



Batchelor Institute
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'Captains' and 'Selly-welly': Indigenous Women and the Role of Transactional Sex in Homelessness

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December, 2012

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Note The authors of this report have attempted to use language that is sensitive and respectful. Any offence caused by the language used is unintentional.



Executive Summary

Aligned with the national homeless research agenda, this exploratory study aimed to contribute to the collective understanding of homelessness. Specifically, this research explored the relationship between transactional sex and the drivers of homelessness and the role that this exchange played in determining the risks to homeless Indigenous women in Darwin.

Informed by ethnographic approaches, in-depth interviews were undertaken between November, 2010 and March, 2011, with 89 participants, twenty five (25) of whom were key informants during the interview process. Participants were generally women, adult, Indigenous and were regarded homeless, as defined by the Australian government, that is, they were living rough without shelter, known locally as staying in the Long Grass.

Findings revealed a high level of social organisation among homeless populations in Darwin and that engaging in transactional sex was a common occurrence for most homeless Indigenous women who participated in this study. Transactional sex occurred within an everyday life pattern that was influenced by a range of factors including: alcohol consumption; Aboriginal spirituality; the criminal justice system; surveillance; social dysfunction; grief, loss and trauma; violence; social exclusion; poor mental and physical health; and forced mobility. The women engaging in the transaction, or 'selly-welly', were known as the 'captain'. As the title implies, the captain assumed power, influence and control over a group, even if a transitory experience, while resources were distributed as she regaled the group with stories of her recent encounter.

The most significant finding to emerge about the women's lives was the prevalence of sexual assault and rape and the extent to which these atrocities shaped their worlds. Yet rape and sexual assault were not linked by women to transactional sex. Rather, these violations resulted from women being vulnerable to predators, referred to as 'cheeky cunts', through homelessness (sleeping in public places) together with being highly intoxicated.

For the Indigenous women in this study, transactional sex was an historical and established mechanism for basic survival during periods without shelter in Darwin; a practice that has also been observed worldwide among various populations of women throughout history during periods of difficulty, such as war and conflict, famine and poverty. Transactional sex cannot be viewed in isolation as simply immoral behaviour, but as one part of a larger complex narrative that is an expression of women's agency and conversely a symbol of continuing racial oppression, gender inequality and disempowerment. This study concludes that transactional sex is a product of homelessness and an expression of the continuum of colonisation with its social, cultural, political and economic challenges for Indigenous families and communities in the Northern Territory.

The study found that taking punitive measures to prevent transactional sex would serve only to further criminalise and marginalise Indigenous women living without shelter, compounding the hardships of homelessness. Instead, what is needed is a combination of programs, practices and policy supports that provide alternative life opportunities for the women involved. Such supports need to be coordinated to redress the deeply embedded social, racial and gender inequalities endured by the participants of this study.

The need to focus on policy and interventions that can help prevent the ongoing rape and sexual assault of homeless Indigenous women when they are in Darwin is paramount. To bring about immediate improvement to women's health, safety and wellbeing, it is logical that women will be afforded access to safe places to inhabit. This need is consistent with the headline goal of the Commonwealth Government's national homelessness policy (agreed to by the Northern Territory Government) which states that all rough sleepers will be offered shelter if they need it by 2020.

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Background

In the last Census, the rates of homelessness among Indigenous people in the Northern Territory and Darwin were found to be very high when compared with other Australian jurisdictions (ABS, 2007). Since the Census, there is strong evidence of an increase in this population in the Darwin area, particularly among those categorised as experiencing 'primary homelessness'-- that is, living rough or camping out, referred to locally as staying in the Long Grass (Holmes & McRae-Williams, 2009).

The focus on enumeration, however, has tended to obscure society's understanding of this population, with few studies that have examined what is actually going on and why, and even fewer that have explored the perspectives of the individuals concerned. By limiting this form of knowledge in the evidence-base, policy and interventions aimed at homeless groups are heavily based on mainstream (yet often well intentioned) assumptions about their needs. Indeed, in Darwin, significant investment has been directed at policy responses and interventions among this population which have the headline goal of addressing the needs and sensibilities of the mainstream middle class population - who both pay rates and vote.

Primary Aboriginal homelessness in Darwin is highly visible. Despite the emphasis of policy benefiting (and pacifying) mainstream citizens, there is a small body of research that has focussed on the lived experiences of this population, from their own perspective, which has contributed to the development and delivery of interventions that aim to improve their life quality (see Holmes 2006, 2007; Holmes & McRae-Williams, 2009; Holmes, 2010; Holmes & O'Donnell, 2010). The need for this present study has emerged from this body of work.

In a daily life marred by poverty, social exclusion, stigma, hunger, trauma, violence, deteriorated health and addiction, homeless people in Darwin struggle to meet their ordinary survival needs. In this context, Holmes (2007) found that homeless Indigenous women exchanged sexual favours for goods and services and that some young women described being regarded by family as a sexual commodity and resource for the family group. Similarly, in a more recent study examining issues relating to law, health and life for homeless Indigenous people in Darwin, Holmes & McRae-Williams (2009) observed that there was evidence of an increasing number of women engaging in transactional sex (TS) as part of the homeless life world. This practice has both individual and broader public health and safety implications.

The 'Western Australian Aboriginal Sexual Health Strategy 2005-2008', referring to Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), stated 'STI incidence is usually higher in communities where there is ongoing social disadvantage, including unemployment and poverty' (WA Health Department, 2005; p.5). According to the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing (2005), the rates of STIs among the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations of Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria and the Northern Territory were significantly higher for some infections when compared to the non-Indigenous populations. By 2006, in the Northern Territory the rate of chlamydial, gonococcal and syphilis infections were significantly higher than the rates for these infections in any other State or Territory (Australian Government Department of Health and Aging, 2006). With the incidence of STIs already higher in the NT than anywhere else and affecting Indigenous people disproportionately when compared to non-Indigenous people, the incidence of STIs among Darwin's Aboriginal homeless populations, facing

the greatest level of social disadvantage, is also likely to be high, potentially exacerbated by the activities connected with transactional sex.

Despite the public health impact of STIs and the potential risks to personal safety that homeless women may be exposed to, there are few references in the literature to transactional sex within the context of Indigenous homelessness in Australia. Frances (1994), in an historical account of prostitution in Australia, briefly discusses Indigenous women. She argued that dispossessed Indigenous women were often left with little choice but to enter into prostitution in order to survive or contribute to the survival of kin.

There are likely to be many other determinants influencing the choices to, and decisions made by, homeless Indigenous women regarding engagement in this exchange. However, very little is known about the role of transactional sex in homelessness. With such limited documented knowledge on this subject, policy that explicitly addresses this aspect of homelessness, which leads to the delivery of appropriate services and supports for this population, is yet to be developed. Specifically, it is intended that this research will contribute to policies concerning public health and safety and social inclusion. Holmes and McRae-Williams (2009) recommended that the vulnerability of homeless Indigenous women in Darwin to sexual exploitation and predators should be investigated with a view to improving their health and life quality. Aligned with the national homelessness research priorities, this study is a response to that recommendation.

Report structure

As a subject that has received little scholarly attention and one that has the potential to raise ethical debate, this report has aimed to ensure that the context necessary to gain an in-depth and meaningful understanding of the subject is provided. Following a brief overview of the study objectives, a detailed examination of the relevant literature on transactional sex and Indigenous homelessness is provided. Drawing from this knowledge base, the methodology and methods

used in this exploratory study is then described. The report then turns to a detailed discussion of the research findings before presenting a concluding discussion. Implications for policy and program development and delivery are then discussed. The report then concludes with an outline of areas for further development and investigation stemming from this inquiry.

Objectives of study

This exploratory study was guided by the following questions:

1. How does transactional sex relate to the drivers of homelessness among Indigenous women?
2. What role does transactional sex have in determining the risks to this population and how are these managed?

While the study has the potential to inform service delivery in Darwin, the findings are likely to have applicability to other settings where transactional sex (TS) forms part of the homeless experience. Addressing the Commonwealth Government's national research objectives of 'understanding homelessness' and 'informing and improving the service system', this study:

- contributes to the national and Northern Territory homelessness policy and social inclusion agendas;
- provides a detailed description of the social organisation of Indigenous homelessness as the context in which TS occurs;
- contributes to the development of relevant and innovative responses which fill gaps in service provision; and
- builds on the evidence base in order to improve outcomes for homeless Indigenous women and groups.

What is known about transactional sex among homeless Indigenous women?

Overview

This literature review begins by defining the term transactional sex. The exchange of sex for monetary gain is then explored from the divergent feminist perspectives of the exchange as a form of violence and as a form of work. Limitations of these opposing positions in relation to this present study are explored and the need to move beyond these feminist discourses in relation to homeless Indigenous women is discussed. The review then turns its attention to the nature of transactional sex in other relationships, drawing largely on African studies that have emerged in response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, as well as those studies that report on transactional sex in a Western cultural context.

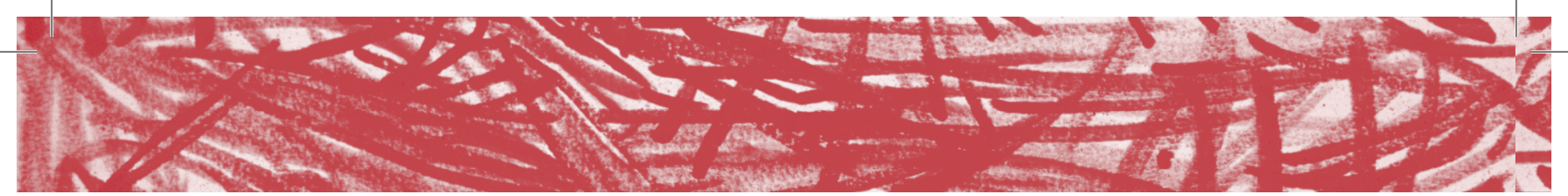
To adequately position the study, the divergent and multifaceted meaning of homelessness is explored through a discussion on the meaning of home. The review then focuses on the profound effects of colonisation on Aboriginal peoples and the implications for contemporary homelessness. Issues with quantifying homeless populations in the Northern Territory are examined and the lived experience of homelessness for Aboriginal people in Darwin is explored. Concluding this chapter is a discussion on what is known about transactional sex among Aboriginal populations in the Northern Territory, and more specifically among Aboriginal people living rough in Darwin.

Transactional sex: the continuum

'Transactional sex' is an emerging concept in academic discourse. It captures the economic exchange that may be implicit or explicit in sexual relationships. Dunkle *et al.* (2010) has defined transactional sex as the '*broad conceptual space between sex work, on the one hand, and gifts or material support freely offered and accepted as part of courtship or ongoing expressions of love, on the other*' (p.91).

Hence, in academic critique transactional sex incorporates discussions on explicit exchanges of sex for money and the sex industry, right through to the role of economic exchange within ordinary sexual relationships. The debates within the literature span: public health imperatives; gender and economic inequalities; violence and power differentials; labour forces and livelihood; social-cultural dimensions of relationships; and social inclusion. As Hunter (2002) has observed, the use of the term 'transactional sex' is intended to be flexible in order to capture the intricacy of sex as a physical embodied experience that is defined and shaped by larger social and cultural processes and '*is always simultaneously material and meaningful in complex ways*' (p.101).

'Prostitution' or what is now known as 'sex work', at the sharp end of the continuum, is a clearly defined practice in academic discourse that involves the '*explicit and direct exchange of sexual services for monetary gain*' (Vanwesenbeeck, 2001; p.243). For a very long time, the practice and its actors have been enshrined in ethical and moral debate. The dominant focus has been on women engaged in the exchange, (rather than their clients, males who sell sex or the ambiguity within transactional sex), and on explicit types of transactional sex where a contract defines time, place, money and rules of engagement. According to Vanwesenbeeck (2001), prior to the 1990s, there was an almost exclusive tendency for research to take the '*prostitute*' as the unit of analysis and to use '*biological explanations for the presumed 'evil characters' and 'sick personalities' of women in prostitution*' (p.243). This research emphasis has had a tendency to isolate and marginalise women and as Benoit and Shaver (2006) have concluded, academic writing on the explicit exchanges of sex for money '*has suffered from moralistic perspectives and been relegated to the realms of deviance, crime, contagion and exploitation*' (p.243).



Within contemporary academia, there has been a stratification of participation in sexual exchanges for money with the lower rungs of the social ladder associated with street walkers, the mid-range more aligned with brothel or parlour workers and a higher end of the ladder positioning call girls and escorts (see Choi and Holroyd, 2007). While a growing amount of literature on less vulnerable groups is becoming available, it is the lower stratum of women engaged in the sexual exchanges that have remained the dominant focus of research. As a result, Vanwesenbeeck (2001) suggests that these studies shaped by discourses of sexual victimisation and sexual risks have maintained the association between prostitution and misery.

Sex for monetary gain - as violence and gender inequality

Within feminist critiques, the meaning and value of exchanging sex for money in Western contexts is highly contested (O'Connell Davidson 2002; Vanwesenbeeck 2001). Some feminists, such as Catharine MacKinnon (1989; 1993), Kathleen Barry (1979; 1995), Andrea Dworkin (1974; 1993) and others (see Whisnant and Stark 2004) have expressed their deep opposition to this practice, which they refer to as 'prostitution'. They have advocated for its abolition on the grounds that it is a profound form of violence against women and that it creates and maintains gender inequalities in society.

Satz (1995) argues that prostitution represents women as the sexual servants of men. She claims that the practice, as an inherent representation of gender inequality, has third party effects, as the negative image assigned to prostitutes shapes and influences the way women in general are conceptualised and marred on the whole.

Feminists who argue for the abolition of prostitution focus attention on the victimisation experienced by prostituted women, such as incidence of early childhood abuse, exposure to violence and various forms of social and sexual subordination. MacKinnon (1993) has stated:

Prostitution occurs within multiple power relations of domination, degradation, and subservience of the pimp and trick over the

prostitute: men over women, older over younger, citizen over alien, moneyed over impoverished, violent over victimized, connected over isolated, housed over homeless, tolerated and respected over despised (pp.24-25).

Feminists who advocate for the abolition of prostitution argue that the conflation of sexual pleasure with domination and economic behaviour and the commercialisation of sex will prevent women from ever reaching social, economic or political equality in society (Heise, 1995). While few articulate a path forward beyond abolition, Satz (1995) suggests a re-focus on '*alternative models of egalitarian relations between men and women*' (p.85) among the broader society is required.

Sex for monetary gain - as work

Some feminist authors are highly critical of the abolition perspective describing it as 'prudish', 'rigid', 'anti-men' or 'anti-sex' and condemning it for being based on outdated (white middle-class) constructions of sexuality and female passivity. These critics argue that the call for abolition is merely another expression of patriarchy which attempts to repress, constrain and regulate the sexual expression of women (English *et al.* 1982; Paglia, 1990; Willis, 1992; Bright, 1993).

Pro-sex worker feminists maintain that abolitionist views fail to take into account the range and possibilities of sexual experience. Analyses of the narratives of the personal accounts of 'sex workers', which shape the pro-sex work position, describe the industry as affording economic empowerment and expressive freedom.

Pro-sex work views are generally positioned within a market economy paradigm where the exchange of sex for money is described as an industry of sex work which employs sex workers. By taking a pro-sex work position, most authors either reject (arguing its emancipation virtues), avoid or ignore the proposition that the exchange is fundamentally an act of violence against women, whereby gender-based power disparities are reinforced and maintained through the institution (Satz, 1995).



