discussion

In this section, I will discuss the findings by focusing on the prominent themes, and sub-themes, that emerged during the analysis of this study.

6.2 Research Themes

Through the literature review and, application of this study's conceptual framework I have identified four central, cross-cutting themes: (1) The Journey (trajectories into sex work and migration into Hillbrow) (2) Structural Violence (police and legal system, health care, and living conditions in Hillbrow) (3) Stigma (individual perceptions of livelihood strategies and family and friends, and (4) visual methodologies. The themes reflect the complexity of (re) presentation of migrant women sex workers. Data was disseminated from images, narrative interviews, informal interviews, observation, and journal entries.

A summary of the four themes is presented in Table 5 on the next page.

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24 I will use images and captions extensively in this section. I would like to point out to the reader that at times, when appropriate, I have included a “title” for an image. The research participants that participated in the in-depth interview phase of this study selected these titles. I will explain this process in depth later in the section.

25 In order to ensure the anonymity of the migrant women sex workers, pseudonyms were used to describe the hotels/brothels where the women worked/lived.
**Table 3: A summary of the four thesis themes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Key components and description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) The Journey</td>
<td>• The key here is seeing how each of the migrant women interact and explore their trajectories into sex work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• During the photo workshop, women engaged with their trajectories into Hillbrow and sex work. The nuances in how this engagement was shared via their images and captions provide insight into their self (re) presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sex work is represented in relation to the audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Another key is to examine binaries of good/bad woman and how each participant has negotiated the two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Stories of migration journeys from place of origin into Hillbrow offer insight into the perceptions and explanations that research participants explored during the process of representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Structural Violence</td>
<td>• Sex Work in South Africa is currently illegal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Access to police protection is limited. Sex workers often complain that police rape, abuse and steal their money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Police brutality is intentional and seen as an extension of the criminal laws against sex work and sex workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Health care access for migrants is compromised; therefore, access to migrant women who sell sex is virtually non-existent. Access to healthcare treatment by health care professionals is challenging and/or abusive in delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lack of access to living facilities, clean water, health care, and dignified living conditions in congested urban spaces leads to an increase of crime and police corruption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Stigma</td>
<td>• Internal perceptions of their work as sex workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Family and friends perceptions of Hillbrow as a space and sex work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Moral/immoral dichotomy on sex work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Legal structures that perpetuate systems that do not protect the human rights and dignity of sex workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Visual Methodologies</td>
<td>• Central here is exploring how best to engage with and give voice to often “hidden” urban populations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


7.2. The Journey

In this section, I will analyze the stories that the research participants shared regarding their migration into Hillbrow, as well as their trajectories into sex work. The journey into Hillbrow, and the journey into sex work are not mutually exclusive. In other words, some women migrated to Hillbrow in search of a “better life” and found themselves in sex work for a number of reasons; other intentionally came to Hillbrow in search of opportunities in sex work. The stories and trajectories into Hillbrow and sex work must be centered on the notion that each woman has a unique story, that the participants(s) choose to share with me, that is embedded in her life story. None of the stories are the same; however shared themes are evident in the data. By engaging with the data, and comparing/contrasting it to the literature, this analysis will highlight the multiplicity of reasons why women came to Hillbrow and, why they became sex workers.

7.2.1 Why I came to Hillbrow and Why I do what I do: A look at the journey into urban space and sex work.

One of the principal questions that this study sought to explore was how migrant women who sell sex in Hillbrow engage with their migration histories, as well as their trajectories into sex work. During the participatory photo project many women focused on their migration stories into Hillbrow; however, some women chose not to highlight their trajectories into sex work. Other participants left out their migration and sex work journeys entirely. Finally, some chose to address their trajectories into sex work and leave their migration stories out of the image selection. I will examine two primary areas: (1) those who chose to include images about migration and sex work, and (2) those who chose to exclude images about migration and sex work. I will examine the two areas by engaging literature on representation and the data.

According to Akhtar (1995) immigration from one country to another is a complex psychosocial process with lasting effects on an individual's identity. The dynamic shifts, resulting from an admixture of “culture shock” and mourning over the losses inherent in migration, gradually give way to psycho structural change and the emergence of a hybrid identity (p.1). Akhtar goes further by arguing that there are four interlinked factors that impact the identity of immigrants: dimensions of drive and affects, interpersonal and psychic space, temporality, and social affiliation (ibid). Although Akhtar focuses his work on cross border migrants, I argue that migration from rural areas to urban areas also requires the individual to face the previously mentioned factors. Similar to the participants from Zimbabwe, the internal participants from this study migrated to Hillbrow from rural areas, leaving behind indigenous languages, customs and traditions; however, xenophobic violence in South Africa requires an acknowledgement that a drastic difference due to internal politics is inherent between the two groups of migrants (Landau 2006a, 2007).

Understanding the discourse around sex work also aids in the process of unpacking (re) presentation among migrant women sex workers. The West dominates a significant amount of research centered on sex work. Women are either portrayed as heroines that are defying a misogynistic system by using their bodies as a way to empower themselves, or they are seen as inherently immoral (Agustin, 2006, Buzsa, 2004, Sanders et. al 2009). This didactic stance does not take into account the specific realities that migrant women sex workers in Africa must navigate (Nyangairi, 2010). The view that a woman who entered sex work is inherently “abnormal,” must be further examined and addressed. Studies conducted in the West tend to focus on sex workers as victims of drug abuse, sex abuse, and broken homes (McKinnon, 1979). The
trafficking discourse claims that all sex workers are victims of trafficking; thus, removing agency away from those who choose to enter sex work voluntarily (Palmary 2006, Nyangairi, 2010).

During the course of this study, none of the women stated that their involvement in sex work was due to coercion and/or manipulation. In fact, all of the women shared the reasons why they chose to enter sex work; thereby, negating trafficking discourse in the case of this study. Instead, my findings highlighted a diversity of personal experiences that explained the various trajectories into sex work and Hillbrow. One of the most interesting observations that I made during this study was the intentional separation that occurred as women talked about their entry points into sex work. With the exception of one participant, all of the women shared freely about their work during the workshop; however, not all chose to include images that centered in their involvement in sex work. Below is an excerpt from my field notes:

I am amazed at how open the “Hillbrow participants” are about their work. They stand in front of the group, and openly explain why and how they entered sex work. No one has asked them to talk directly about their experiences as sex workers, yet they do. I am not sure if it is because they simply need a space to vent and express themselves; if it was a way to gain sympathy from the group, or if it was a way to own their choice in their work profession. I am quite certain that the reasons are complicated and very nuanced. As I have pondered this throughout the workshop, I noticed that some of the women are not selecting images that have to do with sex work, or migration for the matter. Yet, when I listen to them speak, these stories are central to what they are sharing with the group.

There seemed to be a cognitive separation between the selections of images and how they were choosing to (re) present themselves to the group. Landau (2006) argues that many non-nationals in Johannesburg actively chose to remain “outsiders”; consequently, the solidarity of this process amongst ‘foreigners’ is an intentional practice of self-alienation. Perhaps similar lines can be drawn to explain the reasons why the women decided to share their stories of migration and sex work with the group, but not with the general public. Confidence sheds light on how the workshop was a safe space that allowed her to share things about her life that she would normally not share with people.

Safe place, safe people. They don’t know me. It was easy. If I was telling someone that I would see every time I am around the corner I wouldn’t tell the story. I don’t want to. I would see them and think- eesh- she knows too much. It’s better to tell someone that stays far away from you. Even though you can see them sometimes, they are not from here. I don’t have to worry. Elsa, you don’t live where I live so I can tell you my story. I am not afraid that you know too much (Confidence, Interview 1).

This statement can reveal some of the reasons why images were selected (and not) and why the women felt comfortable to share intimate stories to the group, but not to the public. Further inquiry into the images follows as I examine the ways in which both sex work and migration are (re) presented. On the next page are five images taken by different photographers. Each image is a direct statement that reflects their work as sex workers. I will now analyze the selection of these, and discuss the ways that representation can be unpacked.
Title: Confidence’s Shelter

The Ambassador Hotel is where I live and where I do my business. I have been a resident here since 2001.

This is how I look when I work as a sex worker.

This picture shows who I am in terms of the work that I do as a sex worker who lives in Hillbrow. This is how I dress when I do my work. I usually wear mini-skirts because this is how I attract my clients. I try to look good when I am doing my job.

This hotel reminds me of the day I slept with someone that had used [drugs] the whole night. The guy slept with me and promised to pay in the morning but never paid me. He just disappeared.
Above we see sex work depicted differently by four different women. Sku and Iketlang (images 2 and 3) presented themselves in their work attire. Their images exude the desire to be seen as confident and beautiful sex workers; whereas, Pinky, Shorty and Lety (images 1, 4, and 5) focused on images of buildings/brothels as a way to highlight their work. In Shorty’s caption, she refrains from identifying the building as the place where she works, rather she chooses to describe the building as a place where sex workers, in general, work. Captions reveal a variance in the main point that each woman wanted to share in relation to their work. Pinky addresses issues of client abuse; whereas, Confidence and Shorty simply state the location of where they “conduct business”. Confidence titled her image (image 1) as “Confidence’s Shelter” and explained during the interview that she regards the Ambassador Hotel as home, not just as a place where she works. She stated, “I have lived here for so long that now it feels like home. Sometimes the managers are abusive but it’s my home and my shelter away from the dangers of Hillbrow” (Interview 1).

During the workshop, with the exception of Lety, the women above, tended to refrain from talking about their involvement in sex work; yet, they were the ones to include images that highlighted their work. Here we see the discrepancy of ‘voice’ and the ways that women negotiate sex work in their representations. Perhaps for Confidence, Pinky and Sku it was uncomfortable to stand in front of the group during the workshop and speak about their work; whereas, it was less threatening for them to share their work in their images. Perhaps the research team, PDP students, and MPW staff posed a more immediate level of discomfort than that of the exhibition audience, who for the most part were complete strangers. Inconsistencies between openly speaking about their work and the images that were selected were evident.

This is an important point to highlight as it begs the researcher to contemplate the reasons why some women felt comfortable sharing images of their work while others did not. Shorty stated, “I want to show that there are many places where sex workers can safely work in Hillbrow” (Field Notes). However, when Shorty briefly eluded to sex work she often explained it as something that others do, and that she entered this work because, “I needed to support my family” (Field Notes). Monica Mombassa left the research team perplexed with her blatant criticism of sex workers in Hillbrow but admitted to being a sex worker and “sometimes having boyfriends” (Field Notes). When Monica Mombassa first described her entry into sex work, she stated, “I was brought to Hillbrow in a car and was afraid of all of the bad stuff that I heard about this place, and all of the sex workers that were there” (Field Notes). Often times the women spoke of their involvement in sex work privately to me.

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[30] The term “boyfriend” was often used by the women to describe “regular clients”. In other words, the term “client” appeared to be used when there was not a personal relationship with the person; whereas, “boyfriend” was used for those who visited the women regularly for sex.
As a researcher focusing on sex work, I wanted to ensure that all of the women were currently selling sex; therefore, throughout the workshop I asked them various questions in order to gain insight into the length of time in sex work, and location of where they were working. During these occasions the participants would either begin with an explanation of why they entered sex work and/or justify their work by explaining the need to care for children and families ‘back home’. I found these responses interesting as they allowed for insight between researcher and research participant. Although my questions were, in my mind, ‘simple’, (e.g. How long have you worked as a sex worker?), their responses were infused with the need to explain/defend themselves to me. In this case, we can see how “power relations” between the research and research participant might inadvertently leave the women feeling judged/criticized. Below is a reflection from my field notes that speaks to this observation.

I am not sure why the women are explaining themselves to me. It’s as though they feel the need to defend themselves to “superiors”. Regardless of the efforts that I make to reduce the “power imbalance” the mere fact that I am a researcher, and not a sex worker, implies some sort of differentiation that is obvious to the women (Field Notes).

When the women explained their trajectories into sex work, many of them highlighted a common entry-point that I will refer to as the “social network entry-point”. Archavanitkul and Guest (2006) explain the importance of social networks in sex work, and O’Neil (2001) argues that women enter sex work through peer associations. In the case of this study, peer associations were a common entry point into sex work. As we see below, many of the women explained that they where introduced to sex work via someone they knew. Confidence stated,

The father of my son didn’t want to help raise him, and I was living with my grandmother. I couldn’t accept that my grandmother would support us so one day I ran away and came to the Alibi Hotel to make money to support my son. I heard from so and so that sex work was as a good way to make money so I came and I have been staying at the Ambassador Hotel ever since (Confidence, Interview 1).

Thembile also entered sex work via someone that she knew who introduced her to the work. Below is an excerpt from an interview where Thembile explains both her journey into Hillbrow and sex work.

I came to Johannesburg to find a job. My sister lived in Hillbrow, at the Alibi Hotel. When I arrived my sister asked me to take a meter taxi, and I gave him my phone so that she could give him directions. He dropped me off at Shoprite. When we got to Shoprite my sister’s friends were waiting for me and took me to the Ambassador Hotel. I didn’t know what kind of hotel that was. When I got to the hotel, I found two men there and one of the men said that he was an old prostitute, and that he had been working there for a long time. For me, I didn’t know that word [prostitute in Shona] meant. I didn’t know anything about sex work. My sister’s friends took me up into the brothel and showed me how to use a condom. I needed to pay for myself to live and so I started to work as a sex worker, but it was very hard at first. My sister, my younger sister, could not support me so I had to work for my own living. It was hard to sleep with foreigners ” (Thembile, Interview 1).

Ana describes her entry into sex work and Hillbrow as an intentional decision to escape her abusive husband:

I came to Hillbrow with my husband, but then I ran away from him, for domestic violence reasons. I met a friend in town and she took me to stay in the Alibi Hotel, and later explained to me how she earns money. I agreed to stay there and work because I didn’t have an alternative” (Ana, Journal Entry).

Lety, on the other hand, reveals that she entered sex work because she did not have legal documents to reside/work in South Africa, was alone in Hillbrow, and had to find a way to take care of herself. Lety refers to her entry into sex work as a survival strategy stating, “A girls gotta do what a girls gotta do” (Lety, Journal Entry). Furthermore, Shorty explains that she moved to Hillbrow and started working as a sex worker after
her divorce; whereas, Mimi says that she came to Hillbrow equipped to work as a secretary, but her things were stolen.

I came to Hillbrow with a black berry, dell laptop, clothes, 500rand, and my passport. I came looking for a good job. But everything was stolen from me on the first day that I arrived in Hillbrow. I had to support myself so I started working as a sex worker (Mimi, Journal Entry).

Below, Sbu offers insight into her trajectory into Hillbrow by compiling images that trace her migration from KZN to Hillbrow. Although her caption does not reveal her trajectory into sex work, during her interview, Sbu explained all of the images and revealed that she entered sex work after she moved to Johannesburg.

![Image Caption: “This picture brings out all of my memories. It is a picture of the collection of my photos before I came to Johannesburg from KZN.”](image)

I came to Johannesburg to go to school and to find a job. At first I sold vegetables and fruit, but my stock was stolen. In order to support my family, I started doing sex work (Sbu, Interview 1).

Social networks provided the women with an opportunity to raise their families, escape abusive partners, and make enough money to support themselves independently. Social networks and allegiance exist within all spectrums of society. Some of the women in this study refer to their peers as their social support system and some state that they prefer to work in a brothel, as opposed to the street, because it is safer.

Iketlang stated, “In the Alibi Hotel the sex workers like one another. When one of is sick or dies we donate money” (Journal Entry). She also alludes to how working in a brothel protects her by explaining an incident where her rapist returned to the hotel.

He came back to the brothel and when I told the other guys there that he raped me, they beat him up, like he did me, and he has never been back again (Iketlang, Field Notes).

Ana shared how the women with whom she works are her support system and that she leans on them when she needs something. On the other hand, Confidence stated, “I don’t have friends because you can’t trust anyone. My friends are my beer” (Interview 1). However, Confidence later stated, “I asked my client to call my mother and tell her that he was my boyfriend that lives in Alexandra. I told her that I was living with my boyfriend in Alexandra and she wanted to speak to him, so I just asked my client to do me this favor” (ibid). In this, Confidence is using her social capital as a way to avoid conflict with her mother, hence protecting her from harm.

During the interview stage of this study, Iketlang became ill. There was a health strike in Johannesburg, and she was not given the correct ARV medication; therefore, she was not able to participate in the interviews.

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31 Putnam (1995) refers to social capital as “features of social life, networks and norms that allow participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives” (p. 664).
What was amazing to see, and directly pertains to the discussion on social networks, both Ana and Confidence visited her daily as they all worked in the same establishment, and were one another support systems. Iketlang’s family did not know about her work; thus, she relied on her peers for assistance, and they offered her this support.

7.2.2 I know why and it’s my choice: a look at agency.

Nencel (2010) argues that the gender-morale of sexuality is perpetuated by a misogynistic social value system; thereby, negating the notion that women can make a choice to be sex workers. Thembile reaffirmed this notion during an interview where she stated, “I chose sex work because it pays the bills better than other work right now (Interview 2).” Sanders (2009) describes agency as a woman’s choice and free will to decide how she wants to use her body (p.23). The controversial philosophical argument is whether or not “choice” and “free will” truly exist. Sanders (2009) acknowledges that there are challenges in this statement, especially when referring to a group of people that have a limited skill set. Many sex workers have limited educational, economic and social conditions; however, this does not necessarily negate the choice to enter sex work. Lety confirms this notion when she stated, “Some days I make really good money. Some days I don’t make a lot. But, it’s more than if I were to work as a cleaner somewhere (Interview 1).” Many of the women referred to other employment options available to them as less desirable.

Agustin (2006) coined “conundrum of agency” as a phrase to describe the debate between ‘choice’ and ‘force’. Agustin argues that although many sex workers will not state that they did not have another choice or that they were “forced” to enter sex work, a fine line exists between the decision to enter and being “forced” due to life circumstances. I argue that the majority of people working do so because life circumstances require us to work. I appreciate this level of analysis by Agustin; however, applying this discussion to sex work can infer that the women are not making a decision to enter, thereby casting them as victims once again. During one of my interviews with Confidence, she addressed this discourse as she explained her involvement in a pro sex worker rally. Below is her quote,

There was a march in Hillbrow, and many sex workers wore t-shirts saying ‘Sex Workers Demand Rights Not Rescue’. I think that this is important for people to know because we want to be treated with dignity, we don’t want to be saved. We became sex workers because we wanted to. Many people don’t like their jobs. Most of us don’t like our jobs. But how many people out there love what they do? Not many. We work because we have to support our families. They need to give us rights and stop talking about how we need to be rescued (Interview 1)

Often times when the topic of sex work is brought up, whether in academic or social circles, the conversations tend to take on a tone of “poor them”. It would be illogical to pretend as though sex work does not have inherent dangers and risks; however, danger and risk is not unique to sex work. What is unique is that sex work is illegal in many countries, including South Africa; therefore, access to medical care and social dignity are not readily available to sex workers. The consequences of this are enormous and will be discussed in a later section. Regardless of personal views on sex work, it is important to resist the temptation to further stigmatize a group of people that are mostly, except in the cases of trafficking victims, making a choice to work as they do. Below are a couple of quotes that highlight the reasons and experiences that women shared about their work.

32 A statement written in Ana’s journal.
Sometimes it is dangerous, but it is also fine. The security at the hotel cheats us sometimes. When you refuse to sleep with them, they may chase you away. Sometimes you make money, but it all goes towards the rent. We have to buy food from the outside as they do not allow us to cook in the hotel (Ana, Journal Entry).

Some people think that when you are a sex worker that you have a problem. But not a problem like... like for example, you don’t just move from where you are staying and say I want to be a sex worker just for fun. So some of the people say this one must like a lot of sex because she is a prostitute. But that is not right. You can be a sex worker just for fun (laughs). Sometimes the clients are asking me why I am doing this job. I say, why? Why you are asking me? Why you are coming here? He said, no. Never mind. Don’t ask me. I am asking you. Why are you doing this job? You are not a... blah blah. You don’t belong here. Maybe I can marry you and put you in a house with your children. I say, no! I know why I came here so don’t worry about it. You are not helping me (Confidence, Interview 1).

As we see above, there are a vast spectrum of experiences and feelings about sex work. What is important to take note of is that these are the women speaking. Although danger is eluded to, and at times, the women shared that they would rather be doing something else for work, it is important to hear what they are saying and refrain from reducing into an explanation or discussion that ultimately ignores their voice. Lety brings forth issues of gender when she states, “…they [people who criticize sex work] should start asking questions about why their men are coming to see us” (Field Notes). Here we see two poignant issues: (1) the link between male clients and sex workers, and (2) the assumption that the critics of sex work are women. Confidence also raises the issue of gender when she describes a moment when a client offered to marry and support her family. Her response to his offer sheds light on the notion that men can/want to save women, and that women want to be saved. Confidence refutes the clients offer by stating, “I know why I came here so don’t worry about it. You are not helping me” (Interview 1).

Another example of the Nencel’s argument that sexuality is perpetuated by a gender-morale was seen during the interviews when I asked the women if they had female clients. All of the women stated that they only slept with men, Thembile simply stated, “the only people who come to brothels are men” (Thembile, Interview 2). Here we see an internalized explanation of who is a socially ‘acceptable’ client. Nencel (2010) argues that patriarchal belief systems promote/perpetuate ontological views of sexuality; therefore, although sex workers navigate their ‘sex worker identities’ to attract clients, notions of who is an acceptable client is defined within an internalized gender-morale paradigm.

Lety’s statement, “Everyone likes to complain about sex workers, but no one asks why the men are coming to see us,” sheds light on a factor that is often neglected in research involving sex work— the clients. All too often women sex workers are blamed for the spread of HIV/AIDS leaving them solely responsible to navigate the use of condoms. Richter et al. 2010 argues, “sex workers often report that it is difficult to persuade clients to use condoms and that they fear a violent reaction if they insist on condom use” (pg. 2).

Images of condoms were pervasive during the workshop. Both Ana and Iketlang took images of a box of condoms explaining the importance of using them in their work. Ana described the image of condoms as, “These are my working halo. I always use them for safety and protection for my clients and myself so that we can both be of good health” (Journal Entry). Experiences with clients wavered and were dependent on the topic of discussion. For example, Confidence shared that she spends time with her clients socially; whereas, Pinky described her fear of clients not paying her after they had ‘conducted business’.

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Many of the women in this study referred to their work while they were with clients as ‘conducting business’. The women never described their acts as ‘sex’; however, some would use the term ‘fucking’ but this term was rarely used in
other hand, Thembile presented the possibility that sex workers are helping marriages and relationships when she stated, “Sometimes people are having a hard time and they need to relax. They have arguments with their wives, or some kinds of problems. Maybe we [sex workers] help them to relax so that they can better care for the family” (Interview 2).

I have discussed migration as an entry point into sex work. I would now like to shift the discussion to the only participant, Lety, that stated that she had been involved in sex work prior to moving to Hillbrow, and that she migrated to South Africa in search of better opportunities. Like Sbu, Lety chose to include an image about her entry into sex work, but does not make it obvious to the audience in her caption. Lety chose to concentrate a great number of her images on her experience as a migrant in Hillbrow, yet only refers to her work in a cliché statement written in her journal, “a girls gotta do what a girls gotta do” (Journal Entry).
Below are five of Lety’s images. All of the images refer to her primary experiences of Hillbrow; in fact, the central themes in Lety’s images are about her experience of migrating to Hillbrow.

