



# Buyer Beware

A study into the demand side of the sexual exploitation industry

## *Executive Summary*

Dr. Susan McIntyre  
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## Preface

Over the past 15 years, much of my research has been focused on young people involved in the sexual exploitation trade. This academic research extends primarily through three interconnected pieces of work.

The first piece of interviewing took place in 1991-1992, and was released as my PhD dissertation in 1994 entitled *The Youngest Profession the Oldest Oppression*. During that time, I interviewed 50 young people in Calgary. This involved 41 females and nine males, 25 percent of which were Aboriginal. This research found 82 percent of this population had experienced sexual abuse prior to their entrance into the sexual exploitation trade. It also demonstrated professionals had both ignored and failed to recognize the abuse this population had experienced prior to their entrance into the trade. In fact, many had failed to act while young people were being sexually exploited in front of them. Given this failure to intervene, it was in fact a form of state-supported sexual abuse. In the end, this research resulted in raising both social and political attention in The City of Calgary and The Province of Alberta.

Over time, I observed the growing acceptance of youth involved in prostitution as a form of sexual abuse. I watched The City of Calgary and The Province of Alberta embrace this paradigm shift, subsequently resulting in policy, legislative and program changes. This paradigm shift slowly spread across the country as the term 'youth prostitution' was replaced by the term 'sexual exploitation.' Today these two terms are used interchangeably.

The second piece of research was initiated by two former youths I had interviewed in 1991-1992, who challenged me to revisit the same questions I had originally asked those ten years earlier in order to see what had and hadn't worked.

I took the challenge, and in 2002 a retrospective longitudinal study titled *Strolling Away* was released.

At that point, I had accounted for and interviewed 38 of the original 50 people I had interviewed ten years previously. Some of the women had worked in the United States: primarily Las Vegas, California or Hawaii. Two women from this group ended up working in Japan for up to six months and found it difficult to escape back home. The men seemed to work primarily throughout Canada.

In this study, I learned both young women and men could survive this experience; however, the painful scarring remains. We also learned that for young women, the value of producing a child, or the desire to produce children, brings with it both family and state support. Eighty-two percent of women from this study had in fact produced children. On the contrary, the physical birthing of a child was not an option available to young men. From our small sample of young men, we learned they enter the trade younger and stay twice as long. Childbirth was not a viable opportunity to exit for young men as it is for young women. We also learned through interviewing the same men 10 years later that we tend to view sexual exploitation of children through a female lens only. Young men inquired as to why we still asked them questions from a 'chick perspective'.

This second piece of research made it apparent that we as professionals and as a society knew very little about young men entering the sexual exploitation trade. Why and how do they enter? How do they work? How long do they stay? What is the lifestyle? How do they exit?

This lack of knowledge was the impetus to begin the third connected piece of work entitled *Under the Radar: The Sexual Exploitation of Young Men*. It was apparent that looking at only one geographic site would be unfair. The plan was

to examine independently the provinces of Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. The Alberta report was released in June 2005. The British Columbia report was released in December 2006. The report for Manitoba and Saskatchewan was released in the spring of 2008. Compiled as *The Western Canadian Report*, the report overviewed the four western provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, summarizing and comparing similarities and differences of each of these Western Provinces in 2008.

During this time I had been very vocal about the issue of supply and demand within the sexual exploitation trade. It became apparent that if we were able to influence and decrease the demand for youth in the sexual exploitation industry, we would be able to decrease the supply end and truly impact this social issue. To this end, I had been involved in designing a program to educate youth about the realities in the sexual exploitation industry. The goal was to educate potential consumers about the realities resulting in a decrease in the likelihood of a person becoming a consumer. During the work of this program design, we realized that we were naive about who and how someone becomes a consumer of the sex trade. Who are these people and where do they come from? It was for this reason it was important to begin this study.

This research study entitled *Buyer Beware* aimed to answer some important questions about the demand side of the sexual exploitation industry.

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## **The Researcher**

With over 20 years experience in the non-profit, public and private sectors, Dr. Susan McIntyre has developed a unique set of skills and expertise.

As a scholar and educator, Dr. McIntyre is well recognized for her expertise in the areas of child sexual abuse and prostitution. She has presented over 100 workshops and keynote addresses to provincial, national and international conferences.

As an international research and policy advisor, Dr. McIntyre appreciates the relationship between research, the law and social policy in the development of social programs.

As a social service practitioner, she has combined her human service background with entrepreneurial business flair. She clearly understands the social sector's challenge to meet mission goals, and helps them integrate mainstream business practices and accountability into their daily operations.

As a leader in effecting organizational change and development, she has established a strong track record in identifying and meeting the needs of an organization.

As a fundraiser, her ability to provide an analytical, business approach towards matching a company's community interests to high priority social issues have earned her the respect of Calgary's foundations and corporate sector. Her broad fundraising experience includes approving foundation grants, applying for foundation grants and securing sponsorship from numerous leading national and international corporations.

As an entrepreneur, she was responsible for the start-up of 25 operations in both the private and public sectors, guiding them from concept through to the stages of implementation and evaluation. Her pioneering work in designing a management service to partner the expertise of Calgary's corporate community with non-profit organizations was just one example of her work in this regard.

As a community volunteer, Dr. McIntyre has proven her personal commitment time and again. As a strong community advocate, she has co-chaired numerous volunteer committees and task forces involving justice, social services, health services and education.