Making sense of the feminists: the muddled waters

The abolitionist and pro-sex worker positions saw the advent of what has come to be known as the 'Feminist Sex Wars' in the late 1980s. With two clearly demarcated feminist positions about sexuality, the practice of exchanging sex for money provided fertile ground for highly contentious debate. While women engaged in the practice are at the heart of these debates, their lived reality may not fit comfortably within either of these positions. As O'Connell Davidson (2002) points out, this polarisation can be disconcerting where elements of both sides of the debate have credibility. The interplay of these positions has brought to the fore the underlying '*questions of power, resistance and the possibility of female sexual agency under patriarchy*' (Bernstein, 1999; p.91).

Despite their apparently irreconcilable positions, at the heart of these positions women's empowerment and equality remain fundamental. Perhaps they seem insurmountable, as each requires revolutionary societal shifts of global proportions. Imagining a world without women exchanging sex for money is as equally difficult as imagining one where the practice is not stigmatised, or of imagining a world where all women are not disempowered and subjected to forms of violence. While a diversity of views exists within feminist critique on sexuality and economic exchange involving sex, the dominant positions, being pro-sex and abolitionism, present ethical struggles. With such powerful discourses, the creation of alternative spaces for dialogue to occur that advance the questions around power, resistance and agency, have gained little momentum.

While abolitionist views seek to address female disempowerment, they inadvertently objectify women prostitutes (as receptacle for men), and deny them their subjective experiences in which agency and empowerment are sourced.

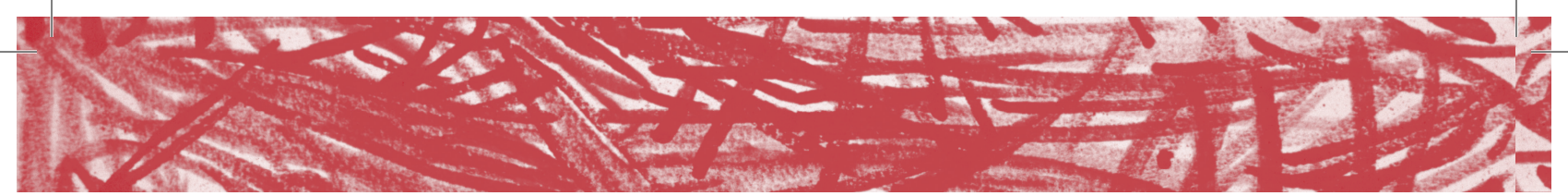
The pro-sex movement is also afflicted with the same problem. By often using the narratives of a privileged minority of sex workers always from within the constraints of a work choice labour

market discourse, the broader context in which power operates and the subjective experiences of the majority of women engaged in the exchange are overlooked. The possibility of liberating women from either of these standpoints and adequately exploring the rights and wrongs of exchanging sex for money is suffocated.

The static nature of irreconcilable stand points, that is, sexual exchange for money as work or as a form of gender violence, has propelled the feminist debate also into the territory of consent. Pro-sex advocates argue that consent is important, and that sex workers, as adult women with agency, can and do make informed choices concerning their sexual exchanges. Abolitionists, on the other hand reject that the majority of women in prostitution have choice and point to the factors effecting the decisions around participation in the exchange as discrediting any notion of consent within a framework of social justice and equality. Consent is complicated, as highlighted by Vanwesenbeeck (2001) who notes that on one end of the spectrum there is forced prostitution with a clear victim, and on the other end, there is voluntary prostitution where consent remains contested ground.

Some authors are critical of the inadequate examination of consent and the underlying hidden power structures that place women in unequal or coercive positions within the pro-sex work discourse (Ferguson, 1984; Bernstein, 1999). Yet a growing number of highly articulate sex workers and activists have documented their experiences which stand as a form of evidence that choice can operate within the institution of sex work (for example see, Almodovar, 1993; French & Lee, 1988). This evidence base has been criticised as stemming from a privileged minority, and thus for being a biased and unrepresentative voice:

It is not entirely clear how representative their voices are, or if other prostitutes, particularly those in the lower end of the industry, share their perspective or how they envision their work at all (Bernstein, 1999; p.92).



While the lived experience of these women add credibility to the pro-sex position, it is difficult to ignore the volume of evidence that points to the majority of women who exchange sex for money being from impoverished backgrounds where a multiplicity of power struggles are at play (Mackinnon, 1993). Yet taking a monological position, as the abolitionist Farley (Farley *et al.* 2003, Farley & Lynne 2004, Farley 2006) has done, is equally problematic. Weitzer (2010) asserts that Farley's work, along with many other abolitionists, lacks academic rigour and its propensity to box sex workers as a homogenous group of victims. In Western society, engagement in the exchange of sex for money has consistently been linked to childhood sexual and physical abuse, runaway and/or homeless youth, poverty and gender and racially motivated discrimination (Vanwesenbeeck, 2001; Weiser *et al.*, 2006; Eyrich-Garg *et al.*, 2008; Bohashev *et al.*, 2009). With this in mind, MacKinnon (1993) asked the question, *'If prostitution is a free choice, why are the women with the fewest choices the ones most often found doing it?'* (p.26), and if it were free choice, wonders what 'coercion' would then look like. She contends that where poverty has been a coercive factor in entering prostitution, for the majority it is impossible to exit into another career.


Yet, the pro-sex focus on protecting women through achieving workers rights within this well established and socially and culturally embedded industry is understandable. It is driven by a concern to recognise the legitimacy of sex work as a career, which takes it beyond a pragmatic sense that sex work is not going away in any hurry without the gender revolution that abolitionist positions imply. Despite this focus, improved workers' rights will give no surety to overcoming the stigma of prostitution. The exchange does not occur within a vacuum, but within a larger complex world where its meaning is shaped by those inhabiting the institution, as well as those in ordinary society (including abolitionists) who may stigmatise it.

The major limitation of both the abolitionist and pro-sex work positions is that they place gender relations at the centre, ignoring issues of class and race or only engaging with them

as complications. As Razack (1998) has stated, *'From this perspective, patriarchy is the culprit and white supremacy and capitalism are merely the accomplices'* (p.339). She argues that the spaces and bodies of prostitution are fundamentally related to the spaces and bodies of respectability, and as such, prostitution not only plays a role in maintaining male dominance over women but also one of securing a bourgeois and white social order. In this way *'we are all connected because the violence directed at some of us enables others to live lives of lesser violence. Prostitution is thus always about racial, class, and male dominance, and it is always violent'* (p.359).

If the aim of pro-sex work is to liberate all women from patriarchal repression, it is difficult to imagine how this can eventuate when the institution of prostitution itself plays such a pivotal role in reinforcing not only male dominance and female subservience, but also class and race inequalities. When positive narratives of sex work are reported, and clearly give important meaning to the lives of women, yet we can not discount the possibility that these are also tools for the management of wider societal stigma. Drawing from the seminal work of Erving Goffman (1963) on stigma, the prostitute has a marred or spoilt identity and is simultaneously a symbol of a stigmatised industry, with the dominant group determining who is normal and who is stigmatised. Shifting dominant cultural attitudes and behaviours is a slow process, with limited evidence of progress in this regard in the Western world (Vanwesenbeeck, 2001). Similarly, to assume that sex exists outside of and untainted by multiple layers and dimensions of power is naive. Diamond and Quinby (1984) suggest that, *'heeding Foucault's analysis of how power operates in a society of normalization will better equip feminists to deal with such complex issues'* (p.122). For example, Razack (1998) states it is not simply about gender relations but also about space and place:

Space determines who belongs to the nation state and who does not, and consequently, who has rights and who does not...to be displaced, homeless or a migrant, that is, to be without place, is to be without moral



standing. These conditions – displacement, homelessness, migration – create prostitution and what prostitution upholds creates them (p.367).

Transactional sex, power and public health

The majority of the scholarly literature on transactional sex has assumed a focus on prostitution as a sex industry and has positioned the sexual exchange within a work oriented framework. This focus on an exotic, outsider, marginal and stigmatised population or industry of 'sex workers' has shrouded economic transactions occurring within all other sexual relationships under an invisible cloak. By default, these less examined, poorly defined forms of sexual exchange have become 'normalised' in their ambiguity, reinforcing the stigma of prostitution as 'difference' by virtue of explicit contractual exchange. Yet ironically, as Pateman (1988) and Bernstein (1999) have pointed out, both prostitution and marriage are the sexual contracts on which patriarchal society was founded.

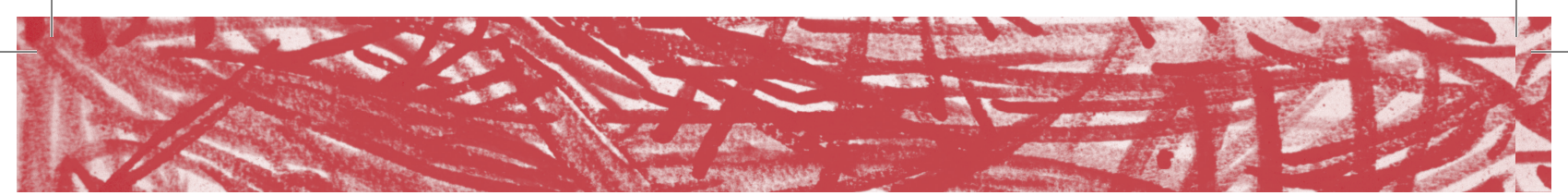
Loates and Walsh (2010) argue for the need to make assumptions about intimate relationships more visible, and through this, position them within larger systemic forces. Economic transactions often occur within non-prostitute/client relationships. These transactions and the identity assigned to individuals are shaped by larger social systems and beliefs. For example, the position of wife within a marriage contract, when compared with the position of a sex worker in a brothel with a workplace contract, has implications for how society understands the transaction and the individual. Yet the motivations behind engagement in transactional sex may well be similar whether the woman is wife or sex worker. The reason/s for the lack of examination of economic exchange in relationships outside of prostitution are equally relevant and point to cultural beliefs around the moral goodness of (and in former times, the legal necessity of females submitting to) sex in marriage, where selling sex for money stands in opposition and reflects the devious other. The potential of 'prostitution' to corrupt the institution of marriage (as the assumed 'good') is pivotal to the process of stigmatisation in all societies.

The limited focus on transactional sex beyond the confines of sex industry research can also be explained by cultural taboos which limit the gaze of the researcher. According to Foucault (1976), sexuality is socially constructed and as a discourse, has gained traction since at least the 1600s. He comments:

What is peculiar to modern societies, in fact, is not that they consigned sex to a shadow existence, but that they dedicated themselves to speaking of it *ad infinitum*, while exploiting it as *the secret* (p.35).

The dominant academic discourse for discussing sex and sexuality is provided by biomedical science which has a clinical focus on cause and effect. Early interests concentrated on the discovery of biological explanations for sexual transgressions from the norm, including attempts to distinguish women who sold sex for money from other women in a community and explain their deviance. With little success in the scientific endeavour for biological truths, researchers turned their attention to the motivations, characteristics and circumstances of women in order to explain their entry into prostitution. Dominated by quantitative modes of inquiry, this research has generally been underpinned by the assumption that explicit exchanges of sex for money and economic transactions in other sexual relationships are inherently devious. Uncovering explanations for this deviance, such as victimhood or coercion, has remained a preoccupation.

The advent of HIV and AIDS in the 1980s saw a proliferation of public health research which had the imperative of understanding and preventing the spread of disease across the world. In medical and epidemiological studies, prostitutes were identified as a likely vector for the epidemic. The research approach, which was often moralising and stigmatising, soon gathered empirical evidence proving that prostitutes were in fact not the primary vectors researchers had assumed them to be. Despite being found to play little role in the spread of the disease in the Western world, the continued research attention to HIV risk among this population stands as evidence of the deeply held perception that sex workers



are a source of contagion. In non-Western and developing countries HIV and AIDS or other sexual disease risks also remain the predominate framework of research on sex work with disease rates and concerns around condom use most common (Rhodes *et al.*, 2008; Reed *et al.*, 2010; Sirotin *et al.*, 2010). Weir *et al.* (2003), however, have pointed out that while HIV research usually focuses on 'high risk groups' such as commercial sex workers in sub-Saharan Africa, there is little evidence to suggest that this decreases infection in the general population.


HIV/AIDS began to infect an increasing population in Africa. Researchers came to realise that the term 'prostitution', in its traditional Western form, was a limiting factor in understanding the cause and effect relationship in 'risky sexual behaviour' and the rampant spread of HIV/AIDS. The cultural norms around economic transactions in sexual relationships became critical to disease prevention, with an increasing number of ethnographic investigations being undertaken in addition to the traditional focus on prostitution (Luke & Kurz, 2002). It is through these studies that the term 'transactional sex' gathered momentum in academic discussion (Kaufman & Stavrou, 2004; Maganja *et al.*, 2007; Poulin, 2007; Wamoyi *et al.*, 2010; Hunter, 2002). In these inquiries, women do not identify as sex workers, nor are they defined by others as sex workers with clients. Rather, they are women living from day to day in a social organisation where sexual exchanges with material flows are constructed as relationships of boyfriend and girlfriend and are essential to survival and social inclusion. Wamoyi *et al.* (2010) has pointed out that, while there are exceptions, young people engaging in pre-marital relationships in rural Tanzania '*rarely expressed the wish to get to know someone of the opposite sex, other than to negotiate having sex, and sexual intercourse did not symbolise emotional intimacy*' (p.6).

For both men and women, survival and social inclusion is often contingent on having multiple partners:

Class differences are also important. In an increasingly winner-takes-all sexual economy - where wealth can secure many girlfriends and poverty none - those marginalised from the productive economy also face marginalisation from the sexual economy (Hunter, 2002; p.109).

In a study with young people in Malawi, Poulin (2007) found that women receiving money/gifts from men in exchange for sex marked commitment, love and movement toward marriage in sexual relationships for both parties. Wamoyi *et al.* (2010) found in their case study that for women '*To have sex and not to seek material exchange would have had serious symbolic implications for them, suggesting they were sexually available to anyone and did not value themselves*' (p.14). Poulin (2007) described the link between sex and money as nuanced and normative and that a driving force related to the women's need for economic resources. Poor women appreciated the economic value gained from having sexual relationships. Similarly, Wamoyi *et al.* (2010) in a Tanzanian study reported that 'young women actively used their sexuality as an economic resource... they often willingly entered into relationships primarily for economic gain' (p.15). As Maganja *et al.* (2007) have explained, transactional sex is both a survival strategy and a normative part of relationships whereby women have agency in the process through using explicit strategies to extract resources from partners and 'use material support from partners as a mechanism to initiate, maintain and terminate relationships' (p.979).

In Mandeni, Hunter (2002) described the nature of transactional sex as it related to the concepts of subsistence (survival) and consumption (luxury oriented items). Loosely, subsistence in this context describes poor women with limited options for economic survival and no secure food source, whereas consumption refers to women who have networks of support for basic survival but receive gifts of cash or consumption goods, such as phones, through sexual exchanges (see also Wamoyi *et al.*, 2010). Hunter (2002) demonstrated that these concepts are linked in intricate ways, for example women may need consumption goods in order to secure their position in exchanges for subsistence.



Looking and smelling nice, for example, may be essential in attracting opportunities that secure food. He concluded that whether using sex for subsistence or consumption,

...women sew themselves into the very fabric of masculinity through their own agency. Women actively qoma (choose) men – while operating through patriarchal structures they rarely see themselves as 'victims' (p.116).