1

Title: It’s Not Easy To Cross The Border If You Don’t Have Papers

Caption:
It’s easy to give up on life

2

Title: When I am lonely and stressed

Caption:
South Africa is full of opportunities.
Now I am in charge of my life, and in control of my life. I am using my hands and mind. These are the main ingredients for my dreams and aspirations.

the workshop. The use of language was observed as women self (re) presented themselves and their work to the group. The term “fucking” to describe their interactions with clients was generally used when the women were speaking among themselves rather than as a way to explain their work to me. This observation highlights the ways in which women wanted to portray their work to an outsider- to the group they would use “conducing business; whereas when they spoke with me they would use a variety of words to describe “sex” including, the term ‘fucking’. In this case, we see how the use of language is navigated, and often times, dependent on the trust level of the audience.
Although Lety chose to use her real name stating “the work that I do is not a crime” (Field Notes), and spoke openly about being a sex worker, the focus of her story did not include her work, rather she chose to concentrate the story that she wanted to tell in the images by focusing on her migration history. Lety stated, “Hillbrow is better than Zimbabwe because here I can make money and buy things. I can make money to send back home and I can travel to Zimbabwe to visit my family when I want to” (Interview 2). Even though Lety chose to focus her story on her migration into Hillbrow, her captions appear to be highly edited versions of her original statements that were written in her journal explaining why she took the images and what they meant to her. For example, image number five, which she titled, “What must I do?” lacks the references into sex work that she wrote in her journal, “a girls gotta do what a girls gotta do”. Why did Lety do this? Bailey (2002) argues that identities and space are fluid and are relative to place and time. As the editing process commenced and Lety had to write a caption that would explain her images to the public, she made an intentional choice in what she wanted to reveal. For Lety, it appears that it was more important to share about the struggles that Zimbabweans face as they enter South Africa and her own migration story into Hillbrow, rather than focusing on her work.
During the first interview that I had with Lety as she was explaining the reasons why she selected the ten images, she explained that she chose image number one because many people suffer when they migrate to S. Africa from Zimbabwe. She wanted to elude to the suffering that Zimbabwean migrants experience, “because people don’t understand the abuse and fears that we have when we come across [the border]” (Lety, Interview 1). In image number two, Lety’s physical and facial characteristics exude fear and discomfort; however, her caption reveals an empowered (re)presentation, one of control and strength. Image number three and four spotlight her initial experiences as a Hillbrow resident; whereas, image number five explains how when she moved to Hillbrow she was alone. All of these images symbolize the struggle that Lety experienced during her migration into the City; however, none of them explicitly tell us why she moved to Hillbrow, South Africa. When I asked her why she came to Hillbrow she stated, “In Zimbabwe we hear awful things about Hillbrow, but we also hear that if we want to make money we should come to South Africa. Hillbrow is a place where many foreign people live so I found comfort here. I think that the City can improve the living conditions for us but it is okay. I am okay here in Hillbrow” (Interview 2).

I questioned the reasons why some women chose to include images about sex work and others did not; however, this analysis can go further by examining the specific language that is used as participants transitioned into the final editing of their images. Often times, the women used language as a way to accept/reject stereotypes and stigma. Thembile explained that she did not want sex work to be legal because she did not want to imagine her children as sex workers; however, in a later statement she criticized the City for their lack of policy in protecting the rights of sex workers. Some of the women, particularly Mimi, Monica Mombassa and Shorty seemed to refuse to be identified as sex workers in their images and captions. During the workshop, they often appeared to deflect questions and conversations that associated them to their work. In this case, we see how a lack of language is used as either a way to accept/reject or silence the stigmas and stereotypes of sex work. Regardless, the use of language and/or the intentional silence, can be seen as both a conscious and subconscious process that spotlights the complexity of representation and identity. Secor (2002) highlights the ways in which Muslim women navigate urban spaces in Turkey by arguing that the women chose when to wear the veil, and this choice is dependent on a series of factors stretching from identity politics to safety reasons. If we take Secors argument and apply it to the five images above, we see that each woman navigated their involvement in sex work via the images, differently.

In the images on page 56, both Iketlang and Sku present themselves in their working attire. One can deduce that they are proud of the way that they look. The captions and images reveal their work to the audience; however, this clear statement is more complex than what the is initially portrayed. Iketlang’s family does not know that she is a sex worker. In this case, Iketlang decided to reveal her identity to the public, yet use a pseudonym. When I spoke to Iketlang about this image selection and my concern that her anonymity might become compromised, she asked me, “Are these images going to be on television or in the Sowetan or Daily Sun?” She stated that she was not concerned about the people attending the exhibition because no one would know her family, and that the people at the exhibition are from a different world than she is from. When I asked her why she wanted to include this image, she explained that she is proud of the work that she does, and that if it can make a difference in the legalization of sex work, then she wanted to keep it in the exhibition. Here, we see what Secor (2004) refers to as the ever-shifting process of identity formation that is based on the socio-political realities of a given situation. Iketlang made a conscious choice to include
an image in her work attire in an effort to, “show people that sex workers are beautiful” (Iketlang, Field Notes), and to illustrate her hopes that this project could impact legislation change.

Further examples of the negotiations of space and identity are seen as we examine the reasons why Sbu decided to share her trajectory into sex work during the interview but not publicly.

I want to be seen as a clean person, as someone who can be a role model. I am ashamed of my work and I wish to do something else. This is not a life. I am not proud of the work that I do. But, it feeds my family. I do not talk about my work so openly because one day I want to be a counselor or a social worker, and I am afraid that my work history will leave people thinking that I am not worth employing (Interview 1).

It is apparent from the statement above that Sbu has internalized a significant amount of stigma associated with her work. During the interview, Sbu often became emotional when speaking about how others perceive the work that she does, and how these perceptions cause her pain and anguish. It was challenging to witness the anguish that Sbu carried as it was evident that she was sharing a deep struggle with me, and I felt limited in what I could do to relieve her pain. Throughout the workshop, Sbu rarely spoke of herself as a sex-worker, and often concentrated her discussions on explaining her “dream job” as a counselor/social worker. When I asked her why she did not speak of sex work during the workshop, she stated, “It is too hard for me to talk about my work. I am not happy with what I do and I don’t want for people to think that this is all that I am [a sex worker]” (Interview 1). Although Sbu did not speak of her work during the workshop and did not select images that directly positioned her work to the audience, her work was central to how she felt about herself; therefore, the exclusion/inclusion of images must be unpacked in order to understand the intricate position of each participant.

Participants who did not include images of their work were also actively negotiating their self-(re)presentations in relation to space and identity. Vearey (2010a) argues that, at times, migrants opt to remain ‘hidden’ in order to avoid harassment and violence. The inclusion of images allows us to analyze the meanings further; however, the exclusion of images can be analyzed as a way to keep their work profession hidden, discrete, or as a space in their lives that is untouchable by social critique. The women who omitted sex work from their images and captions chose to be represented as individuals outside of the sex work debate/controversy.

Although trajectories into sex work appeared to be highly driven by social networks, the reasons for entering sex work differ; thereby, supporting Nyangairi’s (2010) argument that there are varied reasons why women enter sex work, and these reasons must be applied within an African framework. The following excerpt was taken from Sku’s journal. In this entry Sku reveals her migration experience and how she entered sex work in Hillbrow; it is unknown whether she was involved in sex work prior to moving to South Africa.

My first time to South Africa was very difficult. I came through the bush because we were robbed of all of the money that my two friends and me had. We were threatened at gunpoint and left in the middle of the bush. We were given a lift and promised that we would pay when we arrived. My cousin promised to pay for me, but it wasn’t that easy. She didn’t pitch up. She even shut her phone off. The guys who came with us to South Africa began threatening to keep us as their wives if we didn’t pay them. Luckily, by coincidence, I saw someone that I knew from home who told me that I should go to the Diplomat Hotel (a brothel) and there I would meet so many people who could help me. When we got there I met a friend of mine who paid our transport fee and accommodation. That night I started working in order to pay those guys back (Sbu, Field Notes)
The above examples show how the participants in this study engaged with discourses on migration and sex work. Participants have varied responses in how they chose to actively engage in these discourses via the inclusion/exclusion of images and captions, and it is here that we begin to see the intricacies of how each woman chose to self- (re) present.

Dunn (200b) argues that some women portray themselves as victims in order to receive sympathy and support. At times, I wondered if the choice to share their trajectories into sex work were an attempt to receive sympathy. Although this is an essential question to ponder, I felt that it was an unfair and incomplete assumption to make as it motioned me to discount the inherent sincerity that the women shared during the study. This notion also excludes the possibility that the women had intentional motives and explanations for how they wanted to be represented that had nothing to do with me, the researcher. Perhaps their reasons for representing themselves as such were motivated by their own internal process that occurred as they analyzed their lives. Discourse that center on the belief that women are victims perpetuates a violently unjust representation of an individual/group. Gangoli (2001) argues that stigma offers women the temptation to portray themselves as innocent bystanders and victims in order to avoid being continually ostracized. The intentional editing process described above was motivated by what the participants wanted the audience to know about them. The reasons for the exclusion/inclusion of images and captions should not be delineated into a diatribe that reduces their choice and active participation in how they wanted to be (re) presented. There is a pervasive amount of literatures that attempts to explain women’s behavior within the dichotomies of victim/hero (Nyangairi, 2010). This process ignores the simple fact that women are active agents in their own lives. I would argue that the choice to edit images and captions clearly revealed strength and individual expression, two characteristics that are not normally attributed to women in general, and even less to women who sell sex.

The varied entry points into Hillbrow and sex work reveal that migrant women sex workers are not a homogenous group, and that in order to gain insight into the lives of migrant women sex workers, it is crucial to highlight their individual stories. By engaging in the multiplicity of reasons and experiences that migrant women shared, we begin to move away from the binary relationships that so often characterize studies centered on sex work.

7.3 Structural Violence

The term “structural violence” is one way of describing social arrangements that put individuals and populations in harm’s way... The arrangements are structural because they are embedded in the political and economic organization of our social world; they are violent because they cause injury to people (typically, not those responsible for perpetuating such inequalities). With few exceptions, clinicians are not trained to understand such social forces, nor are we trained to alter them. Yet it has long been clear that many medical and public health interventions will fail if we are unable to understand the social determinants of disease. (Farmer et al, 2006:43).

As we see from Farmers definition, structural violence refers to a form of violence that is based on a how a social structure or social institutions systematically harm people by preventing them from meeting their basic needs (Galtung 1990). Sexism, classism, elitism, racism, ethnocentrism, and nationalism are examples of structural violence. Structural violence renders visible the social machinery of oppression (Green 2004). In
this section, I will utilize this term as a theoretical framework to discuss how migrant women sex workers (re) presented themselves in space, time and history.

7.3.1 “Unless you have suffered, you can’t understand us”34: A look at how migrant women sex workers (re) present themselves in their environmental, social and structural barriers.

And, she is the one that said- I want you to take me a picture. So that people can see what happens to us. She wanted to look over there so no one would recognize her. Metro police is harassing street vendors. The way that they harass these people- take their fruits and lots of stuff- they make the children of the mother to starve. Maybe she doesn’t have a husband. She is single mother and is trying to raise her kids by herself. She is trying to make something so that the kids can eat. It’s not right. Many people think that Hillbrow is bad because of the people who live in Hillbrow but that is not true. Most people who live in Hillbrow are working hard and trying to make a life for themselves. The government and the police is what is hard. They don’t care about us. They don’t want to care because we are all ugly and poor in their eyes. So many Mamas live in Hillbrow because they can make a little money to feed their kids- so many good people. But, the city doesn’t care. They don’t want people to sell things on the street but they don’t help with getting better jobs. Sometimes I think to myself, if I could talk to one of those big men that are in charge- I would want to know what they know about Hillbrow. Have they ever been and talked to anyone that lives in Hillbrow. They don’t come here… they don’t even know us (Confidence, Interview 1).

Confidence’s statement serves as an introduction to one of the most prevalent themes discovered during the course of this study; structural violence. Farmer (2011) states, “structural violence embodies adverse events that are experiences by the people who live in poverty or are marginalized by racism, gender inequality, or a mix of all of the above ” (p.308). Adverse events include, epidemic diseases and violations of human rights. This position is reaffirmed by Confidence’s statement, “They [the City} don’t care about us. They don’t want to care because we are all ugly and poor in their eyes” (Interview 2). As Confidence explained this photo, she appeared angry and disappointed. Her words flowed without pause, her eyes darted around, and her hands shook slightly when she stated, “If I could talk to one of those big men that are in charge- I would want to know what they know about Hillbrow. Have they been and talked to anyone that lives in Hillbrow. They don’t come here… they don’t even know us” (ibid). One of the most interesting

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34 A statement made by Confidence during her interview.
things about Confidence, is that she often spoke of Hillbrow as a place that others, those “who have not suffered,” could understand. This is important because it spotlights the notion that human rights acquisition and services are analogous to personal and intimate relationships to space and poverty.

Another key aspect of structural violence is connecting violence to current/historical political systems. Confidence sheds light on a number of issues, such as gender inequality, police violence, stigma of Hillbrow as a ‘bad place’, and poverty. Her ‘voice’ is powerful and strong in the quote and reveals a host of opportunities in which to examine structural violence—a theme embedded in many of the images and stories shared during the workshop. Many images focused on the living conditions in Hillbrow, others on the working conditions of sex workers; however, journal entries and interviews revealed a plethora of experiences that gave rise to this theme. Beckerleg (2004) explains how the violence that women sex workers experience is directly related to the economic and political systems of those countries, and this connection was apparent as the women chose images that (re) presented the ‘story’ that they wanted to share. Many chose to highlight the healthy/unhealthy parts of Hillbrow, migrant experiences of pain and suffering, and experiences of police brutality. Others chose to focus their attention on the beautiful aspects of Hillbrow; thereby, deflecting the negative stereotypes that Hillbrow, as a space, is subjected to.

I will now move the discussion by focusing on the data that was generated in this study, and connect the data to a discussion that highlights: (1) how these images were used to (re) present a ‘story’ or experience, and how they relate back to self (re) presentations, and (2) the larger socio-political discourses that impact/perpetuate/reduce structural violence in the lives of the participants of this study who live in Hillbrow, Johannesburg. I will separate this section in four main sub-themes: (1) police/legal system, (2) health, (3) living condition, and (4) working conditions.

7.3.2 “They are our worst enemies”: A look at police/legal system violence.

I would like to begin this discussion by analyzing the two images below. Both of the images, on the following page, are of the same place; however, two different participants took them. Both Iketlang and Ana live/work at the Ambassador Hotel, and both women wrote in their journals that the steps were used when sex workers ran away from the police. Ana’s caption (image 2) changed a few times before she decided on the caption below that would be published alongside her photo. Ana’s first caption read, “These are the steps that we use when we run away from the police” (Journal Entry). Her second caption stated, “These steps are appealing and show that the hotel is a nice place. Ironically it is not when you get inside (all that glitters is not gold)” (Journal Entry). The statements made in the captions, not only changed in their depictions of the photo, but also bypassed the issues of police abuse that were expressed originally. In one caption, Ana explains the steps as ‘refuge’ from the police, in another she describes them as “appealing”, and in her last image, she decided to highlight issues of hotel security guards and hotel safety. On the hand, Iketlang changes her caption from police abuse to a caption essentially identifying other sex workers explaining the image as people “going about their everyday business”. In this case, it appears as though Iketlang is attempting to normalize sex workers; whereas, Ana is making a clear delineation between bad security guards at hotels versus security guards that treat ‘them’ well. The question remains, why did they choose

36 Statement made by Thembile as she discussed police brutality during one of her interviews.
to change their captions entirely from their original versions? As Iketlang selected her images for the exhibition, it was apparent that her choices were motivated by the desire to bring attention to the struggles of sex work, and to present sex work as a noble profession. In her journal she wrote, “I want to show the world that sex work is like any other work, but that we must be protected. People must see us as regular people. If they do, then maybe the laws will change and we will be safer to do our work without harm” (Journal Entry). Although Ana does not speak directly to police violence in her image and caption, she nuances violence perpetuated by security guards; therein, both Iketlang and Ana share a similar concerns in relation to safety, and the desire for sex workers to be treated with dignity.

Kihato (2010b) explains how she used the images as a way to engage with migrant women living in inner city Johannesburg. She describes the importance of interrogating the image in order to gain an understanding of the story behind the image. This study also drew parallel conclusions. Images must be interrogated otherwise misrepresentations and incomplete understandings/perceptions are sure to exist.

![Image 1](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

This is inside the Ambassador Hotel, and people are seen going about their everyday business.

©Iketlang

![Image 2](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

Thato Mokoena a security guard at a hotel reminds me of good and place security in hotels. Thato is a good security who treats us well.

©Ana

Other participants also shared concern in relation to police abuse. During the fist day of the workshop, many women expressed interest in documenting police violence. They seemed eager to use the camera as a tool with which they could ‘spy’ on police and document their abuses; however, legitimate fears around their safety were also shared. During times like this, we encouraged the participants to keep safety at the forefront of their thoughts and discouraged them from taking photographs of people/places that could pose a direct danger to them. Perhaps the lack of safety explains the lack of images centered on what appeared to be a significant theme: police abuse. Some women expressed rage when they spoke of their experiences; whereas, others appeared disconnected from the topic only later to describe atrocious acts committed on them by police. I realized that certain topics, such as police violence, were highly emotive and often times did not include input from the whole group. Some of the women felt safe enough to speak about their experiences; whereas, others chose to share their experiences in private settings. Perhaps the women felt...
triggered by these discussions; thus, incapable of contributing to group conversations. Or, perhaps those who did not participate in larger forum explanations of personal interactions with police felt reluctant to share information that ‘could’ harm them further. Thembile stated, “Police do whatever they want, and no one does anything to them. They are not our protectors. We are not considered worthy of their protection” (Interview 2). Throughout the research, I observed an important tactic often employed by some of the women when issues pertaining to their individual identities/experiences were at the forefront of conversations. I realized that issues of safety and trust were often negotiated and considered as women opted in/out of conversations that directly stated personal experiences. Below is an excerpt from my field notes in relation to this observation.

Although I know that I would never intentionally put the women at risk, I realize that their participation in this project that can feel risky at times to them. We, the research team and MPW team, are strangers to them. We live and work outside of their realities, and I am sure that they must wonder how much they can really tell us. I watched the women discuss issues of police abuse and I noticed how some of the women didn’t say anything; however, I know that they have had traumatic experiences with police because they have shared them with me. Are they concerned that their safety can be further compromised if they share with the group? Are they wondering who we all are, and why we want to hear their stories? Are they skeptical that we are trust worthy? I wouldn’t blame them if they felt this way. But, then why do they tell me? Is it just easier to tell one person? Regardless, it is a shame that all of these women have a story of police abusing them (Field Notes).

When I asked the women if there were images that they would have liked to take but could not, many stated that they would have liked to take pictures of police when they raided the brothels, raped them, and/or bribed their clients and/or them. This issue links back to the discussion centered on the absence of photos as another important area of critique/analysis when conducting participatory photo projects. The issue of police brutality and abuse was central to discussions during the workshop and interviews. The following are statements made by participants, which highlight police abuse towards them, the clients, and the places where they “conduct business”.

The police sometimes harass my clients. The shoot rubber bullets at them and arrest them (Ana, Journal Entry).

The police are corrupt and the City officials don’t care about our needs (Lety, Interview 2).

When the police need money they raid the brothels or tell us that we are soliciting sex because we are standing outside. They arrest us and make us pay 100rand. If we don’t have it, they take us to jail and rape us (Sku, Field Notes).

When I was almost raped and almost killed that day, I could not go to the police because they would laugh at me and say that sex workers don’t get raped, they want sex (Thembile, Interview 1).

Sex work in South Africa is illegal (UNAIDS, 2009). The legal system, of which law enforcement is under, does not protect sex workers; therefore, police abuse can be seen an extension of the discriminatory laws. Sex workers have reported human rights abuses by police across the globe often drawing parallel relationships to the illegal status of sex work (Chakrapani, et al., 2007, Kiapani, 2010, Richter, 2008a, 2008b, 2009a, 2009b). Simply stated, sex workers are rarely afforded the same legal protection when raped and/or abused because the legal system fails to recognize them as ‘normal’ citizens. Consequently, many rapes go unreported. Gender inequality and class discrimination are examples of how structural violence is seen in these examples.
When the women discussed issues of police brutality throughout the workshop and interviews, they often expressed rage and frustration. They voiced their experiences and self (re) presentations in this regard as individuals that believed that they deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. Women would interrupt one another in order to share a thought, feeling or story. During these times, spontaneous focus groups would emerge as women shared their experiences. I often wonder what their photos would have been, if they could have taken images of police and situations that they felt (re) presented this concern. Unfortunately, capturing these images was synonymous with physical danger; thus, for the purpose of this study on self (re) presentation and the safety of its participants, the data is concentrated mainly on observation, journal entries, and interviews.

This example highlights the importance of interrogating images when using visual methodologies. In this case, women did not feel safe enough to take images centered on their experiences of police abuse/brutality, but discussions showed that this was an important issue for them to address/share. At times it felt as though they were frustrated by the inability to capture these images. After all, we were asking them to use the camera as a way to share stories about their lives and experiences in Hillbrow. Their frustration highlighted that the integrity of their stories were incomplete. Their ability to share their story via the images was limited due to their physical safety.

I will now shift the discussion to the next sub theme: health.

**7.3.3 “If they found out that I was a sex workers they wouldn’t treat me”\(^\text{37}\): A look at issues of health.**

A primary health concern facing South Africa is the HIV/AIDS epidemic. There is extensive public health research on high-risk behavior that has identified sex work an elevated transmission area (Gould & Fink, 2008, Richter 2008a, 2008b, 2009a, 2009b, Richter et al., 2010, Vearey et. al. 2010, Venables, 2010). However, in order to avoid further stigmatizing sex workers this correlation must be unpacked. Health care systems are often over-burdened and under-staffed. This reality gives rise to discriminatory practices that are often exacerbated by unjust political systems and stereotypes (Ong, 1995, Stadler & Delaney, 2006). The stereotypes tend to be fueled by stigma, and the stigma defended by those in need of a scapegoat for the problem. Although it is imperative to comprehend the correlation between high-risk groups and HIV infection, this understanding must be centered on the idea that every individual yearns to be healthy; the caveat here is that individuals define the concepts of what is “healthy”. For example, economic hardship might be considered unhealthy for one individual; whereas, another individual might define health as emotional stability. In working towards the common goal of decreasing HIV/AIDS, understanding, concern, and compassion must replace stigmas and judgments.

Pinky highlights the importance of affordable health care in her image on the following page.

\(^\text{37}\) A statement made by Sbu doing an interview.
The concept of health requires that one engage with the systems that directly/indirectly influence health. Correlating high-risk behavior, such as sex work with HIV, is plausible and logical; however, this correlation is limited. Linking legal status of sex work to HIV can reveal nuances that address larger issues of health.