As a professional who has devoted much of her life to helping sexually exploited youth, Dr. McIntyre's commitment to helping us better understand the dynamics and role consumers play in sexual exploitation.

## Executive Summary

A total of 20 sex consumers were interviewed for this study between February 2010 and December 2011. Interview subjects were sourced from the Prostitution Offender Program in Winnipeg and Edmonton. Other interviewees were found through Sexual Addiction groups and word-of-mouth in Alberta. All interviews were conducted in confidential, safe locations.

The Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) study's series of 10 questions were administered as part of the *Buyer Beware* interview process. The ACE study was a collaborative research project by the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (Dr. Robert Anda) and Kaiser Permanente Health Clinic of San Diego (Dr. Vincent Felitti). For the *Buyer Beware* study, the ACE study's questions were used as an icebreaker within the interviews. The following represents the results from the administration of the ACE questions:

<b>ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCE</b>	
<b>Abuse</b>	
Emotional Abuse	12/20 (60%)
Physical Abuse	12/20 (60%)
Sexual Abuse	4/20 (20%)
<b>Neglect</b>	
Emotional Neglect	11/20 (55%)
Physical Neglect	3/20 (15%)
<b>Household Dysfunction</b>	
Mother Treated Violently	8/20 (40%)
Household Substance Abuse	11/20 (55%)
Household Mental Health Illness	7/20 (35%)
Parental Separation or Divorce	8/20 (40%)
Incarcerated Household Member	1/20 (5%)

Backgrounds of emotional abuse and neglect, physical abuse and household substance abuse were found in over 50 percent of those interviewed. Sixty-five percent of those interviewed were born and raised in Canada. Seventy-five percent of those interviewed had been to college or university. Seventy-five

percent of this population earned over \$50,000 annually, with 40 percent of this population earning over 100,000 annually. Seventy-five percent of this population had or were in long term relationships and had children. The remaining 25 percent were single and did not have children.

Seventy-five percent of this population considered themselves to be sexually addicted but over 27 percent had not sought out any form of treatment. Feeling out of control and high risk behaviour resulted in over 50 percent of this population seeking treatment. Close to 50 percent of this population had experienced other addictions such as substance addiction to alcohol or drugs.

Those interviewed range in age from 20 to 72 years of age with an average being 44 years of age. Over 55 percent of this population had become consumers while they were under the age of 30 years. The exercise of cruising and strolling the street before purchasing was something all had done. Strolling in a vehicle is something which served as an early warning indicator in building a person's self confidence to become a consumer. Forty percent had commenced this behavior while under the age of 20. Seventy-five percent of this population had been consumers in the sex trade for over ten years.

Becoming a consumer was thought to be an adventure, revenge, easy and satisfying or a fantasy for this population. Fifty-five percent of this population identified a family history of a parent, grandparent, or sibling who was a consumer of the sex trade. The purchasing of sex at a stag was something none of those interviewed had ever done. Forty-five percent had arranged escort service or entered a massage parlour. Thirty percent had arranged an encounter online. Forty-five percent had been involved in the purchasing of phone sex. The majority of interviewees (65 percent) indicated they would not be under the influence of any substance when purchasing sexual services. A total of 60percent stated that they purchased for companionship, and the activity would occur in hotels, apartment and cars.

All those interviewed spoke of feeling at risk of harm and vulnerable, with 55 percent of them having experienced violence of robbery while they were involved in a transaction. Many had been consumers for over ten years but only 65 percent of them had been charged. The use of escort and massage parlours prevented any criminal charges as these are city licensed and controlled businesses.

Over 60 percent felt this activity had affected their personal, social and professional life. Thirty percent felt detached and had no feeling toward the activity of being a consumer. The other 70 percent reported feeling guilty, bad and remorseful after they had been a consumer. Eighty-seven percent felt that in the long run being a consumer had taken their spirit away and they themselves and or the sex worker were harmed by this activity. Forty percent felt that this activity caused them or their family economic hardship while 80 percent believed this behaviour has harmed them or their family.

Many interviewees believed that they gained fantasy fulfillment, contact exposure to street life and brief satisfaction from being a purchaser, while the 15 percent believed they gained nothing from the activity. The loss of intimacy, connection, dignity, self respect and employment were noted by 90 percent of this population. Forty-five percent of this population feared they had purchased from a minor. All those interviewed stated they would warn someone considering this activity not to go down this road.

In summary, the following represents the significant findings of this study:

1. Cruising is an early warning indicator of becoming a consumer of sexual services.
2. Being a consumer of sexual services is an individual, secret activity.
3. Forty percent of consumers begin this activity while under the age of 20.
4. Over half of consumers in this study had a family member with a history as a consumer.

5. Some consumers interpret this activity as intimacy, even as a pseudo dating activity.
6. After the completion of the act they have purchased, many consumers feel guilty and depart as quickly as possible.
7. Many consumers felt spiritually harmed by the activity of purchasing sexual services.
8. The opportunity to relapse into sexual addiction is limitless and is present everywhere in society.
9. Everyone interviewed identified damage and losses for both consumers and sex workers.
10. Over half of those interviewed had been charged with a prostitution related offence.
11. There is confusion among those interviewed about our law in Canada as to what is and is not legal where purchasing sexual services is concerned.
12. Consumers identified that there are effects on a person's personal, social and professional life as a result of being a consumer.
13. Those interviewed revealed a recurrent attempt to quit after each time they purchased sexual services.