The African-based ethnographic research has remained entrenched in discussions concerning HIV/AIDS disease prevention, control and treatment (Luke & Kurz, 2002). Through drawing attention to the lived reality in certain social and cultural contexts, it has challenged public health initiatives often based on behavioural change models alone, which place emphasis on personal responsibility for sexual health and fail to acknowledge structures of power (Mabala, 2008). For example, Dunkle *et al.* (2010), in a USA study on transactional sex found that the exchange was '*associated with binge drinking and drug use among women*' (p.91); a finding consistent with studies in other settings. This factor alone has significant implications for behavioural change interventions and women's capacity to manage their sexual health.

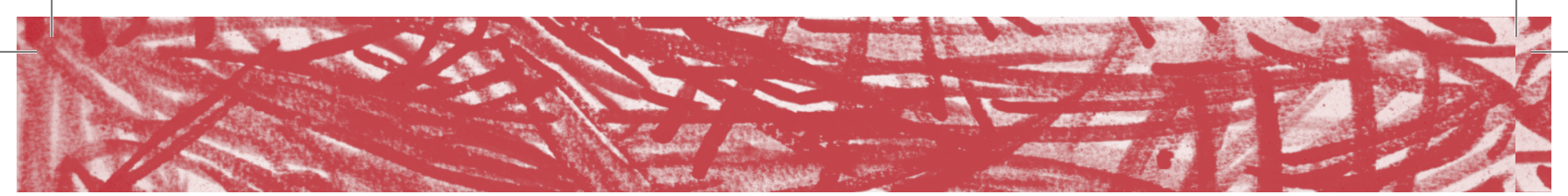
Jauregui (2009) has observed that increased knowledge regarding sexual health among homeless young people does not necessarily change risky sexual behaviours. She points to numerous studies which conclude that the challenges of homelessness create significant barriers to healthy behaviour, despite a good knowledge base. Dunkle *et al.* (2010) maintained that STI rates, including HIV/AIDS, would continue to rise among women with limited economic opportunities and argued that '*risk reduction policies and programs in the U.S. need to explicitly address overall economic disempowerment among women, as well as racial disparities in poverty*' (p.90). Similarly, Auslander *et al.* (1998) argued that 'at risk' young people were unmotivated to change risky sexual behaviours, despite having acquired skills, such as planning, problem solving, decision-making and assertive communication, when they perceived they had few life options.

They maintained that effective interventions must also include skills and incentives for educational planning – a view that is consistent with those who highlight the importance of empowering homeless women through increasing their economic opportunities.

Maganja *et al.* (2007) have pointed out that, '*Women are at a disadvantage in negotiating safe sexual behaviour with their casual partners because of the direct exchange of sex for money or other resources in these relationships*' (p.978). They suggest that in places like Tanzania, men generally control the terms and conditions of their sexual partnerships '*thus, we need better strategies to engage men, and effective interventions to change their attitudes and behaviours related to power and control in relationships*' (p.980). This ethnographic literature has also been critical in broadening our understanding of sex and its relationship to economic transactions among people of all cultures, particularly those where poverty is entrenched.

The growing body of literature that investigates sex tourism in Asian countries has also worked to challenge the commonly assumed binary between commercial and non-commercial sexual exchanges that exist in many Western contexts (Cohen, 1993). It highlights that Western classifications of prostitute and client fail to adequately describe the open-ended 'incompletely commercialised' transaction that occurs in this tourism environment (Cohen, 1993), whereby '*women play down the commercial basis of exchanges and do not seek reimbursement before or after each sexual act, but extract material reward in a variety of forms: meals, drinks, jewellery, designer clothes, housing and international travel for example*' (Gallagher, 2003; p.9).

Despite the limited examination of transactional sex in Western societies outside of the institution of more formalised sex work, a revolutionary study which explored the sexual attitudes of more than 100,000 American women, known as the Hite Report (1976), found that middle class women made economic evaluations of their relationships when having sex (Hite, 2004). In a more recent study, Dunkle *et al.* (2010)



investigated transactional sex among a large number of unmarried African American and white women in the USA (n=1453). A significant number of participants entered and stayed in relationships for economic reasons alone. They found that *'staying in sexual relationships for economic reasons and having transactional sex with non-regular partners are common among US women and extend broadly beyond commercial sex work and sex for money or drugs'* (p.99).

Western-based studies on the topic, although sporadic, have tended to concentrate on identifying correlates associated with engaging in transactional sex and are framed within public health discourses of 'risky sexual behaviour' (that is, levels of condom use). This evidence suggests that being female, older, of African American or Indigenous race, having a history of illicit drug use, incarceration and a prior mental health hospitalisation are all associated with increased levels of engagement in transactional sex (Eyrich-Garg *et al.*, 2008). Being homeless is also consistently associated with transactional sex and risky sexual behaviour for both males and females (Weiser *et al.*, 2006; Eyrich-Garg *et al.*, 2008; Bohashev *et al.*, 2009). In the homeless context, there is evidence of a shifting discourse from 'transactional sex' to 'survival sex'.

Survival sex is described by Greene *et al.* (1999) as *'the selling of sex to meet subsistence needs. It includes the exchange of sex for shelter, food, drugs or money'* (p.1406). Greene *et al.* (1999), in a US study with homeless youth, found that survival sex:

was significantly and positively related to age, length of time away from home, and previous hospitalisation in a psychiatric hospital...the odds of engaging in survival sex were increased for youths who had been victimized, those who had participated in criminal behaviours, those who had attempted suicide, those who had an STD, and those who had been pregnant. Survival sex was strongly associated with all recent substance use indicators and with lifetime injection drug use (p.1408).

Levan *et al.* (2007), in their study of Indigenous homelessness in Canada, also use the term survival sex and have stated that, *'Poverty stricken people are often forced to prostitute themselves in a variety of ways to meet basic needs for survival... women are often forced to engage in sexual relationships in exchange for accommodation'* (p.12).

While abolitionist views about prostitution have been accused of constructing women as victims and failing to recognise the agency that women may experience in their transactions, the notion of survival sex may also be vulnerable to such critiques. As Edwards *et al.* (2006) have pointed out that transactional sex among the general population is not well understood yet their US study indicates that *'considerable numbers of youths in the general population have exchanged sex'* (p.357).

The African centred ethnographic studies have revealed that transactional sex can be an exchange which exists outside the social stigma associated with prostitution and even with the sex industry. However, like with sex industry studies, this work points to the need to understand women's agency within a complex socio-economic and cultural fabric. Similarly, homeless populations form distinguishable cultural groups, and have defined behaviours, beliefs and survival strategies (Glasser and Bridgman, 1999) in which transactional sex operates. As such, transactional sex can only be understood through an acknowledgment that sexuality is a cultural construct (not simply a biological phenomenon) which both shapes, and is shaped by, larger political, social and economic environments.

Homelessness life worlds and transactional sex

In order to understand homelessness, we need to first explore the notion of 'home', as a multi-faceted concept (Annison, 2000), in order to realise what has been lost. This knowledge, in turn, assists us to better understand what Robinson (2004) has referred to as 'the lived trajectory' or lived experience of homelessness. The lived experience or reality for homeless Indigenous women in Darwin provides the context in which transactional sex occurs.



Loss of home

Home can be a haven or conversely, a place of oppression and fear. It can be a site for political action or radical activity. Home may be constituted by a family, a place for social relations and connectivity or refer to a house, place, space, town or country of birth, work or memories. It may also be a state of being in the world, a reflection of the self or the foundations of one's identity (Mallet, 2004). Home can also be a homeland, town, city, community or outstation¹, or where a person's family is or where a person usually lives. It can be a network of relationships in which people stay, arrive and leave. It can be many places with many states of being. Home can be about where you are going rather than where you are from, which is consistent with Tucker's (1994) belief that 'home-searching' is a basic human trait necessary for survival of the species.

Home, therefore, has no singular meaning and the experience of loss of home is contingent on an individual's conception of home in the first place, shaped by both cultural and social factors (Tipple & Speak, 2005; Holmes, 2007). Despite the differing experiences of home, loss of home and house have been found to have a profound effect on individuals, families and whole communities, generative of severe grief resembling the loss suffered from the death and dying process of a family member (Relph, 1976; Anthony, 1997). Such loss, however, only partially captures the lived trajectory or experience of homelessness.

Gradual and profound loss: Aboriginal people in colonial Australia

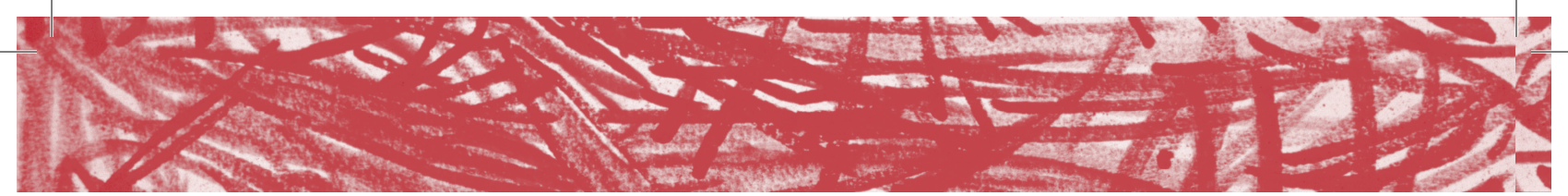
Homelessness for Aboriginal people is situated within a history of perpetual displacement. Langton (2003) contends that today, many Aboriginal Long Grass people in Darwin are there because of the '*radical displacement of Aboriginal people in the northern frontier society*' (p.1). The suffering of Aboriginal people, in all its interrelated dimensions, since colonisation by Europeans settlers throughout Australia has been well documented (Berndt & Berndt, 1978; Reynolds, 1981; Harris, 1990; Rowse, 1998). Central to the colonial endeavour has been the management

of Aboriginal people through the control of their traditional lands and their movement (Reynolds, 1981; Rowse, 1998). Occurring at a very rapid rate, colonisation has in many instances hindered the capacity of Aboriginal groups to survive independently of colonial institutions. For a hunter/gatherer society where high levels of mobility across country are the norm, the disruption of traditional social and cultural organisation has resulted in diverse responses. Expressions of profound loss and grief of home and identity remain central to the lived world for many people (Atkinson, 2007).

In the early days of colonial occupation of the Northern Territory, it was common for Aboriginal people to be chased off their land and hunted and killed by frontier settlers (Cole, 1985). As the process progressed, pastoral stations were established. Aboriginal people were then seen as a potential labour force. They were made to work by force or because there was no sustainable means for independent survival. They received meagre rations for their work (Berndt & Berndt, 1987; McGrath, 1987) and their treatment was slave-like (McGrath, 1995). The missions and government ration stations provided additional means to herd and better control Aboriginal groups (Curthoys & Moore, 1995). Frontier experiences of colonisation for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory are not positioned in a distant past, but are still evident in living memory (McRae-Williams, 2008).

In Darwin, the presence of Aboriginal groups and their mobility has been constructed as a problem since the early days of European settlement in the late 1800s (Wells, 2003). Herding, containing and segregating Aboriginal groups from white people, through the formation of designated camps and other mechanisms, has been described by Day (2008).

¹ An outstation refers to an Aboriginal settlement whereby Aboriginal people reconnect with more traditional living practices on home country. Known as the outstation or 'homelands movement', from the early 1970s some smaller groups of Aboriginal people moved (sometimes forcibly) away from the larger communities or settlements (Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, Commissioner Elliott Johnston 1991).



In Day's (2008) ethno-historical account, from the 1930s to the present day, the dilemma of successive governments in managing the 'Aboriginal problem' (that is, their presence) is omnipresent. Aboriginal people were perceived as uncivilised, a source of contagion, and as a threat to the social order by their engagement in 'immoral' activities, such as drinking and gambling. This sentiment is captured through a government memorandum which suggested the '*scrubland and swamps [on the reserve] provide the seclusion ideal for drinking and gambling orgies and other forms of anti-social behaviour...*' (Wells, 1995b, as cited in Day, 2008; n.p). In short, the presence of Aboriginal visitors to Darwin presented a threat to the fledgling European settlement, creating an ongoing imperative to control their mobility while in town or through their removal from town.

While controlling population movement is fundamental to state organisation for all people, Aboriginal populations in the Northern Territory continue to be highly mobile. Travelling is a desirable state of being for many Aboriginal people and is a way of reaffirming, maintaining and caring for relationships with people and places (Cowlshaw 1999; McRae-Williams, 2008; Musharbash, 2008; McRae-Williams & Gerritsen, 2010). Long and Memmott (2007) found that:

Much mobility can be defined as a social process geared simultaneously towards the enjoyment of social interaction, the maintenance of social relationships and the maintenance of social identity.

Thus when people visit family and friends they are not merely taking part in an enjoyable social occasion, they are also reinforcing reciprocal ties and obligations, all of which are essential parts of their social fabric (see Foster *et al.*, 2005:35). Kinship is maintained through mobility, kinship makes mobility possible, kinship supports mobility, and kinship contributes to the definition of mobility regions (p.4).

In contemporary Darwin, Aboriginal people come from remote communities, outstations, regional centres and other locations for a range of reasons (Holmes 2007; Holmes & McRae-Williams, 2009). Some stay for a short time,

others for a long time. For many, accommodation is unavailable, inaccessible and unaffordable, necessitating people to camp or 'stop in the Long Grass'. While all are without shelter, some may feel homeless and others may feel placed and homed. Irrespective of how Aboriginal people construct their experience and identity, public attitudes towards them have changed little. In a recent study which examined both life among Aboriginal people staying in the Long Grass and the dominant population's views of this group, Holmes and McRae-Williams (2009) found:

...being Aboriginal in the Long Grass, and indeed in public places, was a problem... Public drinking and being drunk; arguing and fighting among families; the impact on amenity levels; being a source of contagion; and the problems Aboriginal people caused themselves, reinforced feelings of suspicion... Their way of existing... was repugnant to the dominant group, beleaguering the social order and affronting accepted systems of beliefs, values and attitudes (pp.65-66).


Contemporary mainstream notions of homelessness

Like Aboriginal people and sex workers, homeless people constitute a highly stigmatised population and are marginalised from society. Phelan *et al.* (1997) have suggested that dominant groups disseminate systems of beliefs, values and attitudes which are internalised by most of society; a process which defends the social order. In this context, Phelan *et al.* (1997) argued that it is inevitable that homeless people will be stigmatised for their abject poverty:

...identifying a person as being homeless, rather than eliciting compassion or reducing blame, engenders a degree of stigma over and above that attached to poverty...a label of homelessness significantly increased social distance (p.332).

Goffman (1963) identified three key forms of stigma:

- physical deformities of the body;
- blemishes of individual character (such as those affected by mental disorders, imprisonment,



addiction, alcoholism, homosexuality and unemployment); and

- tribal stigma of race and religion.

He described a stigma as an attribute of an individual that is deeply discrediting, making the person different from the social group, *'of a less desirable kind...reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one'* (p.3). He held that while individual attributes were central to stigma, it was their relationship to the expectations of the social group that defined and determined whether an individual was credible or not.