Kiapi (2010) states that sex workers in Kampala, Uganda have been left out of national HIV prevention programs and face challenges in accessing ARV medication. “It’s not that these [HIV/AIDS] services are not available, it’s about the stigma attached to the sex worker” (Kamya in Kiapi 2010). Health care providers in Kampala do not believe that sex workers deserve the medication to prolong their lives because their lives are not considered worthy of protection. On the other hand, Banyan (2010) argues that sex workers must be consulted and brought to the forefront of discussions in order for HIV to be prevented, diagnosed, and treated. Banyam exposes the challenges of accessing sex workers in countries where sex work is illegal by highlighting a development in Cambodia. “In 2008 a law on ‘the Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation’ led to the closure of brothels and a shift of the sex trade to bars and other places, complicating measures to prevent HIV” (Banyan, 2010: 2). Furthermore, Reed et al. (2010) argues that economic insecurity and violence are linked to higher HIV risk for female sex workers in Andhra Pradesh, India. Moreover, Harcourt et. al (2010) states that in areas where sex work is decriminalized, health access promotion is shown to serve sex workers more effectively than in countries where sex work/sex workers are still considered illegal.

During the course of this study, some of the women highlighted concerns around health that ranged from HIV/AIDS to psychological and emotional stability. Stigma from being identified as a sex worker was the primary barrier that kept many women from seeking the support that they need/needed. However, assertions that the Hillbrow Community Health Centre is a place that treats them with respect and dignity were plentiful.

The following are statements made by participants, which highlight the issue of being a sex worker and access to safe public healthcare.

Now there are clinics where you can go and get the help that you need. Sex workers here [in Johannesburg] can get treated without facing disrespect (Ana, Journal Entry).

They [health care providers] treat us with dignity and respect. They know that we are sex workers so we don’t have to hide the work that we do (Sbu, Interview 1).

Before there were clinics for sex workers, it was scary to go to the doctor. If they knew that we were sex workers they would not treat us. Sometimes they would ignore us and

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38There are three main outreach health clinics specific to sex workers in inner city Johannesburg. Women mainly spoke of Hillbrow Community Health Centre, however the Esselen Clinic and the mobile clinic were also mentioned.
sometimes they would say that it was our own fault for being sick. They blamed the work that we did and so some of us never went to the doctor and we became very ill (Thembile, Interview 2).

Iketlang expressed pride that there was now a health clinic for sex workers where she could go to get ARV’s.

[Image: Picture of the Hillbrow Community Health Centre. This is where I get my ARV’s.]

©Iketlang

For the women who had lived in Hillbrow prior to the existence of the health services specific to sex workers, their experiences in accessing health were filled with narratives of abuse and discrimination. One participant stated, that she was hit after she revealed her work to a medical practitioner. Another said that until RHRU health services existed, she would not go to the doctor, and that she would treat herself at home as best she could. Sbu summarizes their collective experiences by saying, “They [health staff] would not want to treat us because they think that we are dirty” (Sbu, Interview 1).

In this, we see how the impact of stigma directly affects the Hillbrow participants’ access to health care. All of the women eloquently shared their experiences of accessing health care as a sex worker. Their statements illustrated how public health care access for sex workers is often laden with discrimination. Pinky explains that Hillbrow is a good place for sex workers because there are clinics that support and care about their [sex workers] health and safety. Thembile also shared similar sentiments by stating,

We could not go to the doctor. If they knew that we had an STD and we told the doctor that we were sex workers they would sometimes refuse service to us. Sometimes they would even hit us (Thembile, Interview 2).

Iketlang makes a clear distinction between the Hillbrow Health Centre and other public health clinics that serve the general public by saying that, “there we are treated with dignity” (Journal Entry).

Choudhury (2010) explained a study done in Tijuana, Mexico that sheds light on the need to place health within a contextual framework. During her study, she discovered that although sex workers understand transmission risks in HIV/AIDS, they viewed their health with a holistic framework that included economic well-being. She goes further by arguing that public health officials need to take into account the voices of sex workers in order to understand how to engage in discussions with them around HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment. Some of the women in this study chose images of themselves alongside the symbolic HIV/AIDS red ribbon.
Both of the images above were taken next to a figure that stands on RHRU property. Since all of the women that participated in this study were recruited by Sisonke, and Sisonke is housed at RHRU, their involvement at RHRU might have influenced their choice of images and how they wanted to be depicted. Although it appears that health, specifically HIV/AIDS, plays a major role in their lives, one must consider the possibility that both of these images were captured for reasons of convenience rather than conviction. Neither of these women disclosed their HIV status; therefore, it is impossible to assume why they chose to depict themselves as such; however, a link, conscious or not, between health concerns and safety can be assumed.

Participants also touched upon plural systems of health. During an interview with Confidence she explains how ancestors can impact health if they are not in accordance with one’s lifestyle. During the interview Confidence explained that a woman in her village left sex work because the ancestors made her sick. She stated,

They make us sick when we do things that they don't like. But it depends on your ancestors. I make peace with them everyday. I tell them that I know that what I am doing is not right, but what am I to do? Maybe they would not do what I am doing but it is another time. We don’t live in the fields- in the rural areas- life is different for me (Interview 2).

Confidence described her fears of getting ill because of upsetting her ancestors. She explained the use of rituals as a way to make peace with the ancestors in order to become healthy. She went further by stating,

We can do all that we want to protect ourselves, and we need to, but sometimes if they [ancestors] get mad at you, there is nothing you can do except to return home and do the rituals that you need to in order to make them happy and get better (interview 2).

What we see here is that health/treatment experiences span diverse cultural realms in the lives of migrant women sex workers in South Africa. Confidence’s statement sheds light on the link to home and migration in terms of ‘sickness’ and is incredible information that can aid in future research and/or ways for public
health officials to better understand how migrants interpret health and illness. Furthermore, understanding these nuances is essential when creating effective systems of disease prevention, as well as service delivery.

In this study, we saw a conclusive parallel between treatment during a health visit and access to health care. When the women spoke of the health clinics that treated sex workers\textsuperscript{39}, they shared feelings of pride, affiliation and ownership of this safe place for them to seek care and support. In this capacity, stigma was lessened and health access/treatment increased. As we see from the literatures in this section, linking high-risk behavior with health is a minor step in addressing the challenges of treatment, access and prevention. Understanding the experiences that migrant women sex workers navigate in health systems can deepen the understanding in order to better engage in both dialogues of health prevention, as well as service delivery.

I will now discuss the third sub-theme: living conditions in Hillbrow.

7.3.5 “There is everything and nothing in Hillbrow”\textsuperscript{40}: Examining structural violence and livelihood strategies of migrant women who sell sex in Hillbrow. Another way that structural violence was captured in this study was in how the participants represented their environment(s), in this case, Hillbrow as a contained environment, in their images. Throughout the workshop, images of dilapidated buildings, still water, debris, and alleyways were captured as women described their experiences of life in Hillbrow. On the other hand, some women chose to focus their images on the “beautiful sides” of Hillbrow. These images depicted informal commerce (people selling vegetables, fruit, chickens), images of art work in Hillbrow, and images that represented skills training and educational opportunities. All of the images below nuanced structural violence in one way or another. Images of children playing in rubbish showed a clear link between their physical environments and violence; whereas, images of children playing in a park and images of churches revealed directed intention to challenge the stereotypes that Hillbrow is “ugly, dirty, and dangerous” (Sbu, Interview 2).

In the 1970’s during apartheid, Hillbrow was designated a ‘whites only’ area, but with time, Hillbrow became a ‘gray area’, where people of different ethnicities lived together (Sithole, 1991). At this time, Hillbrow was considered a hub for artists and was, a politically progressive place where people could live together, in the midst of the apartheid system (ibid). Poor urban planning became evident as the population numbers increased. In the 1980’s, black and coloured people began moving into Hillbrow, and the middle class began moving out of Hillbrow and into the suburbs (ibid). Lack of investment in the area followed, and by the 1990’s Hillbrow had become an urban slum (ibid). Today, the many of the residents are migrants (internal and cross border) and living in abject poverty (Mpe, 2001).

Throughout the study, participants commented extensively on the living and working conditions of Hillbrow. I will focus on both of these, as well as above provide a more in depth discussion in the following section that specifically addresses the working conditions of migrant sex workers.

\textsuperscript{40} A statement made by Confidence during an interview.
The following pages will highlight examples of images and captions taken by the women that point to their experiences as residents of Hillbrow. I have divided this section into sub-themes based on the images, and captions.

**“Dirty Streets”**

1. I took this picture to show that the living conditions are deplorable, and there are many health hazards.

   ©Mimi

2. Dirty alleyway and passengers in Hillbrow.

   ©Sbu

3. This open electricity box on Twist St. is a danger. I always pass here and see it like this.

   ©Shorty

4. The jazz of art. A dirty building people sell their produce along the street.

   ©Ana
“Dirty streets” was a common statement heard throughout the workshop. Often times, images of still water and dirty alleys seemed to represent metaphors for how the City was not taking care of them and the residents of Hillbrow. Images one and two on the previous page, are examples of the countless of images that poured in during the workshop that highlighted dirty aspects of the City. Image three points to the dangers inherent in the City’s lack of maintenance. Shorty’s statement “I always pass here and see it like this,” infers that efforts are not being made to improve the living conditions of Hillbrow residents. Image number four spotlights participants’ concerns in relation to food vendors and sanitation. Participants often described images of street vendors selling food alongside dirty spaces in juxtaposing ways. At times, it seemed as though the street vendors were to blame; whereas, other times, the participants criticized Municipality efforts of keeping the City clean. Image number five highlights a significant concern shared by many of the women. On several occasions, the participants would express disdain about the conditions in which children had to live and play. Iketlang raises an interesting question in her statement, “Everyone says that there is a water crisis, but there is so much water on the streets in Hillbrow. I wonder where it is coming from and why they can’t figure out a way to use this water instead of leaving it there and causing illness for the people” (Field Notes). In this case, we see how Iketlang is challenging not only City efforts, but questioning their integrity and interest in the health of Hillbrow residents as well. This element of “dirty streets” was key to illuminating discussions centered on living conditions in Hillbrow and served as a potent backdrop in many other themes.
Many of the women commented on issues of homelessness throughout the workshop and during the interviews. Some of the women explained images of homeless people as a way to show the living conditions of some Hillbrow residents. Others, highlighted their appreciation for the “homeless kids” and explained occasions when the homeless kids helped/rescued them from dangerous situations. Moreover,
others commented on their personal experiences of being homeless and the fears that they feel in relation to this reality. During an interview with Sbu, she stated, “Me… I love the homeless kids. They help me so much.” She described how during a near fatal rape, it was the homeless kids that came to her rescue. She stated, “They heard me screaming and they came running. They ran after the man and got my purse. If it weren’t for those kids I would be dead” (Interview 1). Confidence echoes similar appreciative sentiments towards the homeless youth in Hillbrow. Confidence stated, “When I am walking alone at night and I am afraid, I ask them to walk with me and they keep me safe. I pay them 20 rand and they walk me wherever I need to go” (Interview 1). She goes further by explaining that when she needs help carrying heavy things in and out of her room, she pays the homeless kids to help her, or she buys them food. She explained, “Sometimes they prefer that I go and buy the food myself because they are not comfortable going into the grocery store” (Interview 1). When I asked her why, she explained that grocery stores do not like it when homeless kids frequent their establishments. This is interesting as it reveals an ironic depiction of who is allowed and accepted, and who is not, in certain spaces. In this case, Confidence, a sex worker that is normally disenfranchised in many spaces, can freely walk into a grocery store and buy food without much harassment; whereas, homeless people risk being asked to leave and/or refused service because of the stigma associated with their current living situation(s).

Personal relationships with homelessness extended into areas of concern and discomfort when imagining themselves and/or their loved ones living on the streets. Pinky expressed dislike of the street kids stating, “I don’t like to see them because I am afraid that one day it will be my own children” (Journal Entry). On the previous page, image number three, highlights Sbu’s personal experience of having to sleep outside one night. Sbu explained her experience of that night as traumatizing and scary. She stated, “I don’t think that it’s okay for anyone to have to live on the street. When it gets dark no one knows you are there and anything can happen” (Interview 1). Confidence shared similar concerns when she described image number two. She stated, “This child is only one out of three that survived a horrible slaughter in front of the Shoprite grocery store” (Interview 1). She showed empathy for the children that were killed and concern for the three that survived the homicides. She lamented, “This one does not want to go to the shelter and I wish that he would. He is sniffing glue in this picture because he is hungry and addicted to the drug. If he went to the shelter he would be able to go to school and get off the streets” (Interview 1). As a result of the tragic deaths of this young man’s peers Confidence decided to buy him food when she saw him stating, “I feel sorry for him. He doesn’t have anyone and I think to myself that is not right. So I can buy him something to eat sometimes. When I see him I try to” (ibid).

Others commented that the “homeless kids/people” were a safety threat, and explained how their presence gave Hillbrow a bad reputation. Mimi stated in an interview, “The homeless people make Hillbrow ugly and I don’t like it” (Interview 2). In image number one, Shorty presents a quasi-patronizing view of homelessness by interjecting, “Whenever they find an open space they occupy it” (Journal Entry). Shorty appears to be criticizing the homeless individuals rather than the City, as Pinky does in image number four. Once again, we see a common theme threaded throughout the images; however, the subjectivity of the themes differ significantly. Perhaps the main difference in these sentiments is derived from personal experiences, bad/good, of homeless people and homelessness in general. Throughout this study, extensive conversations regarding the mistreatment of sex workers took center stage in one way or another; however, when discussions veered to the issue of homelessness, it seemed to be the only area where empathy was generated towards the other. The woman spoke about this theme with sympathetic hearts,
understanding/accepting that there are worse and more dangerous realities than their own. Although some of the women appeared to criticize the presence of homeless people, often they would interject that it was a sad reality. In this case, we see a microcosm example of how stigma is accepted/rejected and navigated among societies, places and people.

As I observed discussions centralized on this theme, I could not help but draw parallels, although extreme, to the ways in which some outsiders view Hillbrow residents as the others. I thought of how the women either criticized the homeless and/or used them for “cheap labor” when they needed help. Regardless of the environment, rich or poor, a “social pecking order”, is often used to define us and them. This is an observation that I have always found fascinating when looking at social systems. I was amazed to hear what some of the women had to say as they described the nuisance/appreciation of their Hillbrow homeless residents, and I grew more intrigued by the mechanisms that perpetuate the social systems that we justify/abhor. In the end, the women that shared personal encounters with the homeless tended to shy away from derogatory critique; whereas, those who did not appeared to speak more harshly of their presence.

I will now move to discuss “survival strategies”, another sub-theme in examining structural violence and livelihood strategies of migrant women who sell sex in Hillbrow.

“Survival Strategies”

1

This woman is selling meat next to the trash. It’s not clean.

©Sbu

2

Thembi maintains the streets of Hillbrow are clean. Her job doesn’t pay much but it’s better than nothing.

©Lety
Another central sub-theme was “survival strategies”. The images tended to concentrate on the ingenious strategies for survival, reflect the strength that people employed, and/or illustrate the abhorrent conditions that people face in their work and environment(s). According to Rogerson (1988), the saga of the informal sector in Johannesburg is dominated by the drastic struggles for everyday survival (p. 550). Economic hardship was a key component of the data throughout the study.

Simone (2010) links current unemployment rates and economic survival strategies employed by the urban poor in South Africa to the apartheid past of the City. She states, “Urban dwellers do not, as a result, feel constrained by the sense that specific places and resources belong to only certain kinds of uses or identities” (p. 5). Throughout the workshop when women spoke about their work and/or the informal economy of Hillbrow, they appeared to show pride in the diligence and ingenuity of Hillbrow citizens.

Stock Fella. A strategy that we use to save money because during Apartheid we could not use the banks and there was no way to save our money.

This picture shows the business side of Hillbrow. This is a guy from KZN. He lives in Hillbrow and this is how he makes his living. He designs and makes shoes. This also shows that it is not only foreign migrants that live in Hillbrow. People from S. Africa also live in Hillbrow and they work using their hands. They don’t have to wait for an employer to give them a job.

A mother who is sitting next to her vegetables stand. She looks like she is stressed. Business is not going well, no money.

Jane Gumbo is a beauty therapist in Hillbrow. She owns a saloon and is Zimbabwean. I took this picture to show that besides going into the sex business, as a foreigner you can own something in a foreign land.
stated, “I view Hillbrow as a rough place, but it is also a business place. One thing that I like about Hillbrow is that people do not wait for employment. They do anything that they put their heads to so as to feed their families back home” (Field Notes). Sku’s statement directly aligns with Rogerson’s (1996) argument that, “survivalist enterprises” represent a set of activities undertaken by people unable to secure wage employment or access to an economic sector of their choice” (p. 170).

Images 1-4 on the previous pages, are examples of the many photos that participants took which focused on informal entrepreneurship. Participants seemed keen to present the various strategies that people employed in Hillbrow as a means to earn an income. Image number two, shows a woman collecting plastic containers. During my interview with Lety, the photographer of this image, she explained why this image was important to her. Lety shared an inner-conflict in relation to her occupation as a sex worker as she described the woman in the image. Lety stated, “Sometimes I think that I could do more honest work with my hands, like this lady, but I can’t imagine myself collecting plastic and earning so little” (Interview 2). I asked Lety why she felt as though her current work as a sex worker was not “honest” and she replied, “I think that it is okay honest, but this mama is working so hard to make a little money to feed her family. She spends the whole day looking in trash bins for plastic so that she can sell it. Sometimes I feel as though I should be doing something like this with my hands as well” (ibid). Throughout the conversation with Lety, she vacillated between admiring the work that the woman in the photo was doing, and a visual disgust at the thought of her, herself, doing that sort of work. Later during the interview, Lety shared a bit more about her current work as a sex worker and the ways in which she describes her work as a “survival strategy”. Lety, like many other women, compared her current occupation to those of others in Hillbrow.

In reference to image four, Lety stated, “People from South Africa also live in Hillbrow and work using their hands. They don’t have to wait for an employer to give them a job” (Caption, Image 4). What is interesting about both Lety and Sku is how they infer their migratory stories within their captions and depictions of their photos. Both of these women chose to focus their images on their migration histories from Zimbabwe to South Africa and the resourceful ways in which people strive to make a living in Hillbrow in order to “feed their families back home” (Lety, Journal Entry, Sku, Journal Entry). It appears to me as though both were justifying their own ingenious work choices in order to support themselves and families. The significance that both Lety and Sku placed on “working with their hands” is a metaphor for their own work as sex workers, and was shared throughout the workshop by various other participants. In this, we see how participants are choosing to highlight Hillbrow as a space where a variety of income options are available. By doing so, they are contradicting the negative stereotypes that Hillbrow is a place where criminals and prostitutes work and live; thereby representing themselves as citizens of a space that is ‘healthy’ and ‘hard working’.

Simone (2010) argues that governments cannot control, assimilate and/or govern the dreams and aspirations of urban residents by stating, “Viewing the right to the city as the right to pursue multiple aspirations ensures that no structure of governance can ever really manage the activation of this right” (p.5). In image number three, Sbu spotlights both an historical reality of many South Africans, and a current system that Hillbrow residents still employ as a strategy to save money. Sbu explained this photo by focusing on the Apartheid days of South Africa stating, “We were not allowed to use banks and so ‘stock fella’ was invented and became the way that we saved money” (Interview 2). Sbu stated that she selected this image, “because it is important to show that people in Hillbrow are smart and think of ways to beat the
system” (ibid). Once again, we see how the image selections are metaphors for the ways in which the women utilize survival strategies to secure themselves financially in a hostile system. Sbu went further to explain how as a sex worker she has had to navigate difficult and illegal situations in order to make a living. Her choice to include this image mirrors her own innovative strategies and perseverance in relation to what is “legally accepted” and what “needs to be done” in order to survive.

Image number five on page 75, highlights the struggle “to feed a family” (Thembile, Interview 1). Thembile clearly related the perceived struggles that the woman in this image is experiencing to her own. She stated, “This mama wants to sell some vegetables so that she can feed her family, but it is not an easy day. When I saw this woman sitting there looking sad, I felt bad for her because I know how it feels not to make money one day and not having food to eat” (ibid). During this part of the interview, Thembile shared extensively about her struggles as a sex worker and the challenges that she faces when she is forced to decide where and how to work. Thembile highlighted the issue of risk taken by sex workers when “times are hard” (ibid). She explained how she has had to make difficult choices and put herself in danger in order to make money when the brothels are slow. She stated, “Sometimes we will do anything for 100 rand and this is too much dangerous” (ibid). Although Thembile appeared to be genuinely concerned about the perceived sadness/tribulations of the woman in the image, she quickly transferred her concerns to her own life experience. In this case, we see a clear link between why images were taken and how the images related or served as metaphorical examples of the conditions and strategies employed by the participants.

In image number six, Mimi presents an interesting, and surprisingly uncommon, feature in the pictures surrounding work. Mimi deepens the depiction of migrant survival and spotlights the notion that migrants also own business in Hillbrow. During my interview with Mimi, she spoke with great pride of Jane Gumbo a Zimbabwean hairdresser that owns a beauty salon in Hillbrow. Mimi stated, “Many people think that we [Zimbabweans] do not contribute to the South African economy, but Jane has South African employees so that is not true” (Interview 1). Mimi seemed to show particular affinity for the notion of owning a hair salon. Mimi’s family does not know that Mimi is a sex worker; in fact, she tells them that she is a hairdresser. Mimi was also one of the more vocal “anti sex work” participants in this study. Often times, she would explain the negative attributes of Hillbrow by speaking disapprovingly of sex workers in Hillbrow. This contradiction left me perplexed. However, it is important to note that Mimi appeared to live vicariously through Jane Gumbo and frequently spoke about the salon as though it were an extension of her. As she explained the reasons why this photo was so important to her, she frequently used words like “we”, “mine”, and “Zimbabwean woman like I am”. Mimi concentrated her images in binary relationships between the good/bad aspects of Hillbrow, in a similar way as the binary discourses surrounding sex work. During our conversation, I noticed that although Mimi appeared to be highly critical of sex workers, she spoke freely about herself as a sex worker and seemed to exude a semblance of pride in her ability to take care of herself and her family. Unlike any other participant in this study, Mimi symbolized the friction between wanting to present herself as someone who was not viewed by the stereotypical notions of sex work, and wanting to present herself as a successful sex worker.

With the exception of Mimi’s photo above, there was a lack of images and narratives around the formal economy of Hillbrow. Images of business owners, building managers, and professional employees were virtually nonexistent. Simone (2010) argues that residents are conscious about displaying weakness; therefore, they are mindful about what they say about themselves. She explains, “Since urban residents
know that many people are paying attention to what they do, they try to conform to some sense of what can pass as conventional in order not to stand out” (p. 7). As the editing process came to a close, it was evident that participants shifted their initial depictions of Hillbrow and positioned themselves within their narratives as either hard working women and/or as critics of City management and policy. In this case, we see how the participants personally navigated the spaces in Hillbrow. Although the women were not currently selling fruit, vegetables or any other type of item sold in the informal sector, they were selling their bodies for sex, a commodity that is also relegated to the sidelines of social and political notions of “accepted” work. The majority of the women did not focus on images centered on their profession; however, the issues, concerns and praises for the ‘hard working people of Hillbrow’ can serve as similes for their own occupations.

The images that formed this section, “survival strategies” appeared to serve three main purposes: (1) to show the industriousness of Hillbrow residents, (2) to criticize the City for lack of opportunity, and (3) to serve as metaphors and/or platforms that mirrored their own work profession.