While homelessness itself is highly stigmatised, the associated conditions also break the rules established by the dominant group. For example, living rough with no fixed address, being unemployed, receiving welfare benefits, engaging in sex work or transactional sex, being an alcoholic or drug addict all work to exacerbate the assigned stigma. According to Hopper (1988), failing to participate in 'normal' social processes attract a deviant stigma. He observed, *'homelessness remains locked with the conceptual brace of 'deviancy''* (p.164).

Yet the limited understanding by Australian society on homelessness is exacerbated by government policies that fail to reflect the lived realities for this stigmatised population. Veness (1993) has observed that by narrowing the definition of homelessness around structures, economic position and legal rights, quality of life issues are not addressed. Curiously, in Australia, definitions of homelessness have been formulated on shelter type (Flatau *et al.*, 2006) and have done little to explain differing social and cultural meanings and experiences. Nor do they capture the experience as it is shaped by the attitudes of the dominant group.

Founded on methodologies developed by Chamberlain and MacKenzie (1992), the Australian Bureau of Statistics identifies three categories among the homeless population for enumeration purposes during national Census: the primary, secondary and tertiary homeless. The primary homeless consist of people without conventional accommodation, such as those sleeping rough, in improvised dwellings or squatting in derelict buildings, cars and railway carriages. In Darwin, the

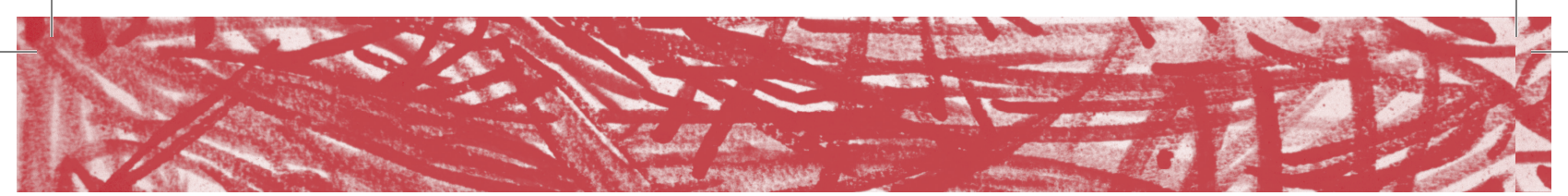
Northern Territory, this is referred to as staying in the Long Grass. The secondary homeless category includes those that regularly move from one form of temporary shelter to another, such as people in hostels and night shelters, as well as those in supported accommodation, and the tertiary group refers to those in boarding houses on a medium to long term basis (Chamberlain & MacKenzie, 2009; Memmott *et al.*, 2003).

Quantifying homelessness in the NT and Darwin

In the 2006 Census, the Northern Territory of Australia had a total population of 193,000, of which 28% identified as Indigenous Australians (ABS, 2007). Taylor and Biddle (2008) estimated that the Indigenous population may have been undercounted by as much as 19% and Chamberlain and MacKenzie (2009) concluded that this is also likely to be the case with the Indigenous homeless population.

According to Holmes and McRae-Williams (2009), accurate figures on Aboriginal homeless populations are very difficult to obtain, affected by factors such as: high levels of mobility; movement in and out of homelessness; hiding (to avoid police, other authorities and mainstream society, to light fires to cook and stay warm etc.); cultural reasons (for example, shame and stigma attached to being homeless); social reforms or interventions (such as the NT Emergency Response) and other methodological challenges. Consequently, Census data on Indigenous homelessness must be treated with caution as they may significantly under-estimate the size of the affected population.

Keeping the likelihood of under-estimation in mind, the 2006 Census identified 4,785 people as being homeless in the NT; a rate of 248 per 10,000 population. This population was older than the national profile, with more than 35% aged 45 or more. In Darwin (which includes Darwin City, Palmerston and Litchfield Shires) there were 2,478 homeless people, reflecting a rate of 234 per 10,000 of population. This rate was significantly higher than other Australian cities, such as Melbourne (41 per 10,000) and Adelaide (47 per 10,000).



Indigenous people were over-represented in all categories of homelessness, and were homeless at a rate three times higher than non-Indigenous people (Chamberlain & MacKenzie, 2009).

Indigenous homelessness today

Highlighting the limitations of the shelter oriented definition (and noting the underestimation of the size of the population affected), Keys Young (1998) examined the meaning of homelessness from the perspective of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Five distinct types were identified which included: spiritual forms linked to separation from traditional land or family; overcrowding; relocation and transient homelessness due to transient and mobile lifestyles and the necessity of travel for access to services; escaping an unsafe or unstable home for safety or survival reasons; and a lack of access to a stable shelter, accommodation or housing, with nowhere to go. Participants in their study believed that homelessness was experienced differently to non-Indigenous people due to underlying factors combining with poor health, economic and social status of Indigenous people. Keys Young (1998) also found that being branded homeless could bring major stigma and shame to communities.

Similarly, Memmott *et al.* (2003) observed that Aboriginal Australians living without walls or a roof may see themselves as both 'placed' and 'homed' and advocated for the term 'public place dwellers' to better capture this segment of the population:

...who do not pay for accommodation, have a visible profile (socialising, sheltering, drinking, arguing and fighting in public), have low incomes of which a substantial part is often spent on alcohol, have generally few possessions (minimal clothes and bedding), and usually conform to a 'beat' of places where they camp and socialise in particular public or semi-public areas (Memmott *et al.*, 2003; p.i).

Despite advances in our understanding of Aboriginal homelessness, loss and grief, and the dominant social processes which serve to marginalise already disadvantaged groups,

societies resist anything 'different'. The same process that unconsciously works to marginalise, compels society to appeal for 'sameness'.

The lived experience of homelessness in Darwin for Indigenous people


Snow and Anderson (1993) suggest a poverty or homeless culture is distinctive for its '*patterned set of behaviors, routines and orientations that are adaptive responses to the predicament of homelessness itself and to the associated conditions of street life*' (p.76). In addition to adaptive behaviours and routines, they point to three key elements that shape homeless cultures:

- the political climate which regulates how days are spent;
- the ecological environment, encompassing the distribution of institutions and marginal spaces in a community; and
- the emergent moral codes which provide an elementary guide to behavioural routines and social interactions.

In a seminal work by anthropologist Basil Sansom (1980), the social organisation and social nuances of homeless populations in Darwin during the 1970s were well documented. His work drew attention to the lived experience of Aboriginal people in the fringe camps of Darwin (today categorised as the primary homeless) who rejected working for the 'white man'. He described the economic and social organisation that occurred, brokered by 'masterful' men (or leaders), based on a distinct system of internal Aboriginal exchange. He commented:

...the camps of Aboriginal fringe dwellers in Darwin are run as informal Aboriginal hotels... Fringe dwellers are thus brokers who mediate relationships between countrymen of the hinterland and the citizenry of Darwin. For their services they extract brokerage and so the camps of fringe dwelling mobs are, in our sense, run as businesses (p.7).

In describing the culture or lived experience of Aboriginal homelessness in Darwin, the processes of normalisation and stigmatisation become pivotal. These processes have implications for structural responses to homelessness which aim



to educate, employ and house people, for instance, yet at the same time work to exclude, stigmatise and punish those who have broken, or continue to break, the 'rules'. Exclusion from participation in 'normal' society has consequences for the health, wellbeing and life quality of individuals. In Darwin's Long Grass, the challenges are great as the high visibility of homeless Aboriginal people attract adverse moral judgements, reinforcing a cycle of disadvantage, but which largely ignore the persistence of a culture of resistance.

In an earlier study, one of the current authors (Holmes, 2007) examined the lived experience of homelessness in Darwin and found that managing stigma was a key dimension of everyday life which informed behaviours and attitudes about most things. This study, along with several since (see Holmes *et al.*, 2007; Holmes & McRae-Williams, 2009; Holmes, 2010) have found that Aboriginal people in the Long Grass believe that they are persecuted. Many described feeling harassed by police, council officers and other patrols. This has increased the level of local mobility as individuals try to avoid trouble in an urban milieu where gentrification has worked to squeeze out traces of poverty.

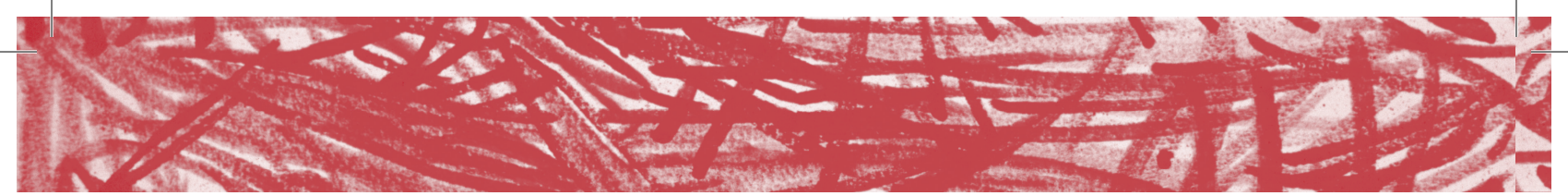
Mobility, however, is a feature of both Aboriginal and homeless life worlds in Darwin. People may move from family, to shelters, to police cells, to the Long Grass, to other communities and may return to their homelands. They are constantly on the move, in and out of homelessness, and in and out of forms of homelessness. Mobility is motivated by pressure and the need to reinforce the social fabric, as discussed above, but also as a result of accessing the services and provisions necessary for basic survival. Decisions on where to camp (or 'stop') or where to move to are also influenced by: the rituals surrounding drinking of alcohol and social interactions; amenity and aesthetics; safety; the opportunity to advance or avoid social/cultural family needs/obligations; and affordability and/or no other alternative (Holmes & McRae-Williams, 2009).

While stigma was found to have a significant influence on everyday life for homeless people in Darwin, Holmes (2007) also found that the

experience of profound trauma was universal among participants, highlighting the likelihood of trauma-related illness among the population. Trauma, like stigma, shaped everyday life patterns and decisions, with alcohol used to self-medicate its symptoms, such as coping with debilitating memories, emotional pain and hyper-vigilance (being highly alert). Using an Australian Aboriginal version of the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire (Atkinson, 2007), Holmes and McRae-Williams (2009) examined the prevalence of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder among this same population and found that the lifetime exposure of participants to traumatic events, where individuals feared for their lives or the life of someone else, was significant.

Over half of the study population reported direct exposure to every trauma on the questionnaire, with the exception of rape and/or sexual abuse. In the week prior to being interviewed, participants also reported being affected by symptoms commonly associated with post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Being on-guard and on the lookout for trouble; feeling alone and the need to avoid people; and avoiding reminders of hurtful or bad things were experienced by more than 70% of participants. One in five of the study participants were found to be PTSD symptomatic. Alcohol was also used to self-medicate in the absence of alternative options (Holmes & McRae-Williams, 2009).

With inadequate shelter, people in Darwin's Long Grass need to be very resourceful to meet the most basic daily needs. They do not have access to the normal safeguards for health and life afforded to other members of society. They have poor physical and mental health. They experience assaults to their wellbeing on a routine basis, and unlike wealthier groups, are not in a position to 'buy' wellbeing. Public showers and toilet facilities are often closed or locked and tap handles where water can be accessed for drinking and washing in public places have been typically removed. Together with high mobility patterns and the illegality of sleeping in public places between sunset and sunrise, maintaining personal appearance (and good hygiene) and managing stigma are particularly challenging in the context



of daily survival. The experience of trauma and the distinct absence of available treatment options support the social and cultural rituals around drinking alcohol. Public drinking, however, is often regarded by mainstream society as the problem, rather than a symptom of a much deeper and complex issue, and the available remedies often further marginalise those who are meant to benefit (Brady, 2007).

To state what ought to be well-appreciated, Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory are very poor when compared to non-Aboriginal people. People from remote communities have low levels of education, low numeracy and literacy skills, few employment opportunities and often suffer from chronic diseases. This situation is exacerbated by poor environmental health conditions (that is, food security and safety, water and sanitation, air quality etc.) with families living in over-crowded and sub-standard housing with limited access to goods, services and transport. Whether in community, in Darwin or somewhere else, families experience high levels of social, political and economic disadvantage. The social welfare economy provides a regular and important source of income for the majority of families. Fewer families have access to royalty payments and some individuals earn income through various forms of formal employment.

Within the context of a poverty culture, black market economies are commonplace and necessary to boost family incomes. In Territory Aboriginal communities, both informal (Altman, 2005) and clandestine economies operate, for example, trading in art, bush resources, childcare, cigarettes, alcohol, soft drinks and lollies, kava and marijuana.

There have also been periodic media reports of young women trading sexual acts to boost their income or receive other goods (for example, see Murdoch, 2007). Invariably, these reports construct the women as child victims of sex abuse, without agency in the process. While the evidence presented in news reports in a Northern Territorian context is often shaky, similarities can be made with the transactional nature of sex in 'relationships' observed in the African context.

Transactional sex among (Indigenous) homeless populations (in Darwin)

There has been a scarcity of published scholarly work which specifically examines sexuality, gender issues, the exchange of sex for money and transactional sex within the context of Indigenous women who experience homelessness in Australia. There are, however, authors who provide historical and ethnographic accounts of Aboriginal life in Australia during interactions with European settlements which make reference to Aboriginal women, culture, social organisation, economic and labour markets, (sexual) violence and so on. These accounts, while sometimes fraught, provide an important historical context in which to understand contemporary homelessness and transactional sex in Darwin.

McGrath (1984) is the only major work published on Aboriginal prostitution in the Northern Territory. She documents that there were relatively fewer white females compared with white males in the Northern Territory, a trend which continued until the 1980s. Relationships between Aboriginal women and non-Aboriginal men were common. McGrath (1984) observed that in the frontier context, *'Black women had come to be viewed as sex symbols, as 'studs' or 'Black Velvet' (p.237)*. Aboriginal women performed a range of jobs in the society and there was often an expectation that they would be available for sexual services (see also McGrath, 1987; Frances, 1994). According to McGrath (1984), as part of the colonial process, Aboriginal women were stereotyped as being available for sex, whether by negotiation or force (see also Robert, 2001). European men tended to construct sexual interactions with Aboriginal women as prostitution as it implied that the man did not have responsibility for the woman after the act. *'It was thus convenient for white men to conceptualise sexual relations with black women as akin to paying for a white prostitute' (McGrath, 1984; p.236)*.

Being with an Aboriginal woman was highly stigmatised and having an emotional attachment was looked upon with even greater scorn, *'whereas casual sex/prostitution could be justified and dismissed as a 'physical necessity' (pp.238-9)*.

Legislation and social norms penalised men who were in open relationships with Aboriginal women and women downplayed their familiarity with men. Dr CE Cook stated in 1979 that *'they would be working around the house, they would be the cooks and the washer woman... and they were there but not conspicuously being lived with. When you called there, they did not sit there at the table with you and have their meal'* (McGrath, 1984; p.271). McGrath (1984) explained that laws prohibited sexual interactions between white men and Aboriginal women and that *'women adapted to inter-racial sexual restrictions as another peculiarity of white man's culture, assisting their men to evade the law'* (p.271; see also Robert, 2001).

The history of the Territory is marred with accounts of Aboriginal women being violently raped and abused. Farley and Lynne (2004), in their study of the colonisation and sexual exploitation of Indigenous women in Canada, point out that although it is infrequently analysed as such *'prostitution is the colonization of women, generally....It is also one specific legacy of colonization'* (p.111). McGrath (1984) presents strong evidence that depicts the violence and coercion that were tolerated by Aboriginal men when they refused to give their women up to prostitution. The women had been typecast as whores, and she noted that *'no white man was charged for raping an Aboriginal woman and it was not an offence specified under the Aboriginal Ordinance'* (p.269).


Deborah Bird Rose (1992) observed that as Aboriginal people lost access to their resources for survival, few had little choice but to turn to what she has referred to as the 'economy of sex'. Frances (1994) stated that:

... Aboriginal women's sexuality was often the only saleable item possessed by the survivors who eked out a precarious existence on the edges of white society. In the north, the labour of young men was also valued, but here the almost total absence of white women placed Aboriginal women in even greater demand (p.31).

Within the context of loss of land and self-sufficiency, the accounts of both Aboriginal men and women reflect their agency in the organisation of sexual transactions between the colonisers and Aboriginal women. Aboriginal men described violence and resistance in the transactions more than did Aboriginal women. McGrath (1984) speculates that this is most likely because:

... women prefer to reminisce about their past lovers, and know that they had a certain amount of freedom in their younger days, though they know it is not advantageous to convince men of their perceptions... men and women alike explain how they helped organise prostitution for profit... Women gained more from the transaction – economically and in terms of power. Men temporarily – and sometimes permanently – lost the services, companionship and prestige of having a 'fully devoted' wife (p.280-1).

In a study on sex, age and social control in 'long grass' populations in Darwin during the 1970s, Sansom (1980) discussed how in 'bad times', when resources were low, transactional sex increased both within the homeless group and beyond. He described these periods of social disruption when there were *'too many young girl runnin round'* (1980; p.257). He explained that during such hard times some women may be released from marriage to become 'girls' again (meaning dependant on others, but not attached to a husband and therefore available to engage in other sexual relationships). When resources were more plentiful and Aboriginal women's sexuality was more controlled by the homeless group, camp or mob (when not so many girls were running around but rather were married or attached), life was described as calmer, without much trouble. Sansom (1980) commented that Aboriginal women who live rough in Darwin and chose *'to enter into casual sexual relationships with white men in order to get money'* would be called a *'workin girl'* by others in her social world (p.257). Yet, while Sansom's study provides invaluable historical information, much of the social organisation 'of mobs' that defined homeless



populations during this time is likely to have shifted due to the changed social and economic environment of the expanding capital Darwin.

Burbank's (1988) ethnographic study on female adolescence in a remote Aboriginal community in Arnhem Land is also a valuable historical account of how marriage and sexuality operated within this particular community. The traditional ideal of marriage here was that:

1. all women are married – there is no place for an unmarried women – [you were] born married;
2. females join their husbands before menarche;
3. the arrangement of a marriage is not the sole concern of potential partners. A females marriage is ideally arranged by her matrikin [her mother's brothers];
4. the selection of partners is governed by rules of partner selection that define which partners are 'straight' and 'not straight' [kinship organisation];
5. females are exchanged in marriage [the marriage of others affects who you should marry]; and
6. marriages may be polygamous (Burbank, 1988; p.51).

Burbank (1988) described cultural changes that had occurred in the marriage system since colonisation and highlighted that '*Freedom of choice is the issue in the intergenerational conflict over marriage*' (p.99). She stated that:

In the past, a little girl with little sense and little resolve was eased into marriage with her assigned husband. But by 1981, premenarcheal marriage was largely unfeasible; adults were attempting to direct more mature and experienced beings who had ideas for themselves and the capacity to carry them out. Thus it is not surprising that adolescence, this newly created maidenhood, is [now] a period of time in which junior and senior generations ... engage in a battle of wills, if not in actual battle (p.103).


With relevance to this present study, Burbank (1988) has also highlighted that another alternative to marriage for women in this community during this period was to completely step out of the system by marrying a white person or by leaving the Aboriginal community for a European centre such as Darwin.

Yet this alternative, she emphasises, was perceived by some in the community as problematic:

According to Lily, it is a place for the 'lost,' a place for drinking 'grog' and being 'mad for man'. As Marguerite said of one young women who had returned to Mangrove and presumably told tales of her adventures in town, 'When Martha is in Darwin she gets married to lots of white fellas, this one and the next one, and the next one' (p.112).

Holmes (2007), in a more recent study in Darwin, found that homeless Indigenous women exchanged sexual favours for goods and services and that some young women described being regarded by family as a sexual commodity and resource for the family group. Similarly, Holmes and McRae-Williams (2009) observed that there was evidence of an increasing number of women engaging in transactional sex as part of the homeless life world. They flagged that reduced access to cash money, linked to the Northern Territory Emergency Response (income management), may have been a factor in deciding to engage in transactional sex and argued that the risk of engagement to health, life quality and citizenship was not well understood.

Within the contemporary context of homelessness in Darwin's Long Grass, there are likely to be many other determinants influencing the choices made by Indigenous women to engage in transactional sex. There is little documented on this form of exchange and the extent to which women may or may not feel emancipated, empowered or disempowered and vulnerable to exploitation and violence. The national commitment to addressing homelessness and disadvantage and to improving the health and life quality of Aboriginal Australians, articulated through major reforms such as '*Closing the Gap on Indigenous*



Disadvantage’ and *‘The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness’*, create an imperative to advance our knowledge of this subject. This imperative is further heralded given that the homeless population of Darwin constitute one of the largest Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory, and also constitute one of the highest rates of homelessness in the country.

Conclusion

Homeless people form a significant part of the social landscape in Darwin. Research has shown that homelessness in Darwin is conceptualised by mainstream society as an anti-social Aboriginal problem, where people choose to live in the Long Grass and drink alcohol. There has been strong mainstream support for punitive measures against those exhibiting anti-social behaviour. A high level of police surveillance has been regarded as both acceptable and necessary. Yet curiously it would seem that engaging in transactional sex by this population is of little concern to authorities:

Glen Dooley, the principal legal officer at the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency, has worked for nearly 20 years in the industry providing legal representation to Aboriginal people. In this time he has never represented a client for solicitation (Holmes & McRae-Williams, 2009; pp.35-36).

Confining our discussion to a discourse on sex work and sex workers in a conventional Western sense will limit our ability to better understand aspects of transactional sex within this population. As this report goes on to show, for the homeless Indigenous women in our study, the transactional nature of sex is not linked to the Western discourse with its notions of work and participation in the market economy. However, the present study is exploratory and while it would be premature to discount its relevance, it is clear that these powerful perspectives are entrenched in Western institutions and beliefs.

For homeless Indigenous women, it is not only historical and contemporary patriarchy which shapes their experience of power and resistance, but also the intertwined processes of colonisation, social hierarchy and global capitalist relations. As Razack (1998) has emphasised, to acknowledge the role that prostitution plays in securing racial patrimonies in today’s transnational world involves questioning our own role as scholars and breaking way from what has too often been restricted to a work/violence debate.

Methodology

This exploratory case study has been designed around ethical considerations and the wellbeing and safety of participants. Informed by ethnographic modes of inquiry in the collection of qualitative data, the following key research questions, as noted earlier, were explored:

1. How does transactional sex relate to the drivers of homelessness among Indigenous women?
2. What role does transactional sex have in determining the risks to this population and how are these managed?

Ethnographic modes are considered to be most effective in investigating sensitive topics as the participant can engage in the process to the extent that they feel comfortable at any given time. The participants' worldview was privileged and judgement was suspended by the researchers who located the participants as experts in their own lives (Glasser & Bridgman, 1999). The approach used positioned the topic of investigation, that is, transactional sex, within the broader life worlds of individuals. As researchers, we set out to learn from participants about their everyday life – about what was going on and why. This permitted participants to talk about experiences they had and decisions they made relating to transactional sex within a particular context. This approach ensured that the researchers did not project assumptions around the meaning and value of transactional sex that were not aligned with the lived reality of women concerned. Heeding Benoit and Shaver's (2006) warning that prostitution '*has suffered from moralistic perspectives and been relegated to the realms of deviance, crime, contagion and exploitation*' (p.243), the researchers were conscious not to define aspects of women's lives using their own lives as a benchmark, but rather afford participants the opportunity to explain their world and their sexual exchange practices from their own position.

The voices of homeless people continue to be under-represented in scholarly literature in Australia. This absence is even more pronounced


in the body of knowledge relating to Indigenous homeless and houseless populations. Yet this form of knowledge has significance for the development of evidence-based policy and meaningful, relevant and effective interventions for homeless populations.

O'Leary (2004) identifies markers of good quality post-positivist research which include neutrality, subjectivity with transparency, dependability, authenticity, transferability and auditability. To ensure the quality of the research data, findings, conclusions and recommendation, our approach, methods and techniques have aligned with these markers. In doing so, we have strived to represent the voice of a highly marginalised population to enable governments to better respond to their needs.

In the spirit of generating quality research that has practical outcomes and that maximises on opportunities for transferability, a Project Reference Group was established. This group, comprised of government and non-government representatives with core business relating to homeless populations and/or transactional sex, met periodically during the research project to serve as a space to: discuss research challenges and problems; seek advice/direction if required; share findings as they emerge; gain feedback on draft reports; co-develop recommendations; and explore ways to embed findings into policy and practice.

Recruitment

The researcher team has had a long-term and established relationship with individuals within Darwin's homeless population and has a solid understanding of the social and cultural processes linked to daily life patterns in the study setting. This enabled the inherent power disparities between the researchers and the participants to be better managed and facilitated a fieldwork environment where in both parties had a level of trust and comfort with one another. A combination of direct



approach invitations and a snowball approach were adopted to invite individuals to participate in the study. Every person invited to the study was willing to participate.

Data were collected between November 2010 and March 2011 from 89 participants, 25 of whom were key informants (that is major contributors during the interview process). Participants were generally women, adult, Indigenous and were regarded homeless, as defined by the Australian government, that is, they were living rough without shelter, known locally as staying in the Long Grass.

Methods

Semi-structured conversational style interviews, drawing on ethnographic modes of inquiry, were undertaken in public places where women were sitting, living and interacting with family and others. A checklist of questions was used to guide the process which incorporated general questions about everyday life as well as specific questions about transactional sex.

Care was taken to ensure that participants were not stigmatised as a result of their participation in the study through selective and discrete recruitment processes. The topic of transactional sex was raised in the first instance as a possible activity among 'other women' or as something they may have an opinion on, creating the opportunity for participants to distance themselves from the topic if they chose.

Interviews were often conducted in groups, reflecting the social and cultural aspects of Indigenous homelessness in Darwin. This method of inquiry enabled the researchers to interact in a space that was familiar to the participants and which was responsive to the normative social processes. Small focus groups also generated particularly rich data and contributed to verification processes, confirming the reliability and quality of the data. Data were collected between November, 2010 and March, 2011, with interviews taking, on average, 1.2 hours.

Data were recorded through hand written field-based notes. Observational data were also recorded. These were expanded immediately

following each interview where the research team typed up detailed electronic records. The team used this process to clarify points and raise questions for further investigation in subsequent fieldwork. Pseudonyms were provided for all participants and any identifiers were removed from the data at this stage.

Data analysis

Data analysis started during fieldwork and was an ongoing process. Inductive and deductive probing techniques were used in interviews which assisted in teasing out the dominant and emergent themes for testing. Further, it also ensured that a nuanced and detailed analysis of the social organisation and contexts within the Long Grass was accurately captured. Throughout the entire fieldwork phase, the analytical process continued. Data were collected until saturation point was achieved, that is, when the data did not generate any new findings and all questions within the study's scope had been thoroughly explored. A thematic line-by-line examination of the complete data set was then undertaken; a process repeated by a third analyst to ensure that the primary researchers' subjectivities had been properly managed and to add a further layer of rigour to the research.

Ethics

An application exploring the ethical dimensions of the study was submitted to the Batchelor Institute Research Ethics Committee and full approval was granted on 21st September, 2010 (Approval #16/10).

Limitations of study

This study did not explore the motivations or characteristics of the men that seek to exchange sexual favours with the women concerned; nor of the men in Indigenous groups we accessed. Any information about the male counterpart in sexual exchanges was gained from the perspective of the women participants. Further, this study does not attempt to connect current policies – such as alcohol restrictions – on the practices described herein.

Discussion of findings

In this chapter the findings are presented and discussed. We start by describing the everyday life in the Long Grass from the perspective of the participants. In doing so, we reveal perhaps the most unanticipated finding of the study. The discussion then explores the social organisation of transactional sex in this setting and follows with a description of the ways in which participants perceived transactional sex (TS) themselves and their self-identity. The remainder of the chapter then focuses attention on TS, discussing: its prevalence; the factors positively and negatively associated with it; the location of the transactions; perceptions of danger; and risk management strategies.

Everyday life in the Long Grass: the context of transacting sex

The accounts of daily life in Darwin's Long Grass captured through this study do not differ from those described in previous studies (see Holmes, 2006, 2007 & 2010; Holmes & McRae-Williams, 2009). While there are many occasions for laughter and enjoyment, life is punctuated by compounded experiences of trauma, intense levels of marginalisation and stigmatisation, being treated like a dangerous deviant, enduring high levels of surveillance, being perpetually moved on and being sick – with deteriorated physical and mental health status. This population is vulnerable to violence, are fearful, tired, hungry and often lonely. Sorcery adds an additional dimension of fear and anxiety. They are nearly always negotiating deep sadness, loss and grief. Excessive drinking of alcohol is commonplace – exacerbating their difficult circumstances, fuelling the cycle of disadvantage, exclusion and incarceration, creating greater dysfunction. Basic survival in this hostile environment is hard work.

It is difficult to read academic literature on homelessness without some rhetoric describing it as a multidimensional, multilayered complex problem. Yet often such references fail to capture

the essence of its complexity. In response, we have attempted to draw from the personal narratives of participants to provide a deeper understanding of the nature of homelessness, and in doing so reveal a dynamic of ubiquitous and relative dysfunction.

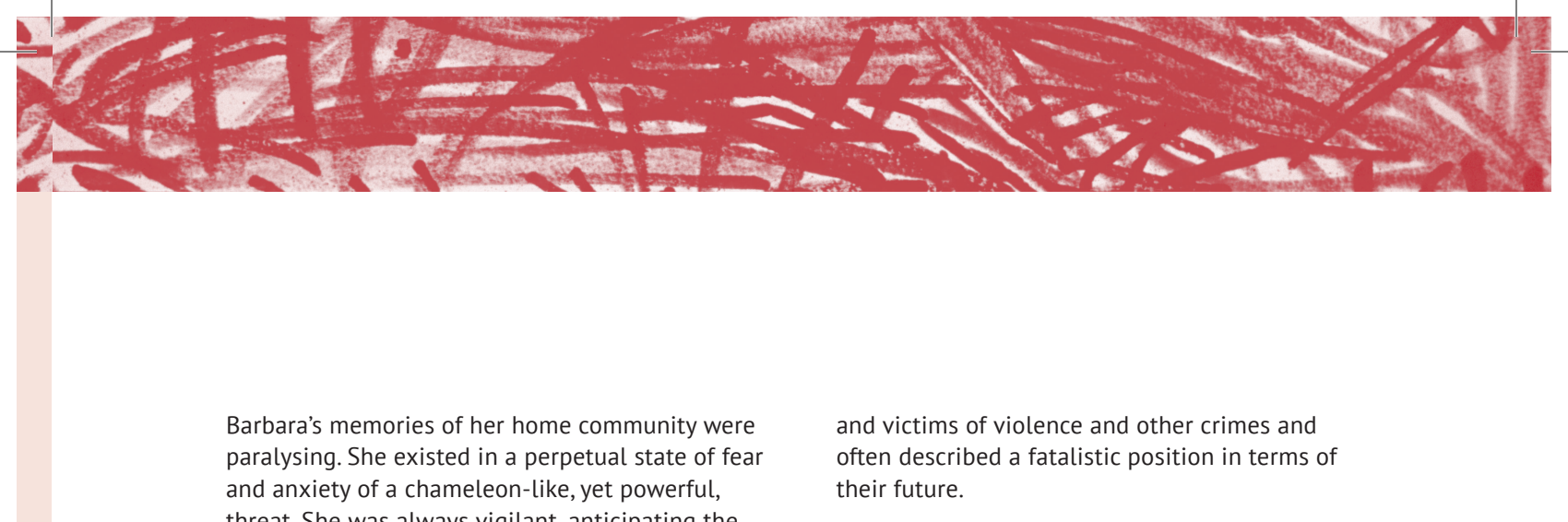
Social organisation

Participants had established daily patterns, that is, life was not random and ad hoc with no purpose, but socially organised around survival, drinking, waiting and conducting business, all in a hostile wider environment. This hum of life is reflected in the words of one participant who claimed she loved to *'meet family in the morning, drink, fight, then go. Pretty much same every day'*. Social groups were fluid, as individuals came and went, sought resources, shelter and conducted business. Proximity to public transport was related to fluidity as it increased individuals' mobility pathways. Being close to transport also addressed accusations of loitering, providing a 'legitimate' space to occupy.