“Spirituality/Religion as a survival strategy”

Universal Church of the Kingdom of God. The main service is on Sunday, but it’s open everyday from 9:30am to 7:30pm. They also preach on the streets, which makes it easier for people who have busy schedules.

Sku highlights the importance of churches in the survival of the poor by stating, “Churches give food to the homeless and help with things like shelter. They are a good presence in Hillbrow” (Field Notes). Monica Mombassa shares that she does not think that Hillbrow is a good place for young families with children because of the “high rates of drug abuse, premarital sex, and alcoholism” (Journal Entry). She goes further in her critique of Hillbrow by attributing all good things in Hillbrow to the presence of the church and the
attendees. Below is a statement taken from my field notes during a group presentation made by Monica Mombassa. In her presentation, Mombassa presented over fifteen images of churches and clearly expressed her support of the church, as well as her criticism of Hillbrow as a space. Below is a statement that she made as she presented her images to the group,

I don’t think that Hillbrow is a good place. There are many people who do drugs, the City is infested, kids are having premarital sex, and it’s filled with crime. The churches in Hillbrow help the City. They feed the kids and the homeless people as well as provide a space where kids can go and learn good lessons about life. They can go to church and learn that drugs and sex at an early age are not good things. In church, they can learn how to be good people and have a good life. If it weren’t for the churches in Hillbrow I don’t think that there would be hope for anyone here (Field Notes).

Pinky, on the other hand, provides an image/caption relating to church and survival. In her caption on the image below, Pinky states that sex workers use the same building where church is held on Sundays. During the workshop, Pinky expanded on her image by stating, “The sidewalk where this family is walking is the same sidewalk that prostitutes walk at night” (Field Notes). She later explained that she chose this image because she thinks that people need both spirituality and work in order to survive.

A mother and her young child leave church on Sunday. The church gathers in the basement of a building on the corner of President and Polly St. The building is shared by the church and sex workers.

©Pinky

Below are a few more quotes that highlight the ways in which the women viewed the church as a “survival strategy”.

“I go to church every Sunday and it helps me” (Confidence, Journal Entry)

“Every Sunday I go to church and I think that it is a good thing because it helps me be who I am, especially because of the work I do. I need a place where I can go for strength” (Iketlang, Field Notes).

“I enjoy going to church. I think that it helps me make sense of things” (Mimi, Interview 1).

Survival strategies spanned a vast spectrum in this study; however, the role of church remained central to the relationship(s) between economic hardship and survival for the women. Lorentzen (2009) conducted ethnographic research that highlighted the role that religion plays in the personal and political experiences of new migrants to the USA (p.5). She argues that groups and individuals negotiate multiple religious, cultural and national identities, as well as how religious faiths are transformed through migration (p. 12). Lorentzen examines the influence that church plays on the lives of migrant street sex workers from Mexico. The role of religion/spirituality and prayer was central to the livelihood strategies of the women. She states, “They pray for security and to avoid being harmed as they dodge the dangers of street work, including physical attacks by street thugs or abuse by clients” (p.23).
During this study, I noticed how many of the women wore crucifixes around their necks. When I asked them if they went to church, many commented that did, while others commented that they did not go to church but prayed for protection and salvation. Sbu stated, “Even though the church does not like what I do I find strength there. I was baptized by my father and so I feel good when I go to church” (Interview 1). The importance that religion/spirituality played in the lives of the women was ever apparent. The majority of the women captured images of churches during the beginning of the workshop; however, as the workshop tapered on, fewer images of churches were taken. In this case, we see how the women vacillated in their self (re)presentations. Often times, spirituality is a private occurrence. As the editing phase of the workshop neared, the participants eliminated images that illuminated their spiritual/religious lives. This can be deduced as a conscious choice to keep this aspect of their lives away from public scrutiny, or raises insight into the possibility that contrary to the amount of images centered on religion/churches, religion in fact, did not play a significant a role in their lives.

“Security”

Siyabonga is a guard at the Twilight Children’s Shelter. This image reminds me of how hard it was for me to feel safe and to trust the City again.

People going about their everyday lives.

A significant concern in relation to security in Hillbrow was also represented in the images; however, this sub-theme is primarily focused on the security conditions of sex workers. In this section, I would like to bring attention to the two images above. In the first image, Lety described her initial discomfort with the City and she decided to use this image as a symbolic representation of her struggles to “feel safe” (Interview 1). During my interview with Lety she explained how she faced many “bad security people” in Hillbrow and that with time she learned who she could trust and not (ibid). I found this image to be interesting because Lety chose to select an image of a security guard behind bars, as though the metal barrier between her and him served as a symbol of safety, and safety, a security through distance and barriers. In this photo, Lety highlights issues of trust and feeling “safe to trust the City again” - a sentiment that many people, participants and not, have shared with me throughout my year in Johannesburg (Caption, Image 1). South Africans live in gated communities surrounded by electric fencing and sensors. These strategies are meant to “keep out the bad people.” In my experience, the general public of South Africa explains dangerous individuals as
“young black men” who cannot be trusted. I found this image to be exceptionally symbolic of both the stereotypes of dangerous people, as well as the tactics employed/perceived to keep people safe.

Image number 2 on the preceding page, addresses issues of safety in a broader sense. Iketlang expressed interest in this image because the signs were posted on a church fence. When she described this photo she stated, “[laughing] Even where there are churches there is a security risk. Where can one be safe?” (Field Notes). Iketlang later changed her caption to reveal a less threatening/fearful experience of the City, and replaced it with what appears to be a nonchalant caption explaining two people going about their daily lives. In this case, one might deduce that Iketlang wanted to focus on the daily life of people walking in Hillbrow in Hillbrow, or that she wanted to avoid portraying violence. Although Iketlang chose to represent a more subtle depiction of her image in her caption, the image contains two posters banning the use of guns, and two black men walking in front of these posters. In this case, the symbolism can be explained in two primary ways: (1) challenging the stereotypes associated with who is dangerous and (2) reaffirming the stereotypes that young black men are a threat to safety.

Often times, women would describe danger in sexist binary ways, coupling their experiences to male police officers that would rape and abuse them, male clients that refused to pay them for their services, male hotel managers that would rape them, and men that tried to kill them. In the case of these two images, similar representations of men were included. Depictions of positive male influences in their lives lacked throughout the workshop; thereby, pointing to both a gendered experience of inequality and/or perceived threat.

“The beautiful things in Hillbrow”

1

This statue is found along Pretoria St. It summarizes life in Johannesburg. Here we have trolley pushers, cyclists, and people from all over Africa who come and try to make a living on this land.

©Lety

2

Everyday I encounter school children, some study while others get involved in silly things. I took this picture because I was impressed by these children who were sitting on the side of the road studying. It shows that they are willing to learn and take care of themselves.

©Monica Mombassa
Some of the women decided to focus a majority of their images on the ‘beautiful’ aspects of Hillbrow. As the editing process went on and final images were selected, I noticed that many of the women chose to include images that portrayed Hillbrow in a positive light. In image number one on the previous page, Lety explains the statue in Hillbrow as an opportunity to shed light on the positive reasons why people come to South Africa, specifically Hillbrow, to “try to make a living” (Caption, Image 1). In image number, Monica Mombassa chose to highlight young kids studying; however, her caption appears to have a patronizing undertone. Mombassa was the participant most critical of Hillbrow, and often highlighted her images and narratives on the negative aspects of the City. Although she chose to include this image in her final selection, her caption stating, “It shows that they are willing to learn and take care of themselves,” it infers that other Hillbrow residents are not willing and/or do not care for themselves.

Confidence selected a common image taken by the majority of the participants. Image three is of the RHRU building. All of the women are familiar to this building, and the majority of the women have accessed health, educational opportunities, and sex work support services at RHRU. This image was consistently explained as a place where they received skills and support, and was often described as a beacon of the positive aspects of Hillbrow. In addition, Thembile spotlights City efforts to provide public water and sanitation services for Hillbrow residents. Images of the positive efforts taken by the Municipality were generally absent throughout the workshop; however, this image points to a desire to represent Hillbrow as a caring and supportive space.
In image number five on the previous page, we see children playing at the park. Many of the women are mothers, a topic embedded throughout the entirety of the workshop. Many women explained their choice to enter sex work as a need to support their children/families. The majority of the mothers in this study stated that they did not have their children living with them in Hillbrow. Children either live with grandparents in rural areas of South Africa and/or live in Zimbabwe with extended family. Although all of the women shared stories about their children back home no one did it with more passion and intent than Pinky. Pinky’s images consisted primarily of children. She explained that when she first moved to Hillbrow in 1997, she was not allowed to bring her child with her to the hotel where she was going to live; therefore, she took her child to a nearby crèche. Days after she moved to Hillbrow, she received a phone call stating that her child had died. The trauma and impact of this event became central to Pinky’s story. Often times when she shared her story with the group, she would cry as she relayed and tried to make sense of the tragic event. The importance to portray happy children playing in safe spaces was central to Pinky’s story, and other participants appeared to have similar reasons for depicting happy children. It seemed as though they were living their children’s lives vicariously through the portrayal of the images of the children. When I asked the women if they wanted to bring their kids to Hillbrow, none of them responded positively. Often times they would state that Hillbrow was not a good place to raise kids, and that they were safer ‘back home’.

The decision to portray Hillbrow in a positive light can be explained as a desire to represent the space that they live in as a good place, a place where healthy, strong, artistic and ethical people live. Essentially, as a place where everyone would want to live. Given the stereotypes and stigma associated with Hillbrow, these decisions can be seen as an example of how women chose to challenge negative stigma of Hillbrow. We are often defined by where we live; therefore, as the women engaged in the editing process of telling their stories, many decided to include images that portrayed their environments as places with art, where people worked hard, went to church and owned businesses.

I would now like to move onto the final sub section and highlight how security in sex work emerged in the data. In this section, I will engage with literature on sex work and touch on issues gender inequality in the work place.

7.3.6 “Sometimes it is dangerous, but it is also fine”\(^{41}\): A look at how migrant women sex workers navigate their workspaces.

Brison (2003) argues that sex work is a consequence of the misogynistic systems that continue to oppress women and MacKinnon (2010) argues that sex work is an act of exploitation that is perpetuated by patriarchal systems. On the other hand, Brock (2009) argues that public discourse to describe sex work as a social problem has resulted in legal systems that disenfranchise women who chose to enter the sex industry. Furthermore, Weitzer (2000) argues that not all sex work is the same; therefore, arguments that support a ban on sex work are naïve because they fail to recognize the diverse reasons why women enter the trade, and the varying degrees of exploitation/victimization and individual choice of occupation (p. 3). Richter (2008a) goes further by criticizing the criminalization of sex work by addressing public health concerns of safety, prevention and treatment. She states, “The on going criminalization of sex work and

\(^{41}\) A statement written by Ana in her journal.
South Africa’s growing inability to adequately deal with refugees and undocumented migrants have a far reaching impact on women’s survival and coping mechanisms” (Richter, 2008a:5).

Gender-inequality is often argued as one of the main reasons why women enter the sex industry (Agustin, 2006, Gangoli, 2001, Richter, 2008a, 2008b, Richter et al., 2010). Moreover, gender inequality is seen as a driving force that supports (or not) legal frameworks that penalize sex workers and sex work (Agustin, 2006, MacKinnon, 2010). Some feminists criticize sex work for these very reasons and argue that sex work supports the political and social systems that oppress women (MacKinnon, 2010). However, Dank and Refenetti (1999) contend that the victim-orientated view by feminists perpetuates, “… feminist imageries of sex workers as helpless victims” (p.3) because it ignores the reality of sex workers who have taken the initiative in organizing work/labor associations for sex workers” (ibid). Nyangairi (2010) stated that pathways into sex work evidenced low pay for most feminized work (p. 151). Agustin (2006) and Gangoli (2001) explain that the overrepresentation of women in unrewarding jobs (domestic work and service industry) is directly correlated to lack job opportunities.

As seen earlier in this report in the discussion that focused on “trajectories into sex work”, many women stated that they entered the sex industry because options were limited and they needed to care for families, income potential was higher then other labor options, and, work schedules were more flexible. Many researchers have linked poverty, homelessness and the need to provide for families to reasons why women turn to sex work (Frost, 1983, Goldman, 1981, Hood-Brown, 1998, Kaname, 2007). Frost (1983) found that the majority of Latina sex workers in Los Angeles entered the trade due to lack of opportunities in labor work. Sku reaffirms this position when she stated, “I entered sex work because my options for other kinds of work were limited” (Field Notes). Throughout the workshop, many women explained their choice to enter sex work for similar reasons. Shorty stated, “I can travel here and there if I want to. I don’t have a clock to punch. If I want to work I work, if I don’t I don’t. I can visit my children in Zimbabwe when I want to and no one can tell me not to” (Field Notes).

Although the previously mentioned reasons provide some sense of ownership for the women Kaname (2007) argues that working conditions and stigma related to sex work in Japan make identifying sex workers challenging; thereby, increasing health risks due to restricted work environments where public health workers struggle to find entrance. In this capacity, many women described their choice to enter sex work; however, many of the women described their working conditions as dangerous, and in need of improvement. Issues of gender and violence were also raised as women shared stories about their experience in sex work.

Ana explained her entry into sex work resulted from her leaving her abusive husband and needing to work. As I examined her images in accordance to her story, I noticed that she was the one participant that had selected numerous images of men. The man in image number one the following page, appears to be inebriated; however, her caption, “having too much” can infer either too much to drink or too much sex. The captions of images two and three highlight positive men in her life. Image number two is of a security guard that “treats [her] well”. Whereas, image number three is of her boyfriend that helps her “go through difficult times”. I wondered if “difficult times” meant economically difficult and/or emotionally. It appears that it is important for Ana to depict the “exceptional” men in her life- the ones that treat her well. Despite Ana’s experience with an abusive husband it seems important for her to show the audience that she has “good men” in her life. The original caption for image number three had stated “client” in brackets; however, she
chose to eliminate this detail from her final caption revealing the importance of keeping her clients identity anonymous and/or presenting herself as someone who has been able to find a good man. I pondered the importance of these images and often wondered if Ana held “negative feelings for men, especially considering her chosen occupation. I asked Ana about this and she responded, “For me, there are not too many good men. We [sex workers] see a lot of men and they don’t always treat us nicely, especially when they find out what we do for work” (Field Notes).

Many of the women excluded the representation of men in their images and narratives and tended to mention men only when describing issues of police safety and client abuse. Thembile was the only participant that stated that she was married. When I asked her how her husband felt about her line of work, she stated, “He does not like it, but he is supportive. Sometimes I don’t tell him where I am going because he gets too much angry with me. But, I have to feed my family and he doesn’t make enough money for that” (Interview 1). Thembile explained that she supports her parents and children in KwaZulu Natal and that in order to provide them with enough money to live on, she must work as a sex worker. Thembile goes further
in highlighting the working conditions that sex workers face and the role that gender plays in both abuse and management of space where sex work is conducted.

During one of my interviews with Thembile, she described this image by stating, “We used to have sex in this building. It was a dilapidated building. You would have to pay the guy five rand to go there and have sex. He would give you a candle, and you would go in there and do business with your client. This is too much dangerous, but we can make so much money there” (Interview 1).

Thembile titled this image, “Unsafe places”. She described why there was so much income potential in a place like this by stating,

It is too dark here. No one can recognize you if you come here. If a client goes to the brothel, someone might see him come in or go out, here no one can see anyone because there are not lights. That is why you can make so much money here. Too many men want sex but they are too much afraid to get caught by someone that knows them (Interview 1).

Other women described working conditions by sharing how the brothels were dirty, or how management abused them by demanding sex in exchange for continued access to the brothel. Some women shared experiences of violence in sex work by describing situations that occurred to other sex workers that they knew. In the image below, Iketlang captured a building and explains how this building reminds her of when her friends were raped.

This building is on Banket St. in Hillbrow. Two sex workers were raped in this building. They were overdosed on drugs by Nigerians.
Confidence describes a situation when she was almost killed when she reflected on the image below.

During the interview, Confidence shared that she went to this building with a client, and when they arrived, he started to snort drugs. He became violent and tried to throw her out of the window. She also explained why she chose this image by stating, “I chose this picture because I want to show how sex work can be dangerous sometimes. If sex work were legal maybe we would have more ways to protect ourselves because we would not be willing to risk our lives to make money” (Interview 1). As she explained her experience in this building, my thoughts mimicked her sentiments centered on law and safe working conditions for sex workers. If sex workers had legal protection, she would have been able to go to police and file a report. When I asked Confidence if went to the police she stated, “There is no point going to the police if you are a sex worker. You risk them raping and abusing you” (Interview 2). I became painfully aware of the limitations that sex work face when attempting to secure safety and protection. Although I was aware of the challenges that sex workers faced in dealing with the police, the interview with Confidence, among others, allowed me to hear them in a more private setting; consequently, the severity of their current appalling circumstances touched me on a more personal and deeper level.

Participants wrote various stories in their journals about their experiences as sex workers; however, many chose to keep these details hidden from their captions. Sku wrote,

A friend of mine Angela, she passed on. She was drowned in a bath basin in her room at the Didi Hotel. Kim, another friend, she is in Durban now, was drugged and raped and left for dead in her room. She stayed in a hospital for three months. She couldn’t drink on her own, and she has lost her memory” (Journal Entry).

Pinky also highlights the dangers of sex work in her statement below,

Getting help outside is dangerous as you might get hurt especially if people know that you are a sex worker. They insult you and call you names. I remember one day some people went inside of the hotel with guns. They got in and shot a friend of mine nine times (Journal Entry).

Shorty explains that she chooses to work in Sandton, an affluent suburb outside of the inner city area of Johannesburg, because the risk of harm is less than that of Hillbrow. She states,

In Hillbrow you can get hurt more often than in Sandton. In Sandton, people have money to pay for sex. In Hillbrow lots of men want to have sex without condoms and they don’t like to pay. If we argue with them, they get angry and sometimes they will even hit us (Field Notes).

Comparisons of work places were often made. Women differentiated ‘safe brothels’ from unsafe brothels. The Didi Hotel was often considered by the women as an ‘unsafe’ brothel; whereas, the majority of the women stated how dangerous it was to be a street based sex worker. Although some of the women had conducted street based sex work in the past, none of the women were involved in street based sex work...
during the time that this study took place. Often times, when women discussed abuses and violence committed by clients, it was primarily in the context of experiences that they faced while working on the street.

Other examples of gender violence were made during discussions around police violence, while others focused on client abuses. The women that chose to represent violence in the work place shared similar sentiments and hopes that if the legal status of their work changed, so too would their safety. Across the globe, sex workers have been forming organizations in an effort to bring attention to violence, and as a way to promote health and support. In South Africa, both SWEAT and Sisonke Sex Worker Movement have shown success in their efforts to support sex workers. Some of the women shared their gratitude for Sisonke as a place where they could go for support, advocacy and skills training.

In this section, I have linked literatures to the experiences shared by the women in this study. Desire to influence policy makers was one of the main reasons why the women above chose to include the images in their stories. They self (re) presented as active participants in the advocacy for sex worker rights. Ana drew a comparison between Nelson Mandela’s fight for freedom and her hope for sex work legislation in her journal. During one of Ana’s photo shoots in Hillbrow, she visited Constitutional Hill and wrote a reflective piece in her journal. The statement below is dense with nuance and insight, and it directly speaks to the multiplicity of systems, hopes and realities that were discussed thus far in this section.

This is where Nelson Mandela stayed for many years in prison. This just came to me as a revelation as I did not know this place [Constitutional Hill] before. As such, it acts as a road to freedom, the same freedom that we are fighting for in our profession (Ana, Journal Entry).

Farmer (2001) traces how the historical experiences of violence in Haiti have direct impact over the lives of modern day Haitians. He examines slavery, historical/current embargos, lack of international aid, and infrastructure to show how structural violence can be understood in that context. In the framework of this study, we are able to see the link between the history of South Africa to Hillbrow today; we see socio-political links that help to explain the current economic experiences of Hillbrow citizens; and, we see how historical/current notions of gender have impacted the lives and safety of migrant women who sell sex.

The women in this study actively engaged with issues of structural violence in the workplace throughout their images, captions, and journals. They revealed insight into these issues indirectly by illuminating metaphorical representations and experiences of themselves, their spaces and their histories. Moreover, they addressed these concerns with poignant voices that shout to a society that has been deaf to their injustices for a safer and legitimate profession.

7.4 Stigma

The term ‘stigma’ carries heavy moral implications. Goffman (1963) defines stigma as, “a significantly discrediting attribute” (p. 2). Goffman argued that there are three types of stigma: (1) a physical deformity, (2) a flaw (or perceived) character such as an experience of mental illness, addiction, unemployment and radical political beliefs, and (3) an association to a particular race, ethnicity, nationality, religion (p. 4). This explanation gives rise to what societies determine as normal, natural and acceptable. If a person, or a group, conforms to mainstream beliefs then he/she is considered ‘normal’; whereas, a person, or group, that
deviates from the expected norms is considered ‘abnormal’. Those who are considered ‘abnormal’ are often cast out of social acceptance and seen as stigmatized. Those who navigate society without this label create and perpetuate ideologies that seek to characterize those individuals with stigma as inferior, dangerous, and culpable for social decay.

7.4.1 Know me, Know me not: How migrant women sex workers deal with stigma.

For the purpose of this study, we can use Goffman’s definition of stigma and see clearly how it can be applied to sex workers. Sex workers do not conform to the larger moral values that society deems appropriate. The Judeo-Christian framework has dominated moral discourse throughout the globe. Within this framework, sexuality is moral only to the extent that it occurs between a man and a woman who are married and are having sex for reasons of procreation. Anderson (2002) argues that sex work and sex workers damage social morals because they have sex with more than one person, and because the sex that sex workers have is one that lacks romance and love. He goes further by stating that those in support of sex work legalization have been brainwashed, and they, themselves, are dirty and sinful. Anderson stigmatizes sex workers, and those in support of sex work legal reform as ‘abnormal’ and sinful; thus, he is perpetuating and defending what he believes to be normal social behavior.

There are a series of consequences to a person, or group, being stigmatized. For example, many are ostracized and have feelings of isolation and loneliness, which leads to both mental suffering and denied access to health care. There is ample evidence that stigmatized groups face greater challenges to health care access than those who do not face stigma (Richter, 2008a, 2008b, 2009a, 2009b, Skinner & Mfecane, 2004, Vearey 2010a, 2010b, Vearey et al., 2010). Skinner & Mfecane (2004) accentuate the implications of stigma by arguing that stigma creates a division and hierarchy in society, and that this structure promotes social inequalities (p. 160).

Gender inequalities can be seen as one main ingredient in explaining the pervasiveness of stigma in sex work. In the USA, some feminists critique media output that exploits women’s sexuality. They argue that representing women in the media reduces women to sexual objects that are void of intellectual independence. For example, media representations of women who have been raped often focus reporting to details that inadvertently, or perhaps intentionally, shift the blame from perpetrator to survivor. In these cases, media will focus on the time of night, what she was wearing, and that has been drinking as ways to discount the validity of the rape; therein, promoting sympathy for the perpetrator. Lety reaffirms this position in her statement, “People always
complain about sex workers, but they should start asking questions about why their men are coming to see us” (Lety, Field Notes).