Aboriginal spirituality

Aboriginal spirituality, enmeshed with sorcery and malevolency, challenges mainstream notions of what is real and truthful. As a discounted idea, it is pushed to the periphery of public policy or is entirely neglected, with the notable exception of the tourism industry, which has recognised the economic benefits of claiming exotic cultural difference. Yet sorcery is an integral factor to the homeless experience, culminating to give form to this multidimensional and multilayered problem. For example, Barbara described staying in the Long Grass primarily for reasons of safety, albeit a tenuous alternative:

Because of sorcery, it is not safe for me to be in the community. In Darwin, it is safer. But they [evil spirits] can blow with the wind and get into your head – even here – and make you like a zombie.



Barbara's memories of her home community were paralysing. She existed in a perpetual state of fear and anxiety of a chameleon-like, yet powerful, threat. She was always vigilant, anticipating the unexpected, but hopeful of survival. In order to explain why Darwin, despite its perils, was seen as a safer option, she recounted stories from her childhood, where she, her sisters and family were physically and sexually assaulted. One violent account related to her older sister's boyfriend hitting her sister with a boomerang. She commented:

I stepped in – but I shouldn't have. I then hid under the bed while she was bashed and bashed. I don't even return [to the community] for ceremonies. No funerals. It is too dangerous for me. It is safer in the Long Grass.

Barbara, like many participants in this study, spoke about a lifetime of violent and brutal incidents, yet was of the view that her situation could be worse. For instance, she was proud of the fact that she had never lost a tooth from being punched in the mouth: *'My teeth get wobbly but hold on. Once I could only drink soup through a straw at the corner of my mouth'*. Violence, whether attributable to sorcery or not, was regarded an acceptable response to problems, for example, one woman commented:

These three were giving me trouble. So I went up to one and grabbed a long neck [glass bottle] and smashed it over her head. Then I used a knife and cut right down the side of another and stabbed the other one in the thigh.

While Aboriginal spirituality was a determinate for some entering the Long Grass (in that it shaped drinking rituals; explained the inexplicable; the causes of violence; or accounted for sleeping arrangements in informal camps), it also had implications, as we will discuss, for women's perceptions of danger when they transact sex in Darwin.

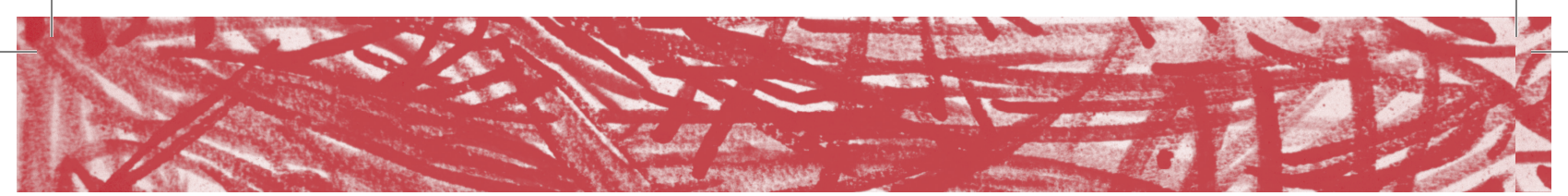
Criminal justice system and dysfunction

Study participants were directly connected with the criminal justice system, as former inmates themselves or as partners, parents or siblings of inmates. Participants were both the perpetrators

and victims of violence and other crimes and often described a fatalistic position in terms of their future.

Dysfunction in family and community life was normalised for participants in the study; similarly, participants were often the source of dysfunction through inter-family violence and volatile relationships, infused with neglect and abandonment. The nexus between the criminal justice system and dysfunction was a dominant theme in this study. For example, one young man explained that he had recently been in prison and that his wife, who was in the early stages of pregnancy, was drinking too much. He believed that it was too late to stop drinking and that the health and safety of the baby would not be improved by belatedly abstaining from alcohol. The young man had been incarcerated for assaulting his child and their mother and had court orders preventing him from going near them. He also had court orders preventing him accessing a woman and child from a former relationship. Despite this situation, he claimed he wanted access to his children and did not regard his history of violence as a valid reason for preventing this from happening. Like many people in this study, his violence was not understood as problematic and he did not relate to the punishment logic.

Another participant, Rose, described some of the concerns that pre-occupied her mind. She was in Darwin visiting her children who were in 'welfare', living with a foster family: *'She [the baby] was taken from me when she was born because I drink. I am also here waiting for my husband. He is in Berrimah [jail]'*. Rose described the physical pain connected with the sadness of having her four month old baby in the care of another family. Her time in Darwin compounded this sadness as she was then separated from her three remaining children left in the community. Rose was unwell, with a distended stomach and she had an obvious tooth or ear ache that was causing her distress. While alcohol consumption formed a central part of daily life and social organisation, it mitigated sadness, long waits and physical pain stemming from social dysfunction, especially for the many women with children no longer in their care.



Similarly, June and Betty also drank. June stated, *'I lost two kids and my husband is dying. I feel lost inside'*. June was in her mid forties and had been waiting for public housing for seven years and was advised that she would have to wait for a further two years. The women carried a tarp with them and a green shopping bag of few belongings. They explained that the tarp was necessary to keep dry, but they still got wet. Both women carried knives for their own safety and reported that they only sometimes had to use them to protect themselves. Carrying a knife, they explained, was responsible, normal and necessary. As well as negotiating profound grief and loss and alcohol dependency, many participants described similar challenges in daily life. They were always being moved on, getting wet, losing belongings, losing phones and their personal and organisational contacts. They described being hassled by police and other people in uniform, including Night Patrol, First Response Patrol and Security Guards, as that these uniformed officials were the source of constant frustration. Betty, perplexed as to why the officers didn't understand their grief and simply leave them alone, asked: *'Can't we just have a drink for sorrow?'*

Grief, loss and trauma

Negotiating grief and loss linked to death was a common theme in the narratives of women, especially older women, and was generally linked to 'elder abuse'. This would necessitate a move from an Aboriginal community to Darwin to escape family problems but to also tap into networks of potential support and protection. Yet for all study participants, violence in the Long Grass was unexceptional; it was expected and it was the norm. May's story captures this grim reality; a story echoed among many participants. She had been staying in Darwin's Long Grass for many years because:

...so many family are dead or are here [in Darwin]. If I stay on the islands, I would feel very lonely... and with the basics card, other family humbug me too much. I am better off here where I can look after myself... My daughter, if she see a single mark on my face, she wants to know the name of the person who did it. She is a good fighter and she will go and

fight that person. She brought a big woman down to the ground last week. She sat on the top of her and smashed, smashed, smashed her, until she was all bleeding. The Long Grass is a dangerous place, especially for women. I sleep with a bottle in one hand, and a stick in the other. I am ready! I can still fight now, even though I am old woman. But if I am drunk – I just go down and get hit.


Another woman explained that, *'I came here because I lost my family. My mother and father died. I had no one. I was sad and came to Darwin to drink'*. The woman, a grandmother, had lost one of her sons in a tragic road accident. In the Long Grass, lives were marred with such tragedies.

Some women had lost hope and waited in Darwin for their imminent death. One participant explained that the group had urged a younger woman to return to the community: *'we want her to go home, away from him [husband]. He is going to kill her. But she is so sad inside, she want to stay and get killed. We tell her that we love her but she doesn't listen to us. Would rather die'*.

Police surveillance: a double edged sword

In previous studies with Aboriginal people staying in Darwin's Long Grass, the high level of police surveillance and interaction leading to a loss of control and autonomy in daily life has been consistently reported (see Holmes, 2007; Holmes & McRae-Williams, 2009; Holmes, 2010). During fieldwork associated with earlier studies, police presence was certainly visible. In this present study, however, every interview – without exception – conducted by the researchers was either interrupted or closely scrutinised by police officer/s. This points to a swelling of intensity of the disapproval surrounding the presence of this population in Darwin, with increased public pressure on police and government to remove individuals and monitor their activities.

For the women and their families who participated in this study, surveillance encounters (police, First Response Patrol, security guards, night patrol) represented the most common form of direct interaction with mainstream society and



its institutions. To a lesser extent, participants engaged with the limited outreach services available to them, whereby services prioritised and reacted to the crisis needs of clients, which were in turn highly valued. Other direct interactions with mainstream were understood as 'devious' or 'clandestine' and met with suspicion, for example, transactional sex, secret drinking or shop owners carefully watching for theft, appointing security guards and installing CCTV. 'Suspicion' between this population in the Long Grass and mainstream has been normalised, with established patterns and expectations of behaviour.

Aspects of the relationship between police and women can be described as a double-edged sword. Police are in such close proximity to the tragic events that shape the lives of people in the Long Grass. They are society's primary response to a complex set of entrenched social issues. They routinely navigate their way through the profound grief impacting on Aboriginal Territorians, and together with other emergency service personnel, are at the forefront of literally 'cleaning up' the traumas (Hodgins *et al.*, 2001). In Australia, their high level of exposure to such profound events is increasingly being recognised within the academy as evidenced through: research (see Mayhew, 2001); the existence of police support groups for trauma; as well as documentaries, such as the ABC's Hungry Beast Police Post-Traumatic Stress story (aired on 8 June, 2011). The implications of this deeply challenging occupational environment on police practice on the ground in Darwin, however, remain unclear. Despite this, it is no surprise that participants in this study described their interactions as oscillating between police-shows of empathy and their exercising of task-oriented pragmatism.

Women, during their police encounters, would often attempt to appeal to the officer's sense of compassion, saying things like '*it's my birthday*' or '*I'm in sorrow*', to proffer legitimate explanations for drinking and avoid having their drinks 'spilled' or being moved on. Other times the women would state that they had not been drinking and would implicate other people that had since gone. Occasionally the officer would accept the explanations and remind the group of the drinking

laws and leave. Women described police responses as being random and inconsistent – which could reflect the ongoing tension for police of simultaneously feeling empathy and the pressure to enforce the law, with the range of emotions that attend this. An occasion during fieldwork effectively captures this tension when we were moved on to avoid an accusation of loitering. The police officer addressed us (the researchers) and explained:

They [the shop owners] have just had enough. You understand where we are coming from, don't you? It affects their business, their customers... it may not have been you ladies making the noise but we have to be seen to be doing something.

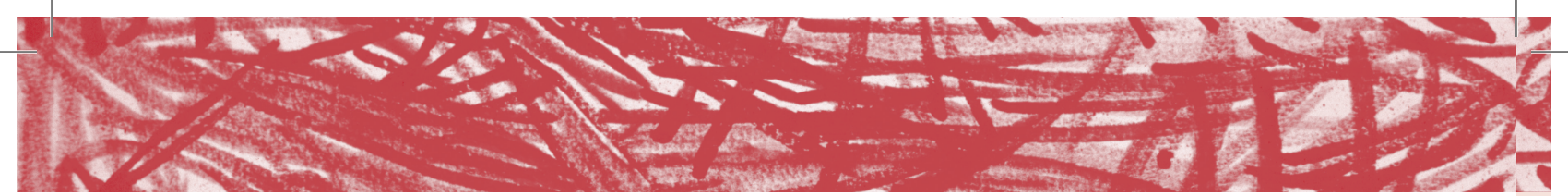
People in uniform that women encountered across their days were often conflated and included officers from the police force, Night Patrol and First Response Patrol, as well as security guards. This study found that women routinely described 'police' as a source of potential danger, alleging that they bashed and raped them. For example, Betty said that 'police' were often rough and June explained that they took,

...young girls to 'spin dry' [sobering up shelter] or the lock up [police watch house], but they don't go there. They take them and have sex with them. When they are drunk, they cannot say anything. Then they go to lock up or spin dry when they have finished.

Sarah described a general distrust of 'police' held by Aboriginal women in the Long Grass. She claimed they were her greatest concern, followed by being moved on or arrested:

...girls, my colour, they [the police] take you in the wagon and they rape you. It happens all the time. Aboriginal girls.

The rape and physical assault of homeless people have been well documented (see Foote Whyte, 1993; Levan *et al.*, 2007; Taylor & Sharpe, 2008; Holmes & McRae-Williams, 2009). There are also both Australian and International studies that have documented street-based sex worker's self reported experience of rape and physical assault perpetrated by police (Woodward *et al.*, 2004; Rhodes *et al.*, 2008).



For example, in one study in Queensland, Woodward *et al.* (2004) found that just over 7 street-based sex workers out of a sample of 27 reported that they had been sexually or physically assaulted by a police officer in the last five years. Their study, which involved more than 200 sex workers, found that street-based workers were more vulnerable to police harassment and being propositioned by police or assaulted than other sex worker groups.

This present study did not attempt to confirm or reject the allegations made by women, and nor did women expect such action. Rather, it aimed to listen to the experiences of women in order to position sexual transactions within a broader context. In Darwin's Long Grass, women drink heavily and will encounter people in uniforms. Uniformed officers assist women and take them to shelters, private houses and the police watch house for their own safety. It is possible that intoxicated women, who experienced rape, may have vague recollections of seeing a uniform and link their experience to that officer. This scenario would align with the findings discussed in the following section whereby women consistently reported a non-police perpetrator. It is also possible that accusing police of rape and assault is a popular narrative in the Long Grass that gets traction as a result of the many negative interactions that occur. Echoing this analysis, one participant commented:

...if the girl goes with police or Night Patrol - we hear stories. Those men sometimes no good. Rape the girl. But maybe someone else and they only remember policeman. So I always say to them [girls], 'you see their face, know who they are. Be able to say - that is him. Ask for his ID and his name'. So if any trouble, you can know who to report to the police.

Despite the sense of fear expressed by women, paradoxically they would often identify police as a primary source of help. For example, women have no hesitation calling the police when another woman becomes overly intoxicated so she can be transported to the sobering up shelter or the watch house. Although women didn't always get the kind of help from police that they wanted - such as a lift, assistance with moving their belongings or acquiring basic needs - they firmly believed that the job of police was to assist people in the Long

Grass with such matters and '*not just hassle or move us on*'. The participants in this study had a limited understanding of the way in which Western institutions functioned and seemed unaware that employees generally had specific functions and boundaries in which to operate, police included.

Rape in the Long Grass

I never sleep at night. I am too scared. Maybe I'll get stabbed or raped. (Sue)

Perhaps the most significant finding to emerge through this study was the high prevalence of women who reported being raped and the extent to which sexual assault informed daily life patterns. For example, as illustrated in the above quote, many women, especially younger women, attempted to stay awake all night to avoid being raped. They walked around at night and tried to sleep during the day when it was safer.

Rape was such a usual occurrence among this population, with a shared discourse used by women to describe their experiences. Women used variations of the phrase, 'being buggered by cheeky cunts who sneak up and climb on', to describe the process. Rape usually occurred when women were vulnerable and defenceless - when they were drunk, alone and asleep. Women consistently alleged that the perpetrators of this form of rape were nearly always Aboriginal men:

Aboriginal men do it. Happen all the time. Women need a place to go and sleep when they are drunk, somewhere safe.

...when you sleep, you have to watch out because they can come up and take what they want. The blackfellas sneak up on you when you are passed out, alone, and do their thing and leave. Then another one comes and climbs on. And another. Horny cunts.

Nearly all women in this study reported that they carried knives to protect themselves. Many volunteered that they would have no hesitation in using them to defend themselves against a physical, sexual or, to a lesser extent, a social status threat. For example, Sam explained that she had needed to use it on several occasions, '*once when a black man climbed on me when I was drunk, asleep*'.

The social organisation of transactional sex

Documentation of transactional sex between Aboriginal women in Darwin and non-Aboriginal men goes back to the earliest days of colonial settlement (see McGrath 1984; Wells, 2003). Women, as commodities, sold sexual services themselves or were sold by their husbands, in exchange for opium, alcohol, flour, tobacco and other items. It was both visiting and local Aboriginal women and their business that offended the sensibilities of members of the colonial settlement – particularly as it was undertaken in broad daylight. According to Wells (2003), the public views at the time considered that the women challenged the morals of the men, with a disproportionate number of males in the settlement resulting in the conversion of the majority of Aboriginal women into prostitutes. Wells (2003) points out that the seemingly high proportions of Aboriginal women engaging in prostitution may have been linked to their understanding of the economic benefits to be derived from that form of business when compared to the limited range of other alternatives, such as domestic services.

Consistent with the historical accounts provided by McGrath (1984) and Wells (2003), the women in this present study believed sexual transactions had occurred for a very long time between Aboriginal women and non-Aboriginal men in Darwin. The older women described their own history of the activity and recalled the exchanges occurring among adults during their childhood too. One woman commented:

...back then, they just got a flagon or twenty cents or one dollar. That was the currency. But today it is mostly cash. Cash first, then maybe grog.

Transactional sex has an established history and was a usual activity for women in the Long Grass to engage in. It was, and has continued to be, part of the social fabric which invariably involved

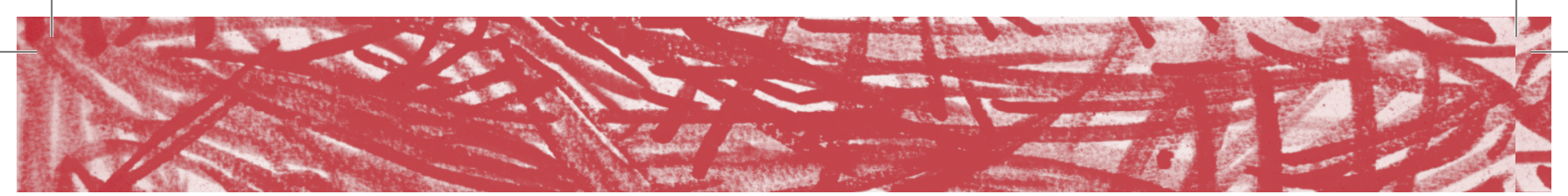
drinking, story-telling and interacting with family, reinforcing social processes and identity. While transactional sex was generative of economic rewards, it was not regarded as work or a job by participants, but rather was seen as a relatively easy way to get resources. As one woman put it: *'you [white people] might say it is their occupation, but it is how they get by, how they live their life'*. With the exception of welfare money from Centrelink, women did not want to get money and other resources from an alternative source.

Identity

Study participants generally volunteered if they were mothers, grandmothers, sisters or aunts – signalling the importance of kinship and relatedness in their lives. They did not, however, identify as prostitutes or sex workers or as 'working girls' – a term used in the 1970s (Sansom, 1980). By not identifying in this way, the literature and related concepts that presuppose such an identity were found to have little relevance in this context.

Participants similarly rarely identified as 'Long Grassers' – a term often used by mainstream society but one that is increasingly rejected by people in the Long Grass for its stigmatising and shameful consequences. They merely saw themselves as Aboriginal people who had no place to stay, who 'stopped' or 'camped' in the Long Grass and did what was necessary to get daily provisions, such as alcohol, cigarettes and food items. Selling sex, often referred to as 'selly-welly', was fundamentally a pragmatic approach available to Aboriginal groups to gather resources. This sentiment is captured in the following quote:

I am not a prostitute. I am someone who has to sell myself sometimes to get what I need.



When asked if the sexual exchange was problematic from an Aboriginal Law perspective, most women did not raise any concerns, as explained by one woman who commented:

For example, that man [points], he looks out for that woman. He not her husband, just looks after her. He lets her go [TS]. He happy about it. She brings back money. Only once, he smashed her in the face, but I tell him not to do that, to look after her.

There were, however, potential consequences for women who had a boyfriend or husband which would likely involve being beaten – probably publicly. (This is expanded on in the section entitled ‘Perceptions of danger’). Only one woman, a heavy marijuana smoker, described TS as shameful and attempted to disassociate herself and her entire community from the practice. She described it as symbolic of the people involved having lost their culture.

‘Selly-welly’ and power

Study participants confirmed that women, usually under 40 years of age, would be sold by choice or coercion, although not a lot of pressure was necessary. The coercion was usually connected with turn taking. The woman involved in the ‘selly-welly’ exchange is known as the ‘Captain’, as captured in the following quote:

The one who goes, she is called the ‘Captain’. They say, ‘your turn to be Captain’ or ‘I was Captain last time’ or ‘OK, I will be Captain again’.

As the ‘Captain’, her return to the group is an empowering experience where she is both the centre of attention and in control of group directions:


...some want to be the Captain because they feel strong. They bring back money or grog, and we follow them.

They will all have to follow that one now.

With the control over the distribution of resources, the capacity to recount the experience and also humour the group and distribute new knowledge, the position of ‘Captain’ is one of power and influence, even if a transitory status. Through the measured release of resources and information, a successful ‘captain’ is adept at manipulating the movements and activities of the group for their own benefit. The flip side of this, however, is that a captain who does not come back and share with the group will be stripped of their leadership rights and ultimately punished through violence or exclusion.

The authority structures described above echo the findings of Sansom’s (1980) ethnographic study on fringe dwellers in Darwin in the 1970s, where he discusses the notion of ‘masterful’ men. Sansom (1980) describes how masterful men engaged in a constant process of arithmetic, calculating group size, social composition and available cash. Through processes of careful thought and action they are able to manipulate their role in the collection, management and re-distribution of resources and knowledge and achieve relative group power.

While a fundamental difference of being an Aboriginal person in Darwin’s Long Grass in the 1970s compared to the present day appears to be that women are occasional leaders among the Darwin fringe camps, there are other notable shifts in social organisation. Gentrification and the urban expansion of Darwin, with its accompanying socio-political pressures and anti-social behaviour discourse, have built out many of the informal and semi-permanent camps. Aboriginal visitors to Darwin without shelter spend time in groups that are often fragmented and smaller in population size than those described in the 1970s. Despite this situation and the concerted efforts by governments to relocate this population away from Darwin, this study has found that social, political and economic processes, with their associated power dynamics and hierarchies, have persisted. Even within the oppressive, marginal and disadvantaged environments in which they exist, this study has found that women in the Long



Grass gained relative power and authority through the economic and socially useful mechanism of engaging in transactional sex.

In addition to the benefits that followed an exchange with men, women also reported enjoying and feeling excited by the negotiation phase of TS and demonstrating their skills to the group. Some women felt desirable and 'sexy' if they were chosen by a man. However, not all aspects of the exchange were experienced as empowering by women and they generally did not want to expand on how they were feeling during the sexual encounter. Women were submissive and explained that the men took what they wanted. All but one woman indicated that they did not enjoy the sex but said, *'They just do it to get what they want. They will do whatever he wants. Suck him. Whatever. They don't care – just do it.'*

Any shame felt by women was quickly neutralised when they returned to the group and enjoyed some authority and the resources; usually \$20 to \$40 in combination with wine and cigarettes, but maybe up to \$100. A woman who did not return to the group to share the benefits of TS ran the risk of being punished, for example being beaten, ostracised or shamed by the group or through the telling of an interaction (behaviour) by others to a disapproving boyfriend, husband or family member.

Some women got 'styled up' for transactional sex, but generally they did not need to, as there was a steady demand from men that exceeded the supply of women. When asked whether women did anything to prepare for TS, one mother explained about her daughter: *'She good looking as she is. She has shower every day. She OK. Men like her'*. This finding is inconsistent with those described in the African based literature, where having beauty commodities and dressing up were associated with creating more opportunities to benefit from sexual exchanges and were used as a symbol of power and success (Hunter, 2002). For participants in this present study, not 'styling up' (beyond basic cleanliness) was a strategy used to manage stigma (being 'shamed') and fit in to their own social group, that is those selling sex did not

generally want to stand out from the others by dressing outside of the normalised and expected fashion protocols.

Police

Although women in this study (and people in the Long Grass in general) were the subject of relentless surveillance by police, police did not interfere with transactional sex exchanges – which were frequent. Women did not fear being arrested for TS; they feared being raped when they were vulnerable. This shared view is captured by one woman who commented, *'...coppers don't care. They just drive past, even at the busiest time.'*

The nuts and bolts of transactional sex

In this section, we describe who is involved in TS and the forms of engagement. The factors which motivate women to engage in the practice, along with the conditions which were negatively associated with TS are described. The section concludes with the findings that give insight into women's perceptions of danger and the risk management strategies they deployed.

Prevalence of practice

This study found that all participants reported that engaging in transactional sex was a common, typical and ordinary practice for Aboriginal women living in Darwin's Long Grass. Participants explained that sexual transactions were a usual part of daily life for women under the age of forty, and while less often, also a practice engaged in by Aboriginal men. Most commonly these men, who also stayed in the Long Grass, were described by participants as 'sister girls' (transgender women). In addition to sister girls, women noted that some heterosexual men would engage in TS, providing both anal and oral sex, usually to pay for transport. Women described these men as *'part gay – gay when they needed to pay the taxi driver'*. The following quote captures this exchange.

A group of men and boys, maybe, will pay with sex when they have no money... sometimes the taxi driver pick which one, sometimes they decide. They might say, 'I did it last time, it is your turn'.

A common response from participants when asked about the prevalence of TS was that it was occurring *'all the time, everywhere'*. One young woman explained that *'all people in the Long Grass do it! Everybody does it...I do it sometimes too'*. Another talked about *'selly-welly'* being a thriving enterprise where demand was high and the streets were *'cherry picking'* for those who wished to engage in the practice.

Forms of transaction: the interface between women and men

Study participants explained that TS exchanges occurred in a range of ways and in a variety of locations. The male person in the exchange was predominately described as being non-Aboriginal and often as 'white' (that is, a non-Aboriginal man). Yet it was clear that men of all social and economic status participated in transactions, with a common response by participants being *'any kind. All kinds of people' or 'all kinds of cars pick up the girls, V8s, hiluxes, flash ones'*.

Transactions usually began by a man driving and stopping their vehicle at certain known or pre-organised locations and picking up an Aboriginal woman. Women may position themselves in a location in which they can avoid certain family members and be with others, depending on their need to manage shame and/or violence resulting from the exchange (see section on 'Perceptions of Danger'). The man and woman would then drive to a secluded public or semi-public area, or less often to a private residence.

This study found that the nature and organisation of these transactional exchanges often played out in different ways and forms, both fluid and inter-related.

Managing stigma by 'passing off': implicit negotiations with a 'boyfriend'

The most common form of exchange was an implicit one where women approached a vehicle that had stopped with the knowledge that they would likely benefit through the provision of sexual services. The benefits to women were ambiguous but assumed to include alcohol, cigarettes or money, or any combination of the three. Similarly, there was ambiguity for women about the nature of sexual services they would need to provide. In this form of exchange, women used a discourse which positioned the transaction as a boyfriend/girlfriend type relationship,

similar to those transactions discussed within the African-based literature (Kaufman and Stavrou 2004; Maganja *et al.*, 2007; Poulin, 2007; Wamoyi *et al.*, 2010; Hunter, 2002). As previously discussed, women did not identify as sex workers, nor were they defined by others within their group as sex workers with clients. Like in the African-based studies, these 'poor' women appreciated the economic value gained from having sexual relationships with men, and as Wamoyi *et al.* (2010) found in a Tanzanian study, *'young women actively used their sexuality as an economic resource... they often willingly entered into relationships primarily for economic gain'* (p.15).

This common process of sexual exchange is described by one woman, who commented:

The car comes up and we [the group] go up to it and he picks which one he wants. Or we say, 'which one do you want?', and he points... If the girl doesn't want to go, she will say, 'I already got a boyfriend' and will walk away.

Women also used socially accepted descriptors, such as 'boyfriend' and 'relationship', as a mechanism for managing the stigma assigned by the mainstream society for attributes deemed to sit outside the acceptable order of things. Goffman (1963) describes this process as the stigmatised person 'passing off' as a normal non-stigmatised member of society, as a means to manage their public identity. It is likely that this discourse has emerged as a mechanism to avoid trouble under mainstream law.

Once there was a mutual understanding that a transaction would be entered into, the women would go with the men and their 'relationship' would advance with the first of the benefits; alcohol consumption. A typical account of this exchange is reflected in the following quote:

...they say, 'you want grog? hop in!'. You go their house or somewhere... they have a 24 pack [alcohol, for example a carton of beer] in the car. Girl gets intoxicated so that the man can get what he wants... after, the girls ask for money, maybe \$20 or \$40 and she might get a box [cask of moselle/port etc] and smokes.

Explicit exchanges

Over time, the implicit nature of these exchanges became more explicit as the 'relationship' developed, that is the women and men had a greater level of familiarity with one another and were no longer strangers. This continuum, from implicit to explicit, re-positioned women from being hopeful or trying their luck in an exchange to feeling more confident and having increased capacity to negotiate. In short, their familiarity brought a sense of empowerment. The explicit forms of exchange with men brought to the fore the social organisation and hierarchies of power linked to transactional sex, emphasised by the 'Captain'. Yet this was a slippery slope for women who did not negotiate well, as they would lose the potential for immediate and ongoing benefits.