There is an inherent gendering of economics that must be addressed when exploring sex work. Although there are men and transgender individuals that are sex workers, the majority of sex work is still conducted by biological women. Nyangairi (2010) argues that understanding the trajectories of migrant women sex workers requires us to engage in the issue of economic inequality and gender, an issue echoed by many. In her work in Hillbrow, Nyangairi explains that other employment possibilities for migrant sex workers such as domestic work, janitorial and caretaking are rooted in this economic inequality, and that women chose sex work for a myriad of reasons. Sku’s statement highlights a common reason given by many of the participants regarding the economic opportunities available to them and why they chose sex work. She states, “As a sex worker I can make a lot more money than if I were to work as a cleaner, maid or vegetable seller. I think that all jobs are important, and good, but for me I needed to make enough money to support my children and family back home and I could only do it as a sex worker” (Field Notes). Chilman and Ricks (2002) argue that historical economic injustice of women has disenfranchised and stigmatized women throughout. They go further by stating, “Sex work is ridiculed and devalued by normative social rules” (p. 50). These normative social rules support, and, are supported by, the socio-political paradigms that create what is considered ‘normal’ and ‘acceptable’. Stigma exists when a person, or group, resists, defies, or disregards the socially constructed ‘rules’ and frameworks of appropriateness. These social constructed ‘rules’ exist to defend and protect a status quo are usually hegemonic, and almost always, defined by the elite.

One of the ways in which stigma is challenged is in the language that is used to explain and/or describe a person or group. In the case of sex workers, the term “sex worker” was coined as an attempt to de-stigmatize the label ‘prostitute’ (Bindman, 1997). As we examine the use of language across various ‘marginalized’ communities, we see a process of “owning the label” and/or “reclaiming insulting words” as a strategy to empower, perhaps even mimic the original stigma that the label/word had. However, freedom to use these labels are usually reserved for the groups of people that share the historical implications of the word. For example, gay men often refer to one another as “fag,” a term that has historically had negative implications. In the USA many African Americans will refer to one another as “nigger”, a term ripe with historical injustice. Nyangairi (2010) also describes how some sex workers referred to themselves and one another as “whores” and “prostitutes,” yet she maintained her language in reference to them as “sex worker” so as not to insult the women.

In order to understand the implications of stigma in migrant women who sell sex in Hillbrow, it is important to establish that a major component of stigma for this group of people is attached to larger socio-political and cultural contexts. Although sex work is highly stigmatized world wide, the illegality of sex work in South Africa serves as a system that passively/aggressively gives society, legal, cultural, and individual, permission to stigmatize and disenfranchise this group of people.

During this study, experiences of stigma existed on a spectrum ranging from the type of sex work to living in Hillbrow. Although the majority of the participants had worked on the streets at one time or another, many of the participant's categorized street based sex workers as “dumb”, “stupid”, and/or “they are asking for trouble.”Thembile explained an assault that took place while working on the streets and stated, “I was
stupid. I wanted the 100 rand so badly that I was willing to risk my life” (Interview 1). Other participants criticized sex workers in general. Mimi explained that one of the things that she does not like about Hillbrow is all of the sex workers, “I see Joburg as a nice place, but there are too many criminals, drug dealers and sex workers (Journal Entry). This quote reveals a potential internal stigma that Mimi is feeling. This statement revealed a host of possible reasons why she believes there are too many sex workers in Hillbrow.

One possible explanation can be that “too many sex workers” increases competition. Another explanation can be linked to Mimi’s overall self-presentation throughout the workshop. Mimi presented herself and as an actress, an artist, an individual that openly criticized sex work while admittedly stating that she was a sex worker. Below is an excerpt from my field notes that reflects on this.

I was surprised to read what Mimi had to say about not liking the amount of sex workers in Hillbrow. At first, I wondered if she was trying to present herself as not being a sex worker; thereby, casting herself as separate from them. Mimi is one of the most engaged participants in the participatory photo project, but there is something about how she speaks and the images that she is taking that has left me wondering if she trying to separate herself from her work. There is nothing wrong with this, but the fact that she states often that she does not like all of the sex workers in Hillbrow is confusing, and interesting to me. Perhaps she does not like the competition of so many sex workers? I think that it is more than that; I think that Mimi is taking this opportunity to (re) present herself as someone outside of her work, someone that dresses nicely and speaks well. The research team and MPW staff were impressed by Mimi’s participation and enthusiasm and perhaps she felt this; therefore, it was important to her to remain ‘normal’ and ‘acceptable’ based on her own internal relationship with the stigma of being a sex worker (Field Notes).

When I spoke to Mimi, she said that one of the best things about the photo project was that she was able to meet new people; people that she never thought that she would meet. She commented on how lucky she felt to learn a new skill and to be surrounded by people that were interested in her story. If representation is about making sense of your reality at a given time, then it is logical that Mimi chose to self (re) present as she did: as someone who chose to refer to her work as something others did, rather than something that she does. In this case, we see how Mimi relies on othering as an intentional representation that separates herself from those with whom she does not want to be identified: bad/immoral. In another conversation with Mimi, she referred to the drug dealers as Nigerians. When I asked her if she knew whether they were Nigerians or not, she stated, “All of the drug dealers are Nigerians.” Once again, we see how Mimi chose to represent herself by separating herself from them. In Mimi’s case we can see how she created categories of people to assist with creating a dignified identity of herself.

During my interview with Mimi, she explained that her family does not know that she sells sex; she tells them that she is a beauty therapist in Yeoville. When I asked her why she did not inform them she responded, “Eesh… they would be too much disappointed in me Elsa! I could maybe not have a relationship with them. They would not like it. It is not good that they know” (Interview 1). Many of the participants shared that their families and friends did not know of the work that they did out of fear of rejection and demonization, as well as being seen as an unfit member of their social circles.

Confidence sheds light on the complexity of stigma as she describes the importance of keeping her work hidden from her family. During my interviews with Confidence, one of the main themes that came up was how she navigated the stigma of being identified as a sex worker and as someone who lived in Hillbrow. Confidence explained that the taxi drivers heading to Pretoria could tell if someone was a sex worker or not by the way that they dressed. Below is an excerpt from one of the interviews where Confidence explains the
enormity of stigma that is associated with Hillbrow and being a sex worker. She explains the strategies that she uses in order to avoid being identified as someone who both lives in Hillbrow and sells sex.

If people find out that you stay in Hillbrow, they will know that you are a sex worker. So, I tell my family that I live in Alexandra with my boyfriend. When I go home I wear normal clothes. I don’t try to look nice. I wear jeans and a sweatshirt, like this (she points to what she is wearing). The taxi drivers, the know if you are a sex worker. If you are coming from the City and heading to Pretoria they can tell right away if you sell. And, they ask you ‘Are you are prostitute?’ One of the ways that they can tell is by how light our skin is. Because I’m staying inside of the sun, they know. One time I went home and my mother asked me why I am so white. I tell her, I just put on… what do you call it… sunscreen? Calamine lotion. I tell her that I put cream on my face because it doesn’t make sense to them that I am not dark like them. If you go on the taxi with nice pants and a new shirt and high heels… oh! They know for sure. And, they will tell everyone, ‘see that one over there, she lives in Hillbrow and is a sex worker. That is why I don’t tell people where I am coming from and I always look normal when I go home. I don’t even take too many gifts for my son. I give my family money for his food because I don’t want to walk to my village with a lot of gifts. Eesh… people talk too much (Confidence, Interview 1).

It was surprising for me to hear that connection between Hillbrow and sex work as obviously related to one another; however, Confidence was not the only participant that shed light on this perception. Iketlang and Mimi also explained that their families do know the truth about where they live. These sentiments serve as an example of how the stigma of being a sex worker was internalized, and extended into the space in which they conducted their work. Confidence also sheds light on issues of skin color, race and classism in her statement. When I asked her why she felt that the color of her skin signified that she was a sex worker, she explained that sex workers work is conducted indoors, so their skin is away from the sun; whereas, the majority of people in Hillbrow work in the sun and are dark. The projection and stigma that Confidence carries surrounding her work, location of her work, and her physical appearance all indicate a poignant observation in relation to stigma as an insidious “system”.

Asserting that inner-group affiliations protect the self-concept, Crocker & Major (1989) criticize psychological theories that predict that stigmatized groups have lower self-esteem than non-stigmatized groups. These assumptions can be seen as extensions of the ‘victim’ discourse often associated to ‘marginal’ communities. An example of this is seen in Iketlang’s choice to disclose her HIV status to the group and in her images. In fact, one of Iketlang’s main themes in her images was that of her health status. Although an enormous amount of stigma exists between sex workers and HIV status. Iketlang directly challenged the stigma by placing it at the forefront of her photo story. On the following page, are three very powerful images taken by Iketlang that refer to her health status, and her explanation of how she became infected by HIV. There was another image that she included, but due to the image revealing the client’s identity in an aroused state, we decided not to include it. Sex and thus, pornography, is a part of sex workers lives. Not including the image incited great decent from Iketlang. She argued that she wanted to include the image in the exhibition because the man in the image reminded her of her rapist. Although the picture clearly depicted the man with an erection, Iketlang did not share the same concerns as we did regarding the content of the image and his identity. This is important because it provides insight into how Iketlang wanted to be represented in the story of her images as well as the limitation that she faced in having the final say as to what images would be included that reflected her story. Although an ‘outsider’ ultimately chose to exclude the image, her contestation shows yet another example of the importance of accompanying visual methodologies with interviews and field notes in order to reveal the ‘whole story.’
Images 1-3 above highlight “the story” of Iketlang’s HIV status and treatment. The fourth image in this series that was excluded from the exhibition, would have illustrated the connection between her rape and contraction of HIV. The caption of that image read, “I photographed Tabogo as he reminds me of the guy who raped and infected me with the HIV virus in 1998” (Iketlang, Journal Entry). I could not help but to ponder the reasons why Iketlang insisted on including the image of Tabogo. Was she trying to get revenge on a man that looked like her rapist? Did Tabogo in fact look like her rapist? Or, was he just an innocent bystander in Iketlang’s desire to make it clear to the world that she was angry about what happened to her? Does Iketlang harbor ill feelings towards men? If so, how does Iketlang navigate these feelings, thoughts, and perceptions in her work? Throughout the workshop, Iketlang always smiled and appeared as an eager participant to take pictures and tell her story. She exuded confidence and pride in which she was. I remember thinking to myself, “Wow- she is really something else. She stands tall, looks everyone in the eyes when she speaks. She laughs and smiles, and it all seems genuine. Although I know that she has been through so much in her life, she has a lightness about her that makes all of those around her smile” (Field Notes). Unlike Mimi, Iketlang represented herself in her images by revealing intimate details of her life, and seemed to use this project as not only an opportunity to process the events of her life further, but also to share this process with the public. In contrast, Mimi resisted sharing much about her personal life; rather, she focused her representations on how she wanted others to view her, and how she viewed others. Both of the participants provided rich data to explore the affects of stigma on self (re)presentation.
wanted to show others the struggles that sex workers face; whereas, Mimi criticized sex workers and consciously attempted to separate herself from being viewed as a sex worker.

What has stuck out in my mind ever since I first saw Iketlang’s images and read her captions was her deliberate commitment to share this story about herself. Image number one on page 90, left me speechless. I realized at that moment that this research project was an opportunity for Iketlang to share the injustices of her life. The women were allowed to take the cameras home with them, and it was during this time away from the workshop, that she took this photo. She went so far as to put make-up on her face, create the sign, and ask someone to take the pictures. This process, in and of itself, is incredibly powerful. When I first saw this photo, I was both grateful to Iketlang for being willing to share such intimate aspects of her life, and awe struck by her deliberateness to tell this story to the public. Iketlang’s images were some of the most fascinating material produced during this study. Iketlang was an exception among the participants as she allowed us into her private life unlike anyone else.

Iketlang decided to portray herself as both ‘victim’ and survivor in these images; a theme that will continue to be explored in this section. Iketlang disclosed: (1) that she was raped; and, (2) that she is living with HIV. This disclosure is not common, and is a strong testament to the benefits of Participatory Action Research. Both portraits point to either the acceptance or rejection of stigma, as well as the inherent challenging/refuting of stigma. Iketlang goes further by challenging narrow-minded notions that sex workers cannot be raped, a sentiment consistently reported by the media and in mainstream discourse. In this case, Iketlang uses rape and her HIV status to bring attention to the abusive treatment that sex workers all too often face. The majority of participants tended to shy away from overt expressions and statements about their personal lives in relation to illness. More often than not, their images and captions reflected an abbreviated version of what the image meant to them.

In the methodologies section of this report, I used the following example to explain the process of “title your image”. I would now like to explore it further in the context of Sbu’s interview. Sbu brings forth another element of stigma and sex work as she discloses the inner turmoil that she feels as a Christian sex worker.

![Self Portrait](image)

Title: Hypocrite

There are four main points to discuss regarding the image above: (1) a caption was not included by Sbu to describe why she chose to include this image as her self-portrait, (2) the image itself as a metaphor of reflection that gives birth to Sbu’s decision to leave out a caption, (3) the title that Sbu gave this image, and (4) the powerful insight into self stigma and self (re) presentation that Sbu shared during the interviews.

Sbu titled all of her images without much difficulty; however, she was resistant to title the image above. During the course of this exercise, when Sbu came across this image she would move it to the side. What is
interesting is that not only did Sbu show hesitation to engage with this image, but she also did not provide a caption to this image. Eventually Sbu titled this picture and the narrative that followed her title indicated that Sbu had a personal relationship to how she felt about the image that she wanted to keep out of the public eye. During this part of the interview, Sbu became very emotional as she disclosed what this image meant to her. As we can see from her title, there is a substantial amount of cognitive dissonance that Sbu displayed about herself. She explained that water is supposed to be clean, and that when you look at water, you imagine something pure. She continued to explain that the reflection of her in this image is a metaphor for how others see her and how she sees herself. “When people look at me, they might think that I am good, but inside I am a sinner. This image is a reflection of me on water. This water is dirty like me. I see myself like this… I see myself looking at a reflection of something that is supposed to be clean but is not” (Interview 1). Further inquiry revealed that Sbu was struggling with the shame that she felt as a sex worker, as well as the desire that she has to be a good Christian. In her own words:

If the people at church knew what I did I think that they would tell me that I could not come back to church. I feel like I am always living a double life. My family doesn’t know what I do, and my church friends don’t either. Who am I? I try my best, but God will punish me someday. I can’t hide from him. Sometimes I feel that I am not worthy to be at church because I am a hypocrite. I go to church and hear the preacher and sometimes he says things about the work that I do and I think that he is talking to me and I feel so ashamed. I don’t know what to do but I can’t do anything else. I want to work as a counselor or a social worker but I don’t have the opportunities now. And, I must feed my family. I support so many people, but it’s hard to feel this way (Interview 1).

Sbu’s internal stigma in relation to her religious convictions is obviously causing her great distress. Sbu chose not to reveal this inner struggle in her caption. She remained private and chose what she wanted (and not) to reveal to a public audience. The choice to include this photo reveals that she was one of the audiences to whom she was (re) presenting herself; however, in this case, her audience was private whereas, the public exhibition was public. During the course of our two interviews Sbu referred to this image and struggle often. As a researcher, and as someone who has worked as a counselor, I became aware that the interview space became a place where Sbu felt that she could share her feelings. As the interviews went on, it became more obvious that this format allotted more opportunities for the women to explore thoughts, feelings, emotions, and histories. Below is an excerpt from my field notes that I wrote after this very emotional interview. The excerpt reveals a tension that I felt in my role as researcher, and offers insight into the methodology that I employed. Moreover, it illustrates the sensitive position that both research and participant navigated throughout this study.

My interview with Sbu was intense. As she shared her struggle with me. I vacillated between wanting to let her speak and feeling as though I was over-stepping my boundaries as a researcher. But, how can a researcher that is asking such personal questions decide when a conversation stops? I wanted only to be respectful and allow Sbu the space to share freely; however, I felt like a voyeur in my role. I was not her counselor; I was a researcher seeking to understand representation in migrant women sex workers. I felt honored that Sbu felt that she could speak so freely with me, but I wonder how she feels now? How she feels after this sharing? I realize that my role as a researcher is to gain insight into my study, but then what? Did this process help Sbu? And in the end, what can I possibly say that will improve her situation? Perhaps sex work will become legalized and the stigma associated with it lessened so that feelings like Sbu’s don’t have to be so intense. I believe that safe spaces are a good thing, and that ultimately it was a positive process for Sbu, but right now I am struggling in this role. I offered her tissues when she was crying, but not a hug because I didn’t want to cross some line that might exist. In the end, all I can do is let my humanness connect with another person’s humanness, regardless of the role that I am in. I hope that I did this.
It seems almost absurd to talk about how Sbu chose to (re) present herself to me in this context; yet vital insight into representation can be seen as we unpack the moment, dialogues, and thoughts that both Sbu and I shared. I often found myself wondering if it was “right” to question the reasons why some of the participants were representing themselves, the way that they did. During this interview with Sbu, I felt that her pain was such that I needed to honor it and her rather to analyze it. I found myself more crucial to maintain a boundary of respect, than gathering more data for my study. After all, Sbu felt comfortable to share her struggles with me, would I be doing her a disservice by taking them apart and deciding what belonged where, what was legitimate, and what was important, and what was not?

Prior to the interview, Sbu remained calm and collected throughout the research study. Sbu did not readily share information or conversation during the workshop. Her image selections were consistently powerful and filled with nuances; however, as we see above, her perceived lack of interest was not synonymous with her internal process. In fact, her perceived lack of interest appears to have been a strategy employed by Sbu to remain collected as she navigated painful thoughts and feelings.

The stigma that sex workers face daily directly influences how they represent themselves. A common thread throughout this discussion is how this process of selection is a reflection of how the women wanted to be portrayed. The question remains: Who is the audience? I believe that during this research project there were various audiences, depending on the space and time. During the workshop, participants told stories not shared in the captions and images, and in the narrative interviews, women told stories that were not shared during the workshop. As the situation changed, so too did their self (re) presentations.

I would now like to focus on the use of language as a strategy used in the development, resistance, and/or acceptance of stigma. During this study, women referred to themselves and one another as sex workers; however, there were moments when language around this term became synonymous with the acceptance and/or refusal of stigma. The use of language and othering is also seen in the ways in which the participants aligned (or not) with mainstream discourses. Lety stated, “I am not a whore, I am a sex worker. I use my body and my hands to in order to take care of myself (Interview 2).” Nyangairi (2010) argues that the exchanges between labels are often used as a way to identify, accept and/or cast out stigma. She goes further to explain how some women describe themselves as “whores” as a way to either accept the stereotypes, or as a way to describe another sex worker that they do not like. Use of derogatory language was also evident in how Nigerians were often blamed for the crime and drug dealing in Hillbrow.

Examples of othering were prevalent throughout the study. Monica Mombassa stated, “People who go to church are more humble” (Journal Entry). Shorty addresses herself as an ‘alien’ living in Hillbrow; whereas, Monica Mombassa uses the term ‘foreigner’ to describe herself. Thembile states, “I only do men” as she describes the nature of her work. Another way in which othering occurred is seen in the choice to enter sex work. Confidence states, Cleaning houses, toilets, and the street. They don’t make any money. I am a sex worker because I can make money and I can live how I want and pay rent when I want. If I want to sleep one day I can. If I want to work I can. I make money for my son and that is all that matters (Interview 2).

The process of othering is central to self (re) presentation. As individuals (re) present themselves, an inner process of separating/understanding us and them, occurs. Non-stigmatized people represent themselves in
relation to those who are stigmatized. The ‘normal’ are defined as such simply due to the characteristics
that society has deemed appropriate; therefore, they are represented and (re) present themselves as
‘normal’. Perceptions of ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ influence how one self (re) presents given a particular
moment. For example, I might chose to represent myself as an educated woman in one moment, and
negate that completely in another moment simply because I do not want to be associated as such by my
audience. A symbiotic process between understanding the social norms at a given time and the individual’s
psychosocial placement within those norms gives rise to a fluid representation that either aligns or rebuts the
norms. I am this because I am not that. I am not that because I am this. When shedding light on the affects
of stigma, it is important to understand this process in order to truly unpack self (re) presentation of migrant
women sex workers. Surely, the participants do not feel that their only identity is that of a sex worker;
however, when this identity is at the center of a given moment, each person will navigate the situation
accordingly.
7.5 Participatory Research Methods/Visual Methodologies

This section of the analysis/discussion will spotlight the benefits of implementing innovative research methods in social science research. I will do so by discussing the four main areas that were revealed during this study: (1) the use of images as prompts into narrative inquiry (2) the sequential reflection and action by all participants, (3) the collaborative effort in research with the participants, rather than on them, and (4) the focus on a local setting. I will share personal and participant reflections, as well as explore literatures that advocate for innovative methods in research. I will also engage with literatures that criticize this methodology.

7.5.1 Interviews + Images = extraordinary findings: How images were used during the interviews.

In this section, I will guide the reader through some of the strategies that I used when working with images as an entry point into narrative discussions. I will provide a couple of examples in order to highlight the process that led to incredibly rich data.

During the interviews I used the images as a way to probe deeper into the lives, thoughts and feelings of the participants by asking the participants to engage with their photos. As I was preparing to conduct this final stage of the research I began to strategize ways in which I could use the images as a tool to gain a deeper insight into the lives of migrant women sex workers. Although the images and captions, in and of themselves, served as powerful insight, I wanted more. I strove to use the images with captions as a springboard into their lives and stories.

7.4.2 “Title Your Picture”: An exercise that interrogated the images.

The first exercise that I did with each of the five women was what I called, “Title Your Picture”. During this process, I presented the research participants with a copy of the ten photos that they chose, along with their self-portrait. I asked them to title each picture. At times, there was some confusion on the part of the research participant regarding what I meant by “title your picture”. During these times, I used the example of a book and how every book has a title. This seemed to clear any confusion.

Once the pictures were given to them, they proceeded to tell me what the title for each image was, and I wrote the titles on the back of the images. At times, this process revealed contradictions between their captions and stories; other times, the titles seemed merely to summarize what the captions were saying. One of the most interesting aspects of this process was watching how the women chose what pictures to title first, and which to avoid and/or leave for the end of the exercise. For all of the women, they chose their self-portrait as the last image to title. The only time that the participants were asked to take a picture of themselves was during the self-portrait exercise. We asked women to consider how they wanted to represent themselves (e.g. Did they want to remain anonymous?; Was there something/someone that they wanted to share with the public?; Was there something about themselves that they wanted the public to know about them?). During this exercise, women were taught how to hide their identities in the images if they wanted. I was particularly interested in this aspect of the workshop as I felt that this process lent itself to great insight into how the women wanted to portray themselves. Although all of the images combined were a portrayal of their stories, hence themselves to some degree, the self-portraits were directly
representing them on a more personal level. During the “Title Your Image” exercise, many of the first images that were titled were those of the city of Hillbrow, and how the City feels or looks. In addition, pictures of partners were usually titled without any indication of relationship status. For example, Thembile titled the picture of her husband as “Advice” and rarely made mention of him as her husband. The consistent hesitation that each woman appeared to experience as they titled their self-portrait reveals a level of intimacy that was higher than the rest of the images. In this case, we can contemplate their perceived struggle in titling these images as “asking too much”. The participants were not required to provide captions to describe their self-portraits; therefore, the exercise was possibly intruding in their private experience of the image. As described on page 93, Sbu’s self-portrait was dense with intimate and personal struggles that she might have preferred to keep to herself.

Mimi, a Zimbabwean sex worker that has lived and worked in Hillbrow for over five years, chose a self-portrait of herself that clearly reveals her identity. During this exercise, Mimi shared that her family and friends do not know what she does for a living, yet she chose a picture of herself that clearly showed her face. I asked her why she chose this picture for public exhibition if her family and friends did not know what she did for work. After a moment of panic because the pictures were being sent to the printer that day, we were able to resolve this important concern. After all, if Mimi wanted to remain anonymous and her profession hidden, why did she choose that picture that so clearly identified her? Mimi stated that she was confused and did not realize that the exhibition was going to be public; nonetheless, the research team and MPW staff made it a point to reiterate on a daily basis that the final images would culminate in a public exhibition. In this case, the exercise allowed for a deeper discussion into her life and history that inadvertently revealed the danger of having her image made public. I am happy to say that the image was pulled from printing just in time, and Mimi’s identity remained anonymous.

On the following page, is an example of how the exercise, “Title You Image” revealed deeper insights into the lives, thoughts, and feelings of the photographer.

Caption: This is how some of the homeless people live in Hillbrow. This picture was taken on Kotze Street, one of the streets with a lot of homeless people.

Title: Sleeping On The Streets For One Day

©Sbu

Although the caption in this image seems to reveal Sbu’s interest in homeless issues, what was revealed during the “Title Your Picture” exercise was that she spent a night on the streets, which had a major impact on her life. Sbu stated, “One night I had no money and I had to sleep outside on the streets. I was so scared and it hurt me. It impacted me. I felt like I was such a failure. I came to Johannesburg for a better life, and I had to sleep on the streets” (Interview 1).

Once again, what we see is that Sbu’s images and the captions do not reflect the entirety of what the picture means to her and why she chose it. The captions merely reflect one aspect about the image and how she
felt. Ultimately, although the use of visual methodologies with captions is incredibly powerful, this process must be followed up with narrative interviews in order to capture the true meaning and intentions behind the images.

In this section, I have explained how I used the “Title Your Picture” exercise. I provided examples of the exercise for the reader by showing that multiple truths exist at the same time when working with human subjects, images and emotions. By asking participants to title their images, I was able to gain a deeper insight into their thoughts and feelings. Essentially, I engaged the research participants in the images by asking them to tell me more about them via the “Title Your Picture” exercise. This showed us that the captions did not always reveal the complete story behind the image. Captions are limited, and many chose images and captions that served their purpose and how they wanted to self (re) present. In the case of Sbu, none of the captions above revealed the intimate and personal details that she shared with me during the interview. One can begin to see how this process of images, captions, interviews and observations can work together to effectively produce data richer than any other methodology could hope to acquire.

I will now discuss the other exercise that I did during the interview phase of this study: a ranking exercise.

7.5.3 **Rank ‘em: How ranking the images and interviewing goes hand in hand.**

During the course of this research study, I met with photographers (e.g. Mathew Baloyi), social science researchers (Dr. Emilie Venables and Dr. Joanna Vearey), and professors (Dr. Catherine Duncan) that had experience in the use of images for the purpose of exploring social phenomena. Throughout these meetings, I was encouraged to be creative with the use of the images as a source in which to delve into the open-ended interviews. To that avail, I decided that I would employ a ranking exercise. Participants were asked to perform several tasks (for example, choose five images that you feel capture who you are best), and then they were asked to rank the photographs from most important to least. Once again, this process allowed an entry point into discussions that highlighted thoughts, feelings and perceptions that otherwise would not have been revealed in the study. I will share two examples of this process so that the reader can gain an understanding of the exercise, and some of the intricacies that this process revealed.

The following page, is an example of this exercise conducted by Mimi where she was asked to chose five images that she felt best captured her, and then to rank these images from most important to least important. I have included her captions alongside the images as they help the reader to understand what the intention behind the image was for the photographer. A brief discussion follows.
Pick the pictures that capture you best. Please rank them from most important too least important.

1. Nigerians posing as street vendors, but they are selling drugs. In this picture, I wanted to show that there is a lot of drug dealing going on in Hillbrow. It portrays a bad picture on the part of Hillbrow.

2. This picture portrays prostitution as rampant in Hillbrow. It is not healthy to find condoms on the street because kids might use them as balloons. On the other hand, it shows that people are using condoms as a way of protecting themselves against sexual diseases.

3. A young woman is enjoying her cigarette during her lunch break. Smoking is hazardous to health, not to her alone, but to the customers that walks by as well. I wanted to raise awareness that if people smoke they should not do it in public spaces.

4. Jane Gumbo is a beauty therapist in Hillbrow. She owns a salon and she is from Zimbabwe. I took this picture because I wanted to show that many foreigners own places in foreign lands. Not all foreigners are sex workers.

5. An old lady selling her wares along Banket street in Hillbrow. There is a wall filled with stickers behind her advertising accommodation in Hillbrow. I wanted to show that there are places for rent in Hillbrow, and that there is an accommodation crisis in Hillbrow. This type of advertisement destroys the city’s image.
The duality, and often contradictory, meanings of Mimi’s images was a common observation that I made throughout the workshop and interviews. Mimi would often explain two versions of her photos. The first would usually be a blanket statement with a moralistic undertone; the second, version usually included more personal information which often challenged the original explanation.

Mimi’s first image is that of “Nigerian men selling drugs”. When I asked Mimi why this image was important to her, she stated, “One day my friend died because she bought some weed from these guys, but they laced it with something that killed her.” In this case, we see how the images have deeper meanings, but they are overshadowed and watered down in the caption, with a statement that is void of personal intimacy. Image number two is of a condom on the street. Mimi stated that she chose this image second because, “I am a sex worker and therefore it [the condom] is directly a part of my world” (Interview 1). Although Mimi explained the image nonchalantly, there is a significant amount of information that one can analyze. Firstly, Mimi refers to condoms as a part of her work reality, but ignores the image of the street as a place where she stated, “she walks on sometimes for work” (ibid). Although Mimi conducts the bulk of her work in brothels, she admitted to walking on the streets searching for clients, and that this condom reminded her of the good/bad things about safe sex. She explained that condoms should not be littered on the sidewalk because kids can use them as balloons and “this is not sanitary”(ibid). However, almost in the same breath she stated, “…but I like to know that condoms are being used because it is important for safe sex. I just don’t think that condoms need to be thrown on the sidewalk showing everyone your business” (ibid). Another example of Mimi’s didactic representations is seen in the caption, “Prostitution is rampant in Hillbrow” (Caption, Image 2). Here she evokes judgmental words when she explains the use of condoms and sex work, yet she, herself, is a sex worker that believes condoms should be used.

The third image is of a woman smoking. When I questioned Mimi about this photo she responded, “Smoking is bad for your health.” I interpreted the placement of this image and the content to represent her views on sex work, rather than on the dangers of smoking. In fact, smoking in public became a metaphor for conducting sex work in public spaces, such as the sidewalk where the used condom was laying on the street. Mimi’s choice of words can be further analyzed as she chose to use the word “customer” rather than “pedestrians” or “people” when she criticizes the woman in the image smoking. Mimi’s response to my query regarding the importance of selecting this image as one of the five that “capture you best” was fascinating. She responded, “I feel that I am someone that is trying to do good. I don’t want Nigerians to ruin my life like they did my friend. And, I don’t want to been seen as someone who works and leaves her dirty laundry on the ground. And, I think that people need to be considerate of how other people feel if they are smoking outside subjecting others to their bad habits” (Interview 1). Out of the five images that Mimi selected for this exercise, all but one, have negative and judgmental undertones. Why she chose these images as the ones that represent her best can be better understood by looking at the researchers presence during the exercise. As mentioned previously, Mimi was the one participant who consistently seemed more interested in how we, the research team and MPW staff, represented her than how she wanted to present herself. Although a fine line exists between the interpretations, a distinction can be better understood by comparing Mimi to another participant. Mimi often selected images that criticized others and the stereotypical idea of good versus bad. On the other hand, Thembile often shared personal stories of herself and placed greater importance on how she felt about her family, husband, and work experiences. In this cases, Mimi is presenting herself as someone who she thinks is acceptable by aligning herself with mainstream discourse around health/illness, dirty/clean, acceptable/unacceptable behavior; whereas,
Thembile is presenting herself as a mother who cares for her family and has suffered great hardship as a
sex worker, yet strives to be positive in light of her life struggles. The two are motivated by altering inner self
(re) presentations. Mimi cares more acutely about the status quo; whereas, Thembile seems more
concerned about telling her story.

In image number four, Mimi reveals her discomfort to equate foreigners with sex work. When I asked her
why this distinction was significant she said, “As long as South Africans think that all Zimbabweans are sex
workers, the xenophobic violence will never end. I am a sex worker but I don’t want all Zimbabwean women
to be blamed for the work that I do. I do this but one day I will do something else. Maybe I will be a
hairdresser. This is my dream”. Placing this picture below the woman smoking can either reveal that that
Mimi did not understand this exercise, or it can reveal an intricacy into how she wants to be represented.
Perhaps Mimi wants the world to see her as someone who does not smoke, as someone who knows
foreigners that are not sex workers. The final image Mimi chose that “captured her best” was an image of a
woman sitting in front of a wall that was covered in advertisement. She stated, “I don’t like to see how the
walls are so dirty in Hillbrow. My family doesn’t know that I live here because this place is considered home
to criminals and sex workers. If the City cleaned up the place maybe more people would think differently
about Hillbrow”. Although Mimi alludes to her dislike of the vandalism in her caption, she neglects to state
the possible deeper reasons why she does not like the walls covered in advertisement. She might like
Hillbrow to be cleaner so that its image is improved, therein, reducing the possibility of revealing her work by
the stigma associated with Hillbrow as a space.

In this example, we can see a few themes revealing themselves. We see the potential impact that the
presence of the researcher might have on how participants respond to questions, in the case of Mimi, the
possibility that she was trying to impress me can explain her selection of images in an exercise that I asked
her to complete. It appears that Mimi chose these pictures for deeper reasons than that which the captions
reveal. This process is the crux of this research. By doing this, Mimi is stating how she wants to be
perceived and what message she wants ‘others’ to know about her. Once again, the images served as a
tool to engage the research participant and researcher in a deeper and more nuanced way. Interviewing
participants revealed contradictions and intricacies that would otherwise not have been recorded. The
physical space for captions was limited which may be why there were often deeper and opposing
explanations of the images during the workshop and interviews.

Another example of this ranking exercise is presented on the following page. Lety, a migrant woman from
Zimbabwe that has lived and sold sex in Hillbrow for over five years, was asked to chose five pictures that
told her story best, and then rank them from best to least.
Pick the pictures that tell your story best. Please rank them from most important to least important.

1. It’s easy to give up in life.

2. South Africa is full of opportunities. Now I am in charge of my life, and in control of my life. I am using my hands and mind. These are the main ingredients for my dreams and aspirations.

3. Through Sisonke I am connecting with interesting projects that are close to my heart. HIV outreach projects and Women’s Support Groups in Hillbrow.

4. Siyabanga is a guard at the Twilight Children’s Shelter in Hillbrow. This image reminds me of how hard it was for me to feel safe and to trust the City.
During the editing phase of this project, participants were asked to select the ten images that they felt best told their story, and one self-portrait that would be used to “identify” them as the photographer. Participants were informed that their selected images and captions would be used for the public exhibition. As we can see from the images above, Lety’s face and identity are clearly revealed in the images. Lety was one of only two women who stated that their families and friends knew about their involvement in sex work; thus, exposing their identities to the public was not a concern.

What is particularly interesting in the case of Lety, is that she chose to include only ten images in total to be displayed in the exhibition, with four of the images being photographs that she took during the ‘self portrait’ exercise. It is clear that one of Lety’s main themes in her collection of images is that of the self, of her, directly in front of the camera in various locations throughout the city. We see the opposite in Mimi’s images. It seemed as though Mimi was more focused on the external experiences/interpretations/representations of the City, than on the internal.

The first photograph that Lety chose during this exercise was titled, “It’s not easy to cross the border when you don’t have papers”. Her caption read, “It’s easy to give up in life”. Both statements reflect the migration process that many Zimbabweans face as they struggle to gain entrance into South Africa. When I asked Lety why she chose this image, she stated, “Although I did not have to cross over barbed wire, many people do. I wanted to show that it’s not easy. That many people suffer and die trying to get into South Africa. This picture is first because I am from Zimbabwe and I have the opportunity to show how people suffer during this project, and raise awareness (Interview 1). Through the images that Lety selected we see two main things: (1) that she chose three out of four of her ‘self portraits’ during this exercise; therefore, placing herself at the center of her story, and (2) that she has chosen to represent herself as in relation to the experiences that she has faced as a migrant woman sex worker from Zimbabwe. When I asked Lety why she selected image number four titled, “Security in Hillbrow,” she replied, “Because when I first came to Hillbrow I was afraid. I was alone and I was not comfortable with the security in the City. I chose this picture because I have had struggles with security, and many Zimbabweans struggle with security. This man is behind the door looking out. Sometimes I felt like that was me” (ibid). Lety did not share the details surrounding her experiences with security (or lack thereof), but it is evident from this image and statement that there exists an internal/external struggle, of feeling and being safe in Hillbrow.

Her final image delves into her livelihood as a sex worker. Although this is not evident from her caption, during the interview she spoke of the woman in this image and stated, “This woman is working hard with her hands. She might not make much money but she is doing good work. She is honest and she is good.
Sometimes I feel that I should be doing work like this - with my hands. Sometimes I think that the work that I do is not good. Sometimes I think that I should work as a domestic, or something like that; but I don’t think that I can do that work. I won’t make enough money.” However, in image number two, Lety describes herself as someone who works with her hands and mind; therefore, her choice of words to describe her work versus that of the women in image one are not consistent, and reveal an internal stigma associated with her profession. The dissonance that she shares regarding her work shows that she is making a choice to work in sex work. Lety is sharing her agency as she ponders the efficacy of what she does for a living. This is important to note for three reasons: (1) it challenges abolitionist discourse that believes that all women in the sex industry are victims, (2) it highlights one of the reasons why she has chosen to engage in sex work, the ability to make money, and (3) it highlights a gendered look at work.

7.6 Conclusion

Thus far, I have explained the theory behind Participatory Action Research (PAR). I have outlined how I conducted my research, and I have provided examples that bring to life the process of using the images as entry-points into narrative inquiry during the interviews. According to Danzig (2007), narrative inquiry is an overarching category that includes: personal accounts, narrative interviews, life stories and auto/biographies (p. 118). In this study, I was interested in all of these sub-categories. Listening to their personal accounts and life stories allowed me to compare/contrast them with the images and captions that they chose during the participatory photo project. I was interested in their trajectories into the City of Hillbrow and sex work, their livelihood strategies, their perceptions and thoughts of life as a migrant woman, and their life as a migrant woman sex worker. In essence, I was interested in their psychosocial/spiritual experience(s) of the world and their lives.

Throughout the research, I felt that the interview process reflected the PAR principles as it offered the women another opportunity to voice their story and reflect on their lives. Kiguwa (2006) states, “The act of recounting one’s personal experience provides a useful way to represent oneself, it enables one to reflect and make sense of these experiences” (p. 15). Although this study focused specifically on migrant women who sell sex for work, it also relied on the participation of a number of ‘secondary participants’: PDP students, MPW staff, the research team. Thus, the total participant pool in this study extended far beyond the eleven migrant women. During informal interviews with the PDP students and MPW staff, they all felt that this process was a positive experience that enriched their personal and professional lives. Strangers were able to form relationships, and individuals were able to reflect and challenge some of the thoughts and perceptions that occupy our minds and hearts. Regardless of the depth of growth that each participant experienced, it was the intention, from beginning to end, that all primary and secondary participants would benefit; to this end, the study was a success.

This study has highlighted that (1) research on representation is an enormous challenge as it requires the researcher be put in the center of the analysis findings, (2) that self (re) presentation is relevant to context and audience (3) the themes pulled from the study are interlaced and nuances of experience are mostly context specific, and (4) the use of visual methodologies is a viable tool when working with hard to reach populations, such as migrant women who sell sex. Although this research has surfaced a series of inherent challenges, this study has shed light on issues that impact marginalized communities as a whole by bringing to light the intricate complexities of (re) presentation in migrant women who sell sex in Hillbrow.
8. Study Limitations

8.1 The collaborative pinwheel: Multiple agencies/organizations in one research study.

Although this research project would not have been made possible without the partnership of Market Photo Workshop, the University of the Witwatersrand, FMSP, and Sisonke Sex Worker Movement, there were times that the missions and focus of each partner had to be negotiated due to different focuses and frameworks. Market Photo Workshop is an art school that trains students in area of photography; whereas, FMSP is an academic organization that focuses on social research. At times, I felt that the workshop was geared more towards photographic technique and style, than content. The different approaches became evident during the editing phase when artistic philosophies contended with the social science research focus. As MPW staff developed the posters for the images that would be displayed in the exhibition, discussion around reducing the number of images in order to fit on one poster and be visually appealing contended with the research teams belief that we, the ‘staff’, did not have authority to chose which images would be included and which would not. In the end, MPW selected eight images, excluding two from the final images selected by the participants. Foresight on the part of MPW would have prevented this from happening and/or would have given the research participants ample time to decide for themselves which images to exclude. After reviewing the final images selected by MPW I am certain that some of the images omitted/selected might have been different had the women been given the opportunity to choose for themselves.

8.2 Who decides who gets to participate, part. 1? Partnering up PDP students with migrant women sex workers.

One of the most fascinating aspects of this research project was the partnering of PDP students with migrant women sex workers. In fact, this process could have been a research study in and of itself. Bringing students and subjects together lends itself to a fascinating research study. However, for the purpose of this report, there were a few possible limitations that derived from this scenario. Although there was an internal application process at MPW as to what PDP students would participate in this participatory photo project, the FMSP research team was not at the table during the final selection of participants. The quality of PDP students selected was impressive; however, preparation of the students by the research team would have allowed us to iron out some of the inherent stereotypes, biases, and struggles of working with a population such as migrant women sex workers. As a research team, we did not know how students felt about the work that they would be doing with the women, as well as their level of comfort working in Hillbrow. Although there appeared to be no significant discomfort between the “Hillbrow participants” and the “student participants,” I think, in the future studies, it would behoove the research team to meet and discuss any potential challenges, expectations, and content of the research beforehand with the students.

8.3 Who decides who gets to participate, part. 2? The selection process that determined which migrant women sex workers would participate in this study.

The recruitment of the eleven migrant sex workers was done primarily through the support of Sisonke Sex Worker Movement staff; therefore, given the nature of their program, there were inherent biases as to who
would be invited to participate in this study. Although parameters of inclusion/exclusion were developed by the research staff in an attempt to recruit participants that had not been involved in previous studies (see figure 3, pg. 83) there are obvious limitations when using solely one method in recruitment. One possible way that this could have been improved would have been to use a snowball sampling\(^{42}\). In other words, Sisonke could have identified half of the participants and then through a snowball sampling the other half of the participants would have been identified. This would limit the amount of allegiance to Sisonke by research participants, as well as provide for a broader sample of migrant women sex workers. Which brings me to my next point. All of the migrant women sex workers at the time of this study worked in brothels; therefore, this study lacks a significant voice of street based sex workers.

8.4 What about street based workers? The limitation of working solely with brothel based sex workers.

Since this study was interested in looking at the impact of urban space and (re)presentation of migrant women who sell sex in Hillbrow, it would have been appropriate and important to include street based sex workers in the study. Although many of the participants in this study, at one time or another, were street based sex workers, none of them were working on the street at the time of the study. A different insight into urban space and lives of migrant woman sex workers, would have been enriched had the study incorporated migrant women street workers. The snowball sampling technique could have possibly identified this group of women; thereby, alleviating both limitations mentioned.

8.5 More time would have been better: The limitations of time in research looking at (re) presentation.

This study provides an insight into (re) presentation of migrant women sex workers; however, more time would have allowed for additional interviews and deeper analysis.

8.6 Who decides what is representation?: The limitations of social research on representation.

As discussed at the beginning of this report, there are inherent challenges when researching representation. To ignore the role that the researcher plays in research centered on representation, is to limit the research findings. According to Palmary (2006) the importance of scrutinizing your position as a researcher throughout the study is pivotal and necessary. Palmary goes further by arguing that the researcher must remain conscious of how their identities are hidden or brought into the open through the research process (Palmary, 2006 in Nyangairi, 2010). In essence, the researcher is part of the context, the setting and the culture that they are trying to understand. Liamputong (2006) argues that reflexivity must be central to qualitative research findings, and that the researcher must participate in a rigorous process of self-analysis in relation to thoughts, feelings, intentions and biases. I have remained committed to this process from the inception of the study, and have been mindful of the importance of this process during my data analysis.

\(^{42}\)Snowball sampling is a technique for developing a research sample where existing study subjects recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances. Thus the sample group appears to grow like a rolling snowball (Kemper et al (2003)).
8.8 Can you please translate?: The limitations of language and translation.

One of the requirements for participation in this study was that everyone spoke English. Although all of the women spoke English, some better than others, English was not anyone’s first language; therefore, at times during the workshop, African languages were used in order to make a point clear. Invariably, this leads to a limitation when researching representation. From personal experience, I understand the inherent challenges to translation, as well as the inability to express in a non-native language. Nyangairi (2010), a Shona speaking researcher, writes extensively on the challenges she faced when she had to translate from Shona to English.

In some instances, I could not find English words that provided the same meaning as the Shona equivalents I was trying to translate, thus in the process of translation, some of the meaning and intensity of what was being said got lost.

This is the most poignant limitation that I found during the course of this study. Not because I did not have translators, but because I understood that the process of translation is never a complete replica of the emotion and nuance that is shared. Conducting research on representation, made this limitation ever more obvious. I was made particularly aware of this limitation during the interview phase of this study. Women, who spoke English at a higher level, shared more during the interviews; consequently, the content of these interviews was richer than with those whose English skills were more limited. The process of analyzing the data became more challenging because I was painfully aware of the language limitations in my data. I did not want to “cut the tongue” of the non-native English speakers by substituting words or feelings (Behar, 2003, Nyangairi, 2010); however, this process was incredibly challenging. In fact, it struck a very personal chord. I did not want to assume, replace, translate, or think that I knew what was being said. As a result, I limited the depth of questions that I asked during the interviews and analyzed the data that I felt was generated with at least amount of need to translate as possible. When research participants looked confused or lacked clarity during the interview process, I re-framed the question, provided examples, and offered alternative questions to answer that I felt were easier concepts to understand.

Once again, I committed myself to reflexivity during this process and have attempted to provide the most complete analysis within this significantly challenging limitation.
9. Conclusion

The primary question that this study sought to explore was how migrant women who sell sex represent themselves. This study exposed multiple factors when attempting to understand the experiences of migrants, women and sex workers. Gender inequality, systems of violence, and stigma were central themes throughout this study. How the women navigated their lives within these themes was relative to each individual’s desire/intent to express how they wanted to be (re) presented. This study revealed that multiple self-representations exist, and that self-representations are relative to environment, context and audience. Moreover, in order to truly understand and explore the varying nuances of how these women represent themselves, their trajectories and experiences of sex work must include historical, political, and cultural realities of urban space where they reside.

There is an abundance of research that focuses on migrant women; however, literature on migrant women sex workers is limited and tends to rely heavily on discourses focused on exploitation; consequently, it often portrays women as passive participants or as individuals without agency (Kihato, 2007, Palmary 2005, 2006, Richter 2009a, 2009b). Furthermore, studies that address migrant women who sell sex tend to be focused on the binary relationships between good/bad (Kihato, 2007, Nyangairi, 2010). In regards to sex workers research, the majority of the literature comes from the West; therefore, this study did two primary things: (1) added to current literature on migrant women who sell sex and (2) added to a lacking, and neglected, body of literature on migrant women who sell sex in Africa, specifically migrant women sex workers living in inner-city Johannesburg, South Africa.

According to Gaillard (1984), representation and how we perceive ourselves exists as an attempt to understand and be understood by our environment. If this is the case, then what were the photographers attempting to understand, and how did they want to be understood? How did the women want to be represented as they shared their stories about Hillbrow, migration, and sex work? Moreover, is representation even appropriate to ponder during moments of sharing, and is this process of wondering what they want others to see, diluting the sincerity and humanness of interpersonal exchange? I argue that these questions are almost impossible to answer. Their representations fluctuated and were often dependent on whom they were speaking to and what the main point of the conversation was. I contend that a corollary relationship between marco and micro systems interact with one another in order to make sense of the world. Dyer (1993) asserts, “How a group is represented, presented over and over again in cultural forms, is taken as representative of that group. How that group is represented in the sense of spoken for and on behalf of… these all have to do with how members of these groups see themselves and others like themselves, how they see their places in society, their rights to a society claims to ensure its citizenry” (p. 2). I argue that in order to examine self- (re) presentation, larger systems of power must be interrogated, examined, and then linked to how groups and individuals are self-representing. It was through my engagement with literature that I described the need for context and for the “individual voice” to be heard in studies that seek to engage with issues of self-representation.

Throughout the workshop and interviews, I realized the importance of context that needed to be applied as I overheard, and partook, in conversations/descriptions of their work, spaces, and feelings. Intuitively, I understood that multiple realities could co-exist at the same time; however, for the purpose of this study, I often found myself perplexed by how to engage in the issue of representation of migrant women sex workers. Although a central aspect of the methodology for this study allowed the research participants to
analyze their own lives, at times, I have felt reluctant to analyze their experiences/representations; I felt an internal dissonance that resonated along the lines of feeling as though I was a voyeur, attempting to explain a ‘reality’ in which I am inept. These sentiments have echoed throughout the workshop and the writing of this report. I often wondered if it was fair/legitimate that outsiders analyze their lives; however, I believe that this internal scrutiny has allowed me to comprehend the process of social research deeper, and in turn, this reflexivity has enriched the data findings of this report.

The secondary objective that this study sought to answer was how urban space influences the self-representation of migrant women who sell sex. This study provides evidence that inner city Johannesburg, specifically Hillbrow, played a central role in how the women depicted their stories. The descriptions of Hillbrow vacillated from a safe place to a dangerous unhealthy place. The majority of the participants’ migration histories and sex work trajectories are directly linked to the urban space of Hillbrow through their first point of entry into the City and, as their introduction into sex work. Furthermore, participants altered their initial depictions and stories of Hillbrow, especially during the last phase of the workshop. When participants selected their final images for the exhibition, some chose to portray Hillbrow in a kinder light than they had expressed throughout the workshop.

A significant amount of literature addressing urban space and migrant identity in Africa shows that a greater understanding of the complexities of both migrants and space must be addressed in order to understand urban realities (Dryden-Peterson, 2006, Grabska, 2006, Landau, 2006; 2009, Vearey, 2010a, 2010b, Vearey et al. 2010). The majority of migration studies literature is centered on the measurement of costs and benefits at the regional, national, community, and individual levels (e.g., Adepoju, 2006, Bakewell, 2009, Boswell, 2007, Campbell, 2006, Castles, 2000, Dryden-Peterson, 2006, Hollifield, 2007, Landau et. al, 2009, Levy, 2005, Martin, 2001, Misago, 2005, Polzer, 2007, Sen, 1981). Although this literature is imperative in order to understand and unpack the realities of migration, such a focus has typically left scholars overlooking the active role that women play in migration (Palmary, 2010). While looking at migration trends into urban areas, both within a South African context and globally, I described the importance of understanding the citizenry that lives in these urban geographies via the lens of migrant women who sell sex and live in inner city Johannesburg.

Although there is a significant amount of literature on urban space and representation (Campbell, 2006, Landau, 2009), a gap exists in the literature specific to how space and representation interact with one another in relation to migrant women sex workers. In this study, I examined these issues by looking at the histories, trajectories and (re) presentations of migrant women sex workers as inhabitants of a ‘hidden space’ (Vearey, 2010a). This research focused specifically in Hillbrow, as an inner-city space in Johannesburg; and, as a result, this study can provide insight to urban planners, programmers, social science researchers, and policy makers interested in finding out more about the population that lives in inner-city Johannesburg.

The final question that this study sought to determine was whether the use of Participatory Action Research rooted in visual methodologies is a viable method for collecting data in social science research. This study showed that although there are a myriad of challenges to using visual methodologies, the extraordinary depth of insight into the lives of the women would not have been possible using other conventional methodologies. The rich data collected from this study is a direct testimony to the efficacy of visual
methodologies, particularly when researching ‘hard to reach’ groups of people living in dynamic and ever-changing urban landscapes. The heart and soul of this study allowed the research participants to actively participate in the research in order for ‘their’ voices to be heard thereby, forging new ground in sex work/sex worker research. The objective of this study was not only to increase the stock of knowledge about this diverse ‘group’ of people, but also to allow the research participants to choose the story that they wanted to share via photographs, interviews, and journal entries.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) as an epistemological framework promotes critical engagement with marginalized communities as a means to open up alternative routes for exploring issues of importance in the social sciences (Bhana, 1999, Baum et. al, 2006, DeKoning et. al, 1996). My commitment to work from the ‘bottom up’ rather than from the ‘top down’ led me to this particular methodology. I believe that knowledge of the social world in which we live and the human experience of this world can best be obtained through research participation engagement. The PAR model, in the case of this study, aimed to explore the deeper meanings and realities behind identity and self-(re)presentation. By allowing participants to actively engage in the research, they achieved a sense of empowerment, knowledge and authenticity as they explored issues surrounding their individual lives. Bhana (1999) highlights the effectiveness of PAR by stating how this methodology allows for, “the structural transformation and the improvement over a broad front of the lives of all those involved” (p. 235).

It is impossible- I argue- to engage in the complexity of urban spaces, such as Hillbrow, without actively engaging the participants in the research. In order to gain insight into the lives of migrant women sex workers research must allow ample room for their voices to be shared, seen and heard. Furthermore, in order to gain an understanding of the complexities, research must focus on the experiences of the urban residents, their trajectories into these spaces, and their livelihood strategies. This model allowed the researcher and research participant to co-exist on a equal level; consequently, this format encouraged the participants to see themselves as being able to make a difference and being worthy of voicing their opinions (Bhana, 1999). Exploring the experiences of urban residents in a participatory, visual way can bring different urban realities to the attention of a wide range of urban stakeholders, including researchers, public health programmers and city officials. It was clear that this model offered the research participants, including myself, the opportunity to transform and grow; however, although this process is a powerful tool, there are important limitations when choosing this method for research.

Parker (2000) argues that innovative research methods are necessary in order for public health officials to better understand the contextual variables and local needs present in a particular community, and these methods are better equipped to provide context relevant interventions and assistance. Vearey (2010a) uses a participatory photo project to engage with individuals in Johannesburg as she examines public health access and delivery systems of the City. One of the most interesting findings that Vearey discovered during the participatory photo project was that some people intentionally remain invisible or ‘hidden’ from the City. Mahab (2003) explains how a participatory research project conducted in Seattle, WA allowed sex workers from diverse arenas of the sex industry the opportunity to discuss experiences with one another; thus, revealing a host of information that enriched her study. Mahab also notes that the research-participant roles were often fluid, obscure, and minimally defined (p. 625). She further explains how the power relationships, institutionalized and societal, gave rise to tensions that at times, made the research study difficult, albeit interesting. Although I can relate to some of Mahab’s observations regarding issues of power, this study did
not reveal them as poignantly as Mahab explained. One of the main differences between this study and the one that Mahab conducted is that this participatory photo project had a facilitator that led the workshop, as well as student facilitators that accompanied the women as they photographed images in the City. I was allowed to observe, ask questions, and reflect on the process from ‘behind the scenes’. I formed relationships with the women over the course of the workshop; however, my role was minimal during the workshop phase of taking and editing images. I became more ‘active’ during the interview phase of the study; by then, the women and I had already formed a basic relationship. I believe that it is necessary to unpack the inherent systems of power in research-participant relationships, regardless of methodology. This study required a more aggressive investigation of these systems due to the studies focus on representation.

This research study discovered a variance of experiences, in migrant women who sell sex. The participants addressed areas of stigma, structural violence, abuse, coping strategies, migration histories, and trajectories into sex work that were relevant to them and the urban space in which they live. This study can assist policy makers and urban stakeholders by providing them with an insight into the experiences of the participants. Although the findings in this study might not be entirely replicable, there are inherent themes that are shared across the globe amongst ‘marginal’ communities; therefore, this study should be seen as an example of the diverse intersections and unique experiences that individuals navigate in their lives. The women in this research study exposed us to ways in which they accept/reject stereotypes, their livelihood strategies and coping mechanisms, their dreams/aspirations, their experiences in Hillbrow, their tragedies with the police, and their ‘voice’ which ultimately allowed them to (re) present themselves as they wanted. This research also provided students an opportunity to interact with a highly stigmatized group of people. This process, in and of itself, allowed transformation and growth to occur. Observation and informal interviews revealed that a shift from “them” to “us” occurred; thereby, lessening indignant, conscious/unconscious feelings and perception, regarding a marginalized group of people.

Below are some vignettes that shed light on some of the perceptions and thoughts during the participatory photo project.

It is important to tell my story because it’s my life. This way I can think about my life and I can share my story with someone (Mimi, Interview 2)

It helped people in photography. Yeah, like people in the Sowetan and the Daily Sun. It helps the students become better journalists (Confidence, Interview 1).

When I tell my story I am telling my story with my photo. Like when I was telling the story of how people are trying to rob me, I can show the picture of the place and inside me. I know that story. I can tell it or not. But to me I am telling my story. This is important. And I like it because it is too important for me to do this (Thembile, Interview 2).

Sometimes things happen and they eat you your whole life. This project helped me to think about my story, my life and now I get to talk with you and it’s a good thing. People are too stressed because they never get to tell their story. They have this and that that is hard in their lives and no one knows (Confidence, Interview 1).

We see a fluctuation of reason and thoughts by the participants as they shared about their involvement. Themes of disclosure, emotional processing, reflection and personal insight are inferred, thus, showing a level of engagement that other methodologies often do not offer. Once again, I point to the tenets of PAR to show that research benefit was central, not only to the findings, but also to the process undertaken during the workshop.
The following is a conversation that took place with a student on the first day of the workshop.

Student: I want to learn more about sex workers, what they do and why they do it. I am so curious about them.

Researcher: What are you curious about?
Student: Everything
Researcher: Everything?
Student: I have never talked with a sex worker. I want to know what they are like.
Researcher: What do you think they are like?
Student: I don't know.

Below is a conversation with the same student five days later.

Researcher: I am curious. On the first day of the workshop you told me that you were excited to meet and work with sex workers because you want to know them. How do you feel now that you have worked with the "Hillbrow participants" for five days?
Student: Me. I am happy. I am thinking that they are just people.
Researcher: Did you feel differently before? Like, that they weren't people?
Student: Not that they weren't people, but that… I don't know… eeesh… when you think of sex workers you think so many things. But they are the same as us.
Researcher: And… what do you think about that?
Student: It's good. Very good. It's easy to think that people are different but when you meet someone you think, 'man, they are same like me'.

This process brought people together for an opportunity to exchange stories, thoughts and beliefs, resulting in dissipation of stereotypes, which are often propelled by a lack of familiarity with them. By the end of the workshop, participants and students were eating lunch together, participants were sharing more about their lives as they discussed their images with the group, and students and participants exchanged more honest feedback with one another. This ‘safe space’ was a feature of this innovative research method. Although gaps still exist in this type of data collection, change was affected, and both the participants and the researcher benefited from its use.

I also felt that the research process allowed me to mature both as an individual and researcher. My own stereotypes and levels of comfort shifted and expanded as the research evolved. Below is an excerpt from field notes that I wrote during my first meeting with migrant women sex workers\(^{43}\).

This excerpt clearly shows my discomfort and fear of Hillbrow as a space, and points to some nuanced discomfort rooted in race differences.

\(^{43}\) Prior to conducting this research project, I worked on the 2010 World Cup Sex Worker Research Project with Marlise Richter. This excerpt was written after the first focus group discussion that I facilitated during Phase I of the above mentioned research. Although I had worked with sex workers in previous settings in the United States, my exposure to African sex workers highlights a level of discomfort that I had never experienced with this group of people.
are beyond ones immediate recognizable reality; however, I was new to Johannesburg, and the movie “Tutsi” really freaked me out when I watched it years ago. When the women looked at me I felt uncomfortable, and slightly unsure of myself. I was not sure why. Perhaps it was because they were all black women, and I was white; perhaps it was because I was intimidated by their “toughness” whereas, I was a privileged Master’s student; or, perhaps it was because I was intimidated by this population and my ability to actually work with them. I mean, who the hell am I to think that I can research these people? Why would they tell me anything? I am so different from them.

Later, as my research progressed, I no longer felt the isolation of that day. I developed confidence and felt less estranged from the women with whom I was working. Below is another excerpt from my field notes, written half way through the participatory photo project.

I had this moment during the workshop today, when I looked out at the room full of research participants, and I realized that something really cool was taking place for all of us. I didn’t worry about all of the differences that we were to one another, rather I acknowledged them and felt a deep appreciation for our willingness to share and grow amidst these differences. I think that the students felt something similar. It was almost palpable. The air changed. Half way through this research project something shifted. The playing fields seemed more equal. I lingered in the back of the classroom as I was pondering this observation, knowing that it is in moments like these, when power struggles emaciate, that good things can happen.

During these final stages of research, I have had the opportunity to reflect and contemplate the effectiveness of the methodologies that were used for this study. I sought to explore the efficacy of such methodologies when researching marginalized and hard to reach communities in urban spaces. Frideres (1992) highlights legitimate concerns pertaining to this methodology; however, his epistemological framework, ultimately fails to capture the experiences and ‘voice’; a component that is vital when undertaking research in urban spaces that seek to understand the intricacies of representation of its citizenry.

Although this research report was not specifically focused on discourses centered on sex work, it was important to touch upon them as (1) it served as a backdrop to discussions on sex work as well as a platform that explained my interest in exploring (re) presentation with migrant women who sell sex, and (2) it served as a tool to explore the current arguments within sex worker discourse that were directly relevant to the population in this study. I argue that the majority of studies in this area tend to rely too heavily on dichotomies between good/bad, and explained how such discourse continues to be placed within a moralizing position negating the voices of the individuals under scrutiny. Furthermore, I delved into micro/macro socio-economic and political systems of health as a way to engage with stigma, labels, and other broader social concerns that directly impact migrant women who sell sex. Concurrently, I engaged with discussions on labels and belonging in order to examine the interplay that language has in perpetuating stereotypes, and show how language discourse influences, and is influenced, by larger paradigms.

The study also described how the women modified and selected their images/captions during the editing stage of the participatory photo project. Captions did not always reflect the original statements made by the women, and images did not always reflect the prominent themes that they discussed during the workshop. Amossy and Heidingsfeld (1998) state that representation is a model, rooted in context and culture that is used to perceive, interpret and describe reality (p. 689). I have shown how identities and representation have intertwined meanings: the Self defined substance of who we are, and how ‘others’ construct us. The selection of images and captions can serve as an insight into how the women wanted to be represented,
and who they considered the audience to be. The motivations and hopes attached to the selection of images was described by some of the women; whereas, others chose to omit these details, leaving the audience(s) to ascertain what was being said and why.

This research has made a valuable contribution to a gap in literature on sex work and migration. While the findings in this study have focused on migrant women sex workers, the data can be used in a broader study focusing on other groups of ‘vulnerable people’ in urban settings. As the need to understand urban space and the people who live in urban spaces increases, this study can serve as an example of more inclusive ways to conduct research amidst areas that are considered invisible’ or ‘too dangerous’ by urban planners and city officials.

This study sought to examine representation of migrant women sex workers and whether urban space impacted their self- (re) presentations. Cities everywhere are a patchwork of increasingly crowded infrastructures, where a proliferation of impressions and interpretations of space and representation exist on multiple and intersecting levels. This study has shown, and argues, that although a wide range of discrepancies existed in how migrant women sex workers depict themselves, inner-city Johannesburg, specifically Hillbrow, played a defining role in how they explained, presented, and represented themselves and their experiences of their urban space.
References


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Kiapi, E. (2010). ‘Why Waste ARV’s on Sex Workers?’ IPS News.  Link:  


Appendix A: Copy of Ethics Approval
Appendix B: Narrative Interviews

The researcher has chosen to use narrative interviews as they allow for open-ended questions to be asked by the researcher, and stories by research participants to be told that will enhance research findings. The interviews are associated with the photography and body mapping projects. The visual images will act as prompts for the interviews. Interviews will only take place with participants from the workshops, and will lead from the images produced by the participants.

The questions listed below will guide a series of interviews. Each interview is expected to last approximately 1 hour.

- **Where are you from originally?**
  - **Probe:**
    - Place, province. Where born? Where grew up? Where is “home”? Where did you go to school?

- **When did you arrive in Johannesburg?**
  - **Probe:**
    - Where did you first come to in Johannesburg? Was it here?
    - Why did you come to Johannesburg?
    - Why did you come to Johannesburg? When did you come here, Johannesburg? Why did you come here, to Johannesburg?
    - Tell me about your life in Joburg- do you have family here?

- **When did you first arrive in Hillbrow?**
  - **Probe:**
    - Why did you come to Hillbrow?
    - When did you come here, to Hillbrow?
    - Did you know anybody in Johannesburg or in Hillbrow? Who? Did they help you come here?

- **When did you first start selling sex?**
  - **Probe:**
    - Why did you decide to start selling sex?
    - How long have you been selling sex?

- **Did you sell sex for work before you moved to Hillbrow?**
  - **Probe:**
    - Did you move to Hillbrow to sell sex?
    - Why do you sell sex in Hillbrow and not in say, Rosebank?
    - Tell me about Hillbrow. Do you like living in Hillbrow? Why/Why not.
Appendix C: Audio Taping: Verbal Informed Consent Form

I give my consent to be audio taped during the interviews. I have read the Participant Information Sheet and understand that my identity will be kept confidential. The researcher has explained to me that the tapes will be typed up and used only for the purposes of the study "Exploring how migrant women who sell sex in Hillbrow, Johannesburg perceive and represent themselves, and how does urban space impact these self- (re) presentations".

I understand that after the tapes will be kept for 2 years after publication, or for 6 years if no publication results.

I also understand that I am free to withdraw this consent at any time.

PARTICIPANT:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Printed Name of Participant</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Person who sought consent (research assistant)

- I (Name of Researcher), herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the use of audio taping for the above study and has given verbal consent to the interviews being recorded.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Printed Name</th>
<th>Signature/Mark or Thumbprint</th>
<th>Date</th>
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Appendix D: Information Sheet and Verbal Consent Form- Participatory Photography Project and Narrative Interviews

Title of research project:
Exploring how migrant women who sell sex in Hillbrow, Johannesburg perceive and represent themselves, and how does urban space impact these self-(re)presentations.

Research Protocol: [H100715]

Names of principal researchers:
Elsa Oliveira

Department/research group address:
Forced Migration Studies Programme, Wits University, 1 Jan Smuts Avenue, Braamfontein, Johannesburg

Telephone: (011) 717 4033

Email: elsa.alexandra.oliveira@gmail.com

Hello! My name is Elsa Oliveira and I am part of a research team conducting a research project that is exploring how migrant women who sell sex in Hillbrow perceive and represent themselves, and how urban space impacts these self-(re)presentations.

I would like to invite you to take part in this study as it will help us to understand the migration histories, livelihoods, and how migrant women who sell sex in Hillbrow represent urban space.

What does this study entail?
Your participation in this study will include the following:

- A weeklong workshop where you will learn photography techniques taught by Market Photo Workshop students and staff.
- At the end of the weeklong workshop you will be asked to take pictures of Hillbrow.
- 1-3 interview sessions after the pictures have been developed where you will be asked to share information about the pictures that you took (this will take a maximum of one hour).

Risks: There are very few risks in participating in this study. I will ask you some personal questions about your life and work. You may experience some discomfort in discussing some of the topics in the interview. But, you may find it helpful to talk about these issues with someone. If for any reason you are uncomfortable you can skip a question or chose to stop the interview at any time. If any of the topics discussed in the interview upset you, I can refer you to a counselor that you can talk with further.

Benefits: You may not receive any direct benefit from participating in this study. But, this research will help us to understand migration, living in the inner city, and the sex industry better, and how to make good policy and law on these issues.

Costs: There are no direct costs associated with this research project.
Payment: You will receive lunch and learn photography skills throughout the one-week workshop with Market Photo Workshop students and staff. A R100 food voucher for redemption at Pick and Pay will be given to you in compensation for each day spent in the workshop.

The information that will be collected is purely for research purposes and to learn more about migrant women who sell sex and how urban space impacts representations of themselves and their environments.

The information that you share with me may be written up in research reports. We will NOT use any of your personal details and it will not be possible to identify you personally in any of the research reports.

Participation is completely voluntary; you are under no obligation to take part in this project.
You may withdraw from this project at any stage; this will not affect you in any way.

- Do you have any questions?
- Would you like to go ahead with being part of this research project?

---

Researcher: please read through this carefully with the participant

- I agree to participate in this research project.
- I do / I do not* give permission for the researcher to take photographs of me while I participate in the photo project and/or body-mapping project.
- I have read/been read this consent form and the information it contains and had the opportunity to ask questions about them.
- I agree to my responses being used for research on condition my privacy is respected, subject to the following:
  - I understand that my personal details will be used in aggregate form only, so that I will not be personally identifiable.
- I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this project.
- I understand I have the right to withdraw from this project at any stage.

PARTICIPANT:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Printed Name of Participant</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Person who sought consent (research assistant)

- I (Name of Researcher), herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the above study and has given verbal consent to participate in the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Printed Name</th>
<th>Signature/Mark or Thumbprint</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
## Appendix E: Demographics and ‘inclusion/exclusion’ parameters of this study

### Number of participants: 11 total

- Six South African (internal) migrant women sex workers.
- Five cross border migrants from Zimbabwe.

Migrants must have lived and sold sex in Hillbrow for a minimum of one year.

### Inclusion/Exclusion

- Participants will not have participated in the 2010 World Cup Sex Work Research project.
- Participants will speak English. Although translators will be available for Zimbabwean and South African languages, basic English skills are required for the participation of this study.
- Participants will commit to attending all workshop sessions. When workshop sessions are held outside of the RHRU Hugh Solomon Building transportation will be provided.
- Participants agree to arrive on time. The workshop will start promptly at 10am each day.
- Participants agree not to leave early unless they have spoken to the research coordinator of this project beforehand. All workshop sessions will end at 4pm.
- Participants understand that this research will require them to use a photo camera to take pictures of Hillbrow.
- Participants will be paired with a PDP student mentor from the MPW who will work with them for the duration of the project.
Appendix F: Sample breakdown of workshop activities and targeted focus for the each day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day(s)</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Main Focus of the Day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1      | Researcher and Hillbrow Participants meet at RHRU to discuss the project in detail. | I. Explain project  
II. Get verbal consent from research participants |
| 2      | First meeting with Hillbrow participants, PDP students, Workshop facilitator, and researcher team. | I. Introductions  
II. Establishing appropriate language  
III. Camera Safety  
IV. Project Overview  
V. Samples of previous PPP projects  
VI. Partner up PDP with Hillbrow participants |
| 3-8    | Participant Photography training and practical sessions                  | I. Photography skills  
II. Develop and explain the “stories” being told through the images. |
| 9-10   | Select Final Ten Images and Editing at MPW.                              | I. Select Images  
II. Write Captions |
| 11-15  | Interviews with randomly selected participants                           | I. Data  
II. Work with images as entry points into narrative enquiry. |

Each participant was encouraged to tell a “story” or “stories” in their images. Each workshop session sought to support the Hillbrow participants in this process- identifying what story they wanted to tell and how they were going to tell it. Each day participants described the reason behind the images taken and linked the images to the “story” and/or “stories” that were developing.
Appendix G: Sample Schedule of a day during the participatory photo project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09h00-10h00</td>
<td><strong>WORKSHOP FACILITATOR AND PDP STUDENTS ARRIVE</strong>&lt;br&gt;(This is a time for the PDP students and the facilitator to meet and discuss image quality, workshop focus for the day, and any other pertinent items.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09h00-10h00</td>
<td>• Facilitator and students brainstorm and discuss the following:&lt;br&gt;1. What worked/what didn’t work during the previous day?&lt;br&gt;2. What technical difficulties (if any) need attention?&lt;br&gt;3. What areas (if any) need more focus?&lt;br&gt;4. What issues (if any) are/might be arising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10h00-11h15</td>
<td><strong>Hillbrow Participants arrive</strong>&lt;br&gt;10h00 to 11h15&lt;br&gt;• Re-cap the previous day and discuss any challenges and/or experiences&lt;br&gt;• Each Hillbrow participant will review the selected images from the previous day, and share what they mean in front of the group&lt;br&gt;• Re-evaluating the assignments so far - thoughts, feelings and direction for the day&lt;br&gt;• Review and discuss images taken the night before&lt;br&gt;• Individual hits and misses: what photography techniques need further support?&lt;br&gt;• Brainstorming with participants about images from previous days assignment&lt;br&gt;• Identify potential working images</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11h15-11h30</td>
<td><strong>BREAK</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11h30-1200</td>
<td><strong>Day 2 continued</strong>&lt;br&gt;11h30 to 1200&lt;br&gt;• Issuing of next assignment and overnight assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12h00-13h00</td>
<td><strong>LUNCH</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13h00-15h00</td>
<td><strong>Hillbrow participants and students go into Hillbrow and take photographs</strong>&lt;br&gt;13h00-15h00&lt;br&gt;• Assignment analysis and editing&lt;br&gt;• Identify images that Hillbrow participants want to consider as part of their final ten images.&lt;br&gt;• Downloaded Images and present them to the group for group discussion overseen by the students and facilitator -- along with a discussion of the difficulties encountered by participants during their assignment&lt;br&gt;• Students and Research Team debriefing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

45 This is an example of a day’s schedule of events during the workshop. The last two days of the workshop were held at MPW for final editing and caption writing; therefore, those two days are not reflective of the schedule above. I chose to provide this figure in order for the reader to gain an understanding of the direction, focus, and professionalism that was inherent in this research project.
Appendix H: Sample of the coding used in data analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Migration into Hillbrow</td>
<td>The role of social networks</td>
<td>“I came to Hillbrow because my sister was here” (Thembile, Interview 1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fleeing Zimbabwe</td>
<td>“I was afraid of Hillbrow because of the violence, but I had no choice” (Lety, Interview 1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In search of better opportunities in sex work</td>
<td>“I left Zimbabwe because things were very bad there and I needed to make money to support my children” (Lety, Interview 1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural-Urban migration in search of education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Use of language to challenge stereotypes</td>
<td>“I am a human being and deserve respect and dignity” (Confidence, Interview 1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use of language to accept stereotypes</td>
<td>“I am educated and go to church” (Sbu, Interview 2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use of language to accept stigma</td>
<td>“I don’t think that sex work should be legal because I don’t want to image my children as sex workers” (Thembile, Interview 2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Capital</td>
<td>Support one another during difficult times</td>
<td>“In the Ambassador Hotel the sex workers life one another. When one of us is sick or dies we donate money” (Iketlang, Journal Entry).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Entry into sex work</td>
<td>“My cousin brought me by car to Hillbrow because I wanted to visit a friend of mine who stayed here” (Monica Mombassa, Journal Entry).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Migration into Hillbrow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trajectories into Sex Work</td>
<td>The role of social networks</td>
<td>“The father of my son didn’t want to help raise him, and I was living with my grandmother. I couldn’t accept that my grandmother would support us so one day I ran away and came to the Ambassador Hotel to make money to support my son” (Confidence, Interview 1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need to work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Money making appeal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex work as a livelihood strategy</td>
<td>Flexible schedule</td>
<td>“I can do projects like this one and work at night. I have freedom and decide when I work and for how long” (Mimi, Interview 1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supporting families/Head of households</td>
<td>“Sometimes I have to go there because the money is not good here” (Lety, Interview 2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Income is higher than other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life in Hillbrow</td>
<td>The City is dirty</td>
<td>“This toilet is used by the community of Hillbrow and is very clean” (Iketlang, Journal Entry).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hillbrow has beautiful parts for children to play</td>
<td>“This is a wonderful and beautiful hotel in Hillbrow called Visatero Hotel” (Iketlang, Journal Entry).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hillbrow residents don’t care about the City</td>
<td>are too many Nigerians” (Ana, Field Notes).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix I: Copy of the invitation to the exhibition, “Working the City: Experiences of Migrant Women in Inner-City Johannesburg.

Working the City: Experiences of Migrant Women in Inner-city Johannesburg

date: 08 October 2010
place: Photo Workshop Gallery
time: 10h00

This exhibition is the result of a participatory photography project with migrant women involved in sex work in inner-city Johannesburg in August 2010, as part of the Health and Migration Research Initiative of the Forced Migration Studies Programme at Wits in collaboration with the Market Photo Workshop.
Appendix J: Posters that were exhibited during the “Working the City: Experiences of Migrant Women in Inner-City Johannesburg” exhibition at the Market Photo Workshop Gallery.

Please refer to the following pages for copies of the eleven posters that were exhibited at the “Working the City” exhibition that was held at the Market Photo Workshop Gallery during the months of October and November 2010.
ANA

Due to domestic violence and unfaithfulness of my husband, I decided to run away from my marital home of 16 years in Tembisa to look for freedom and some peace of mind. I felt traumatised since, time and again, he promised to kill me; even though I reported him to the police several times, he was never arrested.

On Sunday 4 April I left my place in Tembisa and two kids and moved to Hillbrow to my close friend’s place at a hotel. My friend explained how she remedied living in the hotel. I agreed to the idea to sell sex since there was no other alternative to earning a living at that moment and time.

Being a once married woman, it was tough at first, but after two weeks I made up my mind not to blame myself for what I was doing because surely I had bills to pay and buy something to eat since we are not allowed to cook in the hotel.

The cardinal problem of the hotel is the security guards and the management who treat me at random and really abuses me without paying any other clients. This really bothers me because I don’t agree they will chase me away at night, this leaves my room will be given to other people. The police, as well, are a major threat since they continuously raid the hotel and upon arrest I have to pay a fine of R100. The police scare away clients and put my life at risk.

CAPTIONS (clockwise from top left)
- Client sleeping after having sex with a hotel car in Hillbrow
- Client feeling a security guard’s lower moment near of good and bad security in hotels; there is a good security who treats us well.
- Photographs please see the following photos to get an idea of this. This is above the great moments with my notes.
- A client eats bread and only drink water with his child. This highlights that the city is not doing their work as well.
- A woman at a hotel treats her clients with respect and is a client of good service to me especially when I go back almost every day.
- A special woman in the hotel takes care of her children in the house. He helps me to go through difficult times and because of that I really cherish her time.
- Distressed vendors sell their wares in front of a disused building, as sign of the uneasiness of lack of renting access.
my first time in Johannesburg was a beautiful experience. I noticed a coke bottle on top of a shop at the corner of Main and Pretoria Streets, which was my first step to Hillbrow. During a visit to one of my friend’s place at the High Point building, the same friend tried to kill me by throwing me out of an open window. We had been drinking and having fun as our usual form of entertainment. He was high on drugs.

One of my dreams is to be my own boss, have my own salon in Hillbrow. At the moment I see a beauty therapist, operating on Pearson Street.

I do not like Hillbrow because there are some unhealthy and dirty spaces. I also do not like it because it’s bad for business. I think street vendors need clean spaces to work from. Life in Hillbrow is good for a church event every Sunday after which I go out to a drink at the bar. I also go to the shops to do some shopping. I think if most kids were repaired and maintained more people will have a proper place to live. I hate the fact that the place that I’m staying in is dirty and it needs to be fixed.

Johannesburg is a good place as I have learned lots of things, and made some friends. I have participated in educational projects, like peer education, educating my friends about taking care of themselves and what they can do to live a healthy life.

CAPTIONS COUNTERCLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:
- On my first visit to Johannesburg, Becker stopped me off at the Coca Cola building. Every time I see it, I am reminded of the times I photographed this poster and that most sex workers are being discriminated against, and that some women have to work at the sex trade.
- The women on the street tend to her family. She had her goods confiscated by the Drug & Traffic Police.
- There are some very poor people in Hillbrow who do not eat well. This is a dragnet caught for everyone living in the area, especially children.
- The High Point building is where sex workers get help in the form of anti-rape kits. They are encouraged to have sex work as a job.
- The High Point building reminds me of a friend who wanted to kill me because he was high on drugs.

This poster is a result of a participatory photography project with women involved in sex work in inner-city Johannesburg in August 2012, as part of the health and migration research initiative of the Forced Migration Studies Programme at Wits University in collaboration with the Market Photo Archive.
I came to Hillbrow in June 1999 with my friend Nonhlanhla. I experienced a tough time because of the language barrier, as I could not speak Zulu.

I met a guy in a liquor and he asked me to choose which type of drinks I wanted. I chose Sprite and Zimba chips, and then after I had finished eating, he asked me to go with him to his place. I refused. The guy started begging me up and calling me names. He told me I was supposed to go with him because I had spent his money. "You bitch! I just bought you a drink and chips so we have to go!" he said.

I did not understand that he meant Zimba chips and I thought he meant fresh potato chips. I started arguing with him. He beat me up again until I had bruises on my face. He then took me to his place where he raped me without protection. I became HIV positive as a result of the incident.

After the incident, I got a place to stay at a hotel. One day, the guy who beat me and raped me came to drink at the hotel. I told the security guards about what he had done. They beat him up until he was bruised but he had done to me.

I never saw my friend Nonhlanhla again and she does not know what has happened to me. I now see Johannesburg as a beautiful place with lots of job and education opportunities.

CAUTION: CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT
- Poster to increase the sense of what I was beaten up and raped in 1999, as a way of trying to highlight the abuses that pass without go through.
- Poster is not allowed to enter certain places in Hillbrow with girls and this helps in curtailing criminal activities and ensuring the safety of women.
- Poster with HIV-related facts aims to raise awareness and inform about HIV/AIDS in South Africa.
- Poster with HIV-related facts is a part of the multi-faceted activities that have been undertaken in Hillbrow.
- Poster with HIV-related facts is a part of my CVR project as well as investors the vital need that we assist the immune system, I have been testing positive for six months.
- Poster with HIV-related facts is a part of the multi-faceted activities that have been undertaken in Hillbrow.
LEYT

I came to the land of opportunities (Johannesburg South Africa) in 2006. I faced difficulties crossing the border illegally, from Zimbabwe.

Life was hard in the city. I was alone with no job or source of income but I was fortunate to share a cottage with Zimbabweans.

It was hard to get a job because I did not have a work permit. Neither did I have SA citizenship. I had no choice but to create work for myself. As the saying goes, “A girl has got to do what a girl has got to do.”

Johannesburg was not as easy as I had anticipated. Hillbrow was shady and evil. I was pushed around to hunt for myself, to be streetwise and to survive in the city.

CAPTIONS CLOSER TO TEX.

Hillbrow is a rough area in the city of Johannesburg, South Africa. It is a tough neighborhood, known for its crime and gang activity. People struggle to survive in the challenging environment.

“The streets of Hillbrow are a journey of survival. One must be prepared for anything.”

This poster is a result of a participatory photography project with migrant women involved in sex work in inner-city Johannesburg in August 2012, as part of the Health and Migration Research Initiative of the Perinatal Migration Studies Programme at Wits University, in collaboration with the Market Photo Workshop.
My first time in Hillbrow was bad because I was robbed at gunpoint and they took all my belongings. I was using a Blackberry phone, a laptop, my academic and professional certificates, clothes, R100 and my passport. My life was ruined as I was left with no form of identification and as a result could not get a job.

I went to Skowen where I stayed with a friend, whom I had met in Hillbrow. She welcomed me in a temporary house. I spent almost two weeks in Skowen as a result of the traumatic experience. I was like imprisonment because I could not move around without my passport until I got my asylum papers.

As far as getting a job, I am working hard so that I can get a bursary and further my studies.

Johannesburg is a good place to live as it is being run by criminal activities especially drug dealing and sex business. There is a high risk to foreigners who may get involved in early sexual activities which could ruin their lives. Basic foodstuffs are affordable, which attracts foreigners because of the country’s currency stability compared to others in the Southern Africa region.

My aim is to help young girls from neighboring countries not to fall into the same trap as most of us did. My passion is to get involved in Women Support community based work.

CAPTIONS Clockwise from top left:
- boxer (note small red shirt on wall in background) in Hillbrow with ten cents on the wall of people suffering for leprosy.
- young lady enjoys her cigarette in front of her work place. Smoking is harmless to health, not to her alone but to the customers as well.
- Young lady in Hillbrow, one of a nation and also a Zimbabwean. I hope this picture to show that her son’s good looks and long hair, but this photograph has made her beautiful. I am living with this picture.
- Young lady enjoying her cigarette in front of her work place. Smoking is harmless to health, not to her alone but to the customers as well.
- Young lady in Hillbrow, one of a nation and also a Zimbabwean. I hope this picture to show that her son’s good looks and long hair, but this photograph has made her beautiful. I am living with this picture.
- Young lady enjoys her cigarette in front of her work place. Smoking is harmless to health, not to her alone but to the customers as well.
I obtained a Diploma in Nursing whilst I was living in Zimbabwe. In March 2010 I came to South Africa, to look for a job in what I am qualified and trained for. I have been disappointed because it has been 3 months since I came but have not found a job in my profession. I could have gone anywhere but I decided to come to Johannesburg because I knew that the money here is good. A friend of mine who was already staying here invited me to stay in Hillbrow. I discovered that the place was densely populated and some areas were filthy which was completely unexpected.

My pictures talk about how people survive in Hillbrow.

Hillbrow is not a good environment for growing families, with young children, because many things happen here: things such as drug abuse, committed sex and alcoholism. I think about my own children back home. I have two daughters and two sons and I realize that it is better for them to stay in Zimbabwe where they can get a good education and be safe.

Not all people who live in Hillbrow are bad as there are some who attend church. There are places where people can relax and enjoy themselves such as parks, pubs and restaurants. In my spare time I enjoy shopping, eating out, going to the cinema or attending church. Although there are some aspects I like about Hillbrow, I would like to go back to Zimbabwe and look for a job.

I think in the past Johannesburg was a good place, that is why it was so famous. However, illegal immigrants have desensitized it so people do as they please. Today Johannesburg is a health hazard. It is crowded, unhygienic and people do not take care of their health.
This poster is a result of a participatory photography project with migrant women involved in sex work in inner-city Johannesburg in August 2013, as part of the health and migration research initiative of the Forced Migration Studies Programme at Wits University in collaboration with the Market Photo Workshop.
I had a difficult journey to Johannesburg, South Africa. I came through the bush because we had been robbed of all the money we had. I was with my two friends. We were robbed at gunpoint and left in the middle of the bush. We got lost and made arrangements to pay when we got to our destination. When we arrived in Johannesburg the person who promised to pay for me did not show and she also switched off her cell phone. The guys who gave us a lift threatened us by telling us they will keep us as their wives till we paid up. Fortunately, I ran into someone I knew from back home, and we took us to a hotel.

At the hotel, we met a woman from Zimbabwe who offered to pay for our traveling expenses and accommodation. We stayed with them and worked there. One of my friends came with me to the bathroom. The hotel room. My other friend was dropped and raped in the same hotel, and we survived for 3 months.

I saw Hillbrow as a rough place but it is also a business place. One thing that I like about Hillbrow is that people do not wait for employment. They do something they put their needs to do as to feed their families back home.

This poster is a result of a participatory photography project with migrant women involved in sex work in inner-city Johannesburg in August 2013, as part of the health and migration research initiative of the Forced Migration Studies Programme at Vita University in collaboration with the Market Photo Workshop.
DOUBLE VISION

SBU
I moved from Kayali Nala to Johannesburg in 1985 to look for a job. I could not get employed and started selling fruits and vegetables on the streets.

In 1998 I lost my husband and I also lost my stock and I went through a tough time. That is when I started working at the clinic. At the clinic we helped women who were pregnant with our services and anyone who could not afford to pay. It was a place where I could earn some money to pay rent and support my family.

In 1997 I fell ill. I was scared to go to the clinic because I was afraid of being questioned about my sexual relations. It was when I first heard about HIV/AIDS. The nurses at the clinic were great as they treated us (men and other women) with respect. They taught us more about HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections.

The photo story is about my relationship with Hillbrow. In the photographs I am telling a story about how I see Hillbrow. I see Hillbrow in a lot of different ways. Some people have their own way of seeing it, but I do not like the way that the streets, churches, and churches are shown. Most of Hillbrow is dirty, unsafe, and there are many homeless people.

I see Johannesburg as a very difficult place to live because I have to pay for everything. It is also a dangerous place to live and work, especially at night. People in Hillbrow have to fend for themselves in KZN. People in Hillbrow are so different from people in KZN.

CAPTIONS COUNTERWISE FROM TOP LEFT:
1. Hillbrow Town Centre, the town centre market, it is clean and it has proper shelters. Many people prefer going here to sell their goods.
2. The people in Hillbrow are very sick and have to pay for their own medicine.
3. The people are on the street, sick and dangerous. A lot of diseases happen in or near these places, and it is difficult for us to clean them.
4. Colourful shops and a hotel in Hillbrow. Colouring out the face, a lot of people Nvidia are dangerous people who live in this area.
5. This picture shows the area where I live. It is the part of the selection of my photos before I came to Johannesburg from KwaZulu Natal.
6. The people are seen in a hotel that is being identified as a bad place.
7. This is the place where we stay and we are considered to be a dangerous group. It is being identified by those who see us.
8. This is the place where I live and we are considered to be a bad place. It is not easy to see people sleeping on the streets while there are cots for these people.

This poster is a result of a participatory photography project with migrant women involved in sex work in inner-city Johannesburg in August 2013, as part of the Health and Migration research initiative of the Forced Migration Studies Programme at Wits University in collaboration with the Market Photo Workshop.
MISSING HOME

SHORTY

I first came to Hillbrow in 2004, just after my divorce and after taking both my parents. My first impression was that Hillbrow is a beautiful place. I later discovered that it was not that nice. It had good and bad things.

It was not difficult for me to get used to Hillbrow as I bumped into an old friend who was familiar with the place.

I first stayed at a hotel in 9 Joubert & Koch Street. During that time, the place was full of Nigerians who were selling drugs to tenants. I never really liked Nigerians so I would go to Sandton to have a good time.

I like going out to restaurants, casinos and shopping.

I find Johannesburg a tough place to stay, especially downtown. However, it is better than Zimbabwe because the cost of living is lower and things are more affordable.

CAPTIONS COUNTERWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

- Rooftop view of Hill North and First Street in Hillbrow. The best has been open for some time posing a danger to residents.
- A street full of sex workers. I have a flat with ten other people as I have to find a place to hide my food. I pull it in my bedroom because I don't want it to get stolen.
- A picture looking out the window of Sandton. I was relieved to have my daughter return home in Zimbabwe.
- Nyauza market is one of the places where sex workers are still allowed to do their business.
- A young man and woman in the streets of Hillbrow. They were selling the goods or their street vendors.

Nyauza market was a poster for a photograph with his. Nyauza children reminded me of my daughter and my brother's children back home in Zimbabwe.

This poster is a result of a participatory photography project with migrant women involved in sex work in inner-city Johannesburg in August 2013, as part of the health and migration research initiative of the Forced Migration Studies Programme at Wits University in collaboration with the Market Photo Workshop.
THEMBILE

I came to Johannesburg on July 7th 2005. My purpose for coming to Johannesburg was to visit my sister who was staying in Hillbrow and to try to get a job while visiting.

I later realized that my sister was working as a prostitute in one of the hostels in Hillbrow, I found this out through her friends, since she was not willing to confide in me.

I stayed with her for 3 days and then I had to do the same business since I needed to survive on my own. I did sex-work for 5 years.

While I was working I also got myself involved with a women’s organization known as Stroller. It was through sharing experiences with other members that I realized I had to change my ways. My life has changed a lot since joining this organization. I have learnt a lot about computers and I saw my life taking a different direction since am pursuing my dream.

I am now happily married to Michael and am enjoying my life. Michael is very supportive and he does not mind past but instead advices me when I need emotional support.

CAPTIONS CLOSERWISE FROM TOP LEFT
- Close-up of woman selling group in the streets in Hillbrow, trying to make a living through vending, is a true picture of how many other women are trying to make a living through the same means. The business might not be going well but not entirely pointless.
- I took the photograph because of the persons on the wall that are encouraging him, which I think is not right. The woman standing to the left of the Wal shows much responsibility.
- Buying a meal is a big help for me when I am down. Michael doesn’t mind my past but rather helps me to move forward.
- This is where I find shelter. Many of the women or men of Hillbrow are food and potatoes for me.
- This is public bathroom in Hillbrow. It is one of the places were you can pay to do some laundry. I like Hillbrow because there is everything in town for everyone.
- This is where I am standing and where the man approached me and I decided to go with him. After a few minute walk, he directed me to this street boy who helped me by leaning up the guy.

This poster is a result of a participatory photography project with migrant women involved in sex work in inner-city Johannesburg in August 2009, as part of the health and migration research initiative of the Forced Migration Studies Programme at Wits University in collaboration with the Market Photo Archive.