Men, as paying customers, would also negotiate for the woman they wanted:

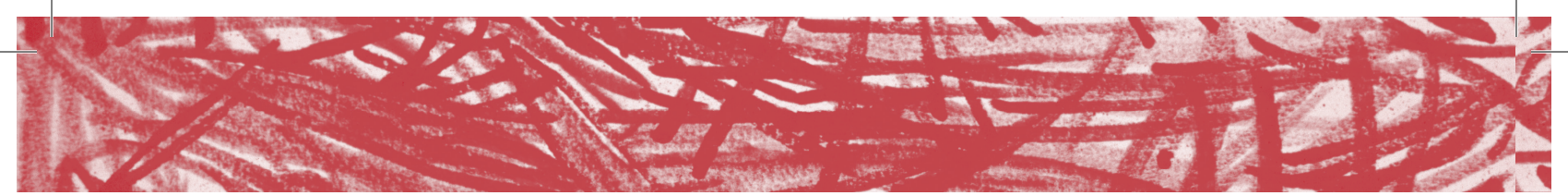
...if she is a new face, he might point to her and say he wants that one. Then she might say yes or no. They also take it in turns and one goes then comes back in 20 minutes, then another one has her turn.

Alternatively, a group would determine which women would go 'selly-welly'. In the context of gathering resources, such as cash, grog and marijuana, one woman explained that the group would discuss *'Which one of us is going to go and get it?'* The fact that sex was being exchanged appeared to be unimportant.

Sister girl exchanges

Although male to male exchanges were not the focus of this investigation, these exchanges were often raised by women as they were celebrated as the most lucrative form of sexual exchange: *'One time she [the sister girl] came back with \$400!. Lot of money. But a poofter thing.'*

While among groups there may have been an economic imperative to encourage sister girls to be the one to engage in the sexual exchange, it appears that their participation was still a negotiated process, as one woman explained:



We were sitting there and she [sister girls] said, 'I'll get us some money. I will go first then you go second, OK!' So a car comes up and she goes with the man and comes back and says, 'it's your turn now auntie'. I say, 'I can't go. I got women's problems'. [Laughing] She goes from car to car, switching. You see those cracks on his lips at the side of his mouth – that is from sucking a man too much. [Laughing].

Factors positively associated with TS

The most significant factor positively associated with women engaging in transactional sex was alcohol; a finding consistent with Dunkle *et al.* (2010) in their U.S. study. Power and lack of family authority were also strongly associated with TS. Participants explained that they engaged in 'selly-welly' because they were intoxicated or wanted to become intoxicated, as depicted in the following quotes:

All women do it. Young. Old. To get the grog!

It's only alcoholics that sell themselves. They do it because they need to have grog.

It was usual for a quantity of alcohol to be exchanged as part of the sexual transaction along with a monetary transfer (\$20-\$40). Women also got: tobacco (and sometimes marijuana); telecommunication access and phone credit; bus and taxi fares; clothes; and food supplies.

The opportunity to be mobile, '*cruise around*' in a private vehicle and be taken to different places to conduct business was also a valued part of some transactional sex exchanges. The personal benefits derived from private car mobility, (that is, other than those that were expected to be shared with the group), were another source of (temporary) empowerment, as women enjoyed an enhanced level of autonomy and control in their day that they gained through their negotiation skills (and sometimes sheer luck). Private cars and a non-Indigenous male companion also gave women temporary access to a mainstream world that their group did not generally inhabit. When women were taken to a private house as

part of an exchange, they also got a glimpse of a different way of living; one with less poverty. As one woman explained:

They go because they can help themselves to anything. They get everything... Take grog out of the fridge... Shower. They might stay there 'til 6.00 in the morning.

The centrality of alcohol consumption to the social processes of life in the Long Grass also made engaging in transactional sex an effective way of acquiring this valued commodity for the group. Obtaining cash similarly provided means to share and distribute with group members other valued resources and opportunities. Participants in this study illustrated through their discussions that bringing back and sharing procured resources was the expected and established moral protocol for individuals engaged in the economic endeavour of transactional sex. Impressed by the substantial rewards some younger women were perceived to get from selling themselves, two older women explained:

The women, they come back and wake us up after [sexual exchanges]. They say, 'I got grog from that Balanda [non-Aboriginal]. Help yourself'. Old people, fill-em up! They always come back.

Sharing reinforced relatedness and provided an opportunity for individuals to demonstrate their capacity to '*look after*' others by contributing to the survival of the group in a hostile environment (see Myers, 1986).

Another key motivating factor for women to get involved in TS was the opportunity to gain prestige and power among the group, as discussed in the section 'Selly-welly and power'.

A further key factor was found to be linked to women's engagement in TS; that being a lack of elder or parental concern and authority in the lives of women. For example, one participant expressed her views about the general parental neglect of young women: '*they [parents] don't care. They know about it. But they drink*'. Another highlighted the relationship between transactional sex and a lack of parental involvement, '*The young women come in [to*

Darwin] and the ones in Darwin teach them how to drink and smoke and sell themselves. But where are their parents?’

While lack of parenting was cited as a reason for women’s engagement in TS, women were quick to point out that when parents did attempt to assert authority over their daughters, they did not acquiesce, as one participant stated:

...they say ‘fuck off’. They don’t listen. Those younger ones get real smart. I can’t tell them what to do if they not my family. I can’t tell them what to do when they are my family! They just say ‘fuck off, it is my life’.

Although less prominent, there were additional factors linked to women’s participation in TS exchanges. These included: freeing up money for purchasing marijuana; using TS as a symbolic expression of the end of a relationship with husband/boyfriend, for example a social statement that, ‘I am finished with him’; an effective mechanism to elicit jealousy from boyfriends/husbands; or as an expression of retribution (payback) to boyfriends/husbands for being unfaithful or incarcerated.

Factors negatively associated with the practice

This study found that women who were non-drinkers were very unlikely to engage in transactional sex. Similarly, women whose drug use only included smoking marijuana or who were over the age of forty were less likely to engage. For example, one woman commented:

One security man tried to catch me. I’m like, ‘I’m not jumping up at your security car’ [meaning she is not a young woman approaching the security car to exchange sex for money or resources]. ‘I’m just old lady. I’m drunk. You find young woman’.

The study found that if women in the Long Grass had sufficient access to alcohol and other resources (such as food), they would be unlikely to engage in a transaction until these resources were depleted. This reflects Sansom’s (1980) description that in ‘bad times’ when accessibility to resources was low, transactional sex would increase.

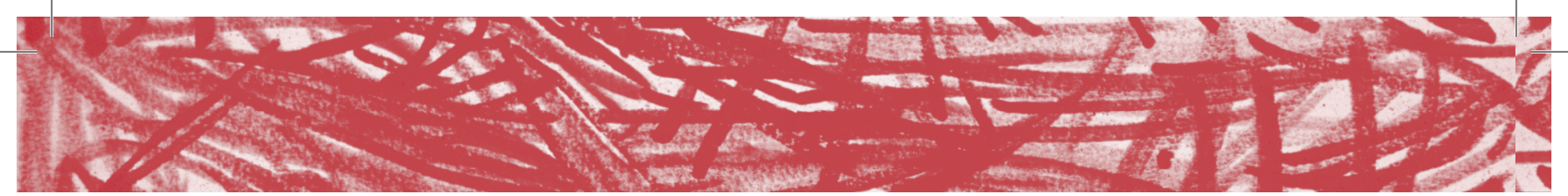
Given that a lack of parental authority was found to be a factor positively associated with women and TS, it is logical that the inverse should apply, that is a high level of supervision or surveillance from parents, elders and husbands is negatively associated with participation in TS. This was found to be the case, particularly when husbands were closely monitoring the behaviour of women.

Perceptions of danger

Participants in this study did not consider engaging in TS as a dangerous or risky activity that would compromise the health and safety of women. In fact, when situated within the normative violence and rape experienced in everyday life, these transactional encounters were overwhelmingly deemed safe. Participants emphasised that transactional sex was not a problem for them and that they did not ‘worry’ for the safety of themselves or for others involved in these exchanges. When one participant was asked if she ever felt frightened during transactions she stated, *‘no, just a bit scared the first time. But then fine’*. This participant’s mother similarly expressed that she had no concerns regarding her daughter’s safety when she was *‘selling herself’*. Another participant explained that she was not worried for her safety and didn’t feel frightened because, *‘white men - they grew up with discipline. They know not to hit a woman, not like black men who will give you the biggest hiding for nothing. They [women] will jump in any car. It’s not a problem’*.

The only aspect of TS that generated fear among women resulted from a man taking the woman a long way out of town and ‘dumping’ them in a place or area that inhibited her capacity to return to the group. A number of participants in this study connected being dumped with prior violent incidents, such as rape or bashings, as the following illustrates:

If the woman does not do what the person wants, he may hurt her or throw/dump her from the car anywhere. The girl gets into the taxi and says, ‘I don’t have any money’. So he turns off the meter. They drive to a place, somewhere like here or there, and she gives him what he wants. If she doesn’t, he might



bash her or dump her. Sometimes they just throw you from the car. Maybe they just take what they want [rape].

A few participants were worried that they may be killed and never be found by family, from being dumped on someone else's country that is not known to living family members or ancestors. While few women expressed fear in connection with being taken far away and dumped, this eventuality was largely an inconvenience, as the story of one woman demonstrates:

I know one woman who went in a car with three men. Long way out, maybe Humpty Doo. They leave her out there to walk back in. But a Balanda [white person] – a good one – you know some are good, others not – well a good one pick her up and bring her to Palmerston. She only got a six pack for that!.

While being taken far away and dumped was construed as an inconvenience in TS rather than a danger, so too was falling pregnant. According to participants, abortion was common practice among women and the most commonly cited health care provider was the Royal Darwin Hospital.

An indirect danger of engaging in TS related to being bashed by an Aboriginal husband, boyfriend or family member. Some girls would attempt to keep their TS experience a secret from some family members and not others, which was risky business: *'The girls would try to keep it secret because of shame... maybe they do it when they are in Darwin or Gove so that they can keep it secret... maybe go away from the group and do it alone. Otherwise, get drunk and family talk. Gossip'*. Shame, in this context, may mean violence or worse; ostracism. Maintaining the secrecy of these 'boyfriend' and other TS relationships with non-Indigenous men from Aboriginal boyfriends and husbands was paramount; the risk being that the woman's friends/family get drunk and tell about the relationship to others (as idle gossip or vindictiveness), leading to a beating.

Other women feared that their incarcerated husbands would accuse them of engaging in TS, irrespective of whether they had or hadn't:

He is in that green uniform now, low security inmate, maybe working on day release programs around town. He might look me and say, 'why you all styled up?' [dressed up] ... If my husband heard that story, he would bash me. He would be jealous. He doesn't believe a word that I say. He even smashes my phone because he thinks I might send messages to a boyfriend. Lots of Aboriginal men are like that. They get real jealousy.

If the woman was in Darwin and the boyfriend/husband was in the community, the woman may not want to return to that community until she was either willing to take a bashing or thought the issue had passed. The family and intimate partner tensions caused by women engaging in TS were associated with cultural and social expectations around how women's sexuality was or should be controlled and by whom. The adaptive and enforced changes to traditional marriage structures discussed by Burbank (1988) and the ensuing intergeneration tensions created, along with contemporary influences that shape notions of sexuality, have come together to create a domain where women's sexual agency continues to be contested and where families or husbands may be perceived to have a right to stake a claim.

The direct health dangers linked to TS were regarded as insignificant. Some participants mentioned their awareness of potential health concerns, such as exposure to various sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or other diseases, and as one participant stated, *'STDs are walking the streets'*. Yet the acknowledgement of potential harm was presented as a minor concern for the women involved, captured in the following comment, *'The women, they are not worried for diseases. They not frightened for safety'*. Some women, however, carried condoms, but did not assert that they be used during sexual exchanges with men:

All women know about STIs and AIDs and they would probably use them [condoms] if they had them, except maybe if they were drunk...we go to the clinic if there is a problem. It's better in Darwin [to go to the clinic]. In the community maybe get shame, people find out, maybe get bashed.



Sometimes use them [condoms], but not all the time. The girl might be shame to push it on.

They not worry about that [STIs]. They get smokes, grog and sometimes ganja or maybe money. Not care. They just get in the car. Go with anyone. Aboriginal or Balanda. It doesn't matter... The man drives up and says, 'you want to come for a drink?' and the Captain gets in.

In the context of talking about 'safety' (in broad terms) and echoing the views of many participants in this study, one woman explained, *'it is safer to go with people you know because you can trust them. They don't have diseases because you know them'*. This finding is consistent with other research that confirmed that the more intimate a relationship became in sexual transactions, condom use diminished (Gillies *et al.*, 1994; Jesson *et al.*, 1994; Wood & Jewkes, 1998).

The incidence of several STIs is higher in the NT than anywhere else in Australia and affects Indigenous people disproportionately when compared to non-Indigenous people (Australian Government Department of Health and Aging, 2006). It is reasonable to conclude that the incidence of STIs among Darwin's Aboriginal homeless populations, facing the greatest level of social disadvantage, is also likely to be high. Although the women in this study may perceive STIs as normal and unproblematic in terms of their sexual health and life world, the evidence points to a broader public health concern. Coupled with the already higher incidence of STIs, homeless Indigenous women were the victims of repeated rape. Their intoxicated state meant that they were unable to defend themselves from predators and were powerless to prevent infection transmission under such circumstances. Alcohol consumption was also positively associated with women engaging in TS; a key risk factor in unprotected sex and STI transmission. Given the life worlds of homeless Indigenous women in Darwin and what is known about the incidence of STIs among this and other populations who face social disadvantage, the women in this

study are at a significant risk of contracting and transmitting STIs – perhaps more so than any other population in Darwin.

Public health interventions need to focus not only on improving the capacity of women to engage in safe sex, but most importantly on (i) minimising women's exposure to rape; and (ii) the safe sex attitudes and behaviours of the male party in the transactions. Drawing from the African-based lessons, public health initiatives based on behavioural change models that place emphasis on personal responsibility for sexual health fail if they do not acknowledge power structures. Not only were women in this present study intoxicated when they engaged in TS, but as Maganja *et al.* (2007) have pointed out, *'Women are at a disadvantage in negotiating safe sexual behaviour with their casual partners because of the direct exchange of sex for money or other resources in these relationships'* (p.978). Public health interventions must be responsive to the context in which TS operates if they are to have effect.

Management of risk

As TS is not regarded as a dangerous activity, there are no specific risk management strategies that women deployed on a regular basis. Participating women, however, could cite a range of specific measures that could be used. These included:

- Taking down number plates;
- Going with men known to the group;
- Maintaining secrecy among group, particularly groups of women, to avoid being beaten by Aboriginal boyfriend/husband or even family;
- Avoiding going with men out of the Darwin area; and
- Condom use.



Conclusion: 'Captains' and 'selly-welly'

This study set out to explore the relationship between transactional sex (TS) and homelessness and its associated risks to homeless Indigenous women in Darwin. Findings revealed that TS is integral to the homeless experience of women and is a key feature of daily survival. It provides essential supplies and sought after resources which enable women to stay in Darwin. The exchange is not understood as 'work' and women do not see themselves as 'sex workers'. Operating through established social processes, TS acts as a mechanism to maintain relatedness and demonstrate commitment to social obligations. The perceived risks to homeless Indigenous women resulting from their engagement in TS are relatively few when contrasted against the cycle of risks inherent in everyday life.


Transactional sex has its merits. It brings a sense of power, identity, autonomy and control. It provides valued resources and contributes to an elevated social status. It creates opportunities for women to engage in mainstream society. From within the constraints of a life world with limited options for social and economic advancement, intervening to abolish the practice will undoubtedly have negative outcomes for the women concerned. Any intervention to better manage the practice therefore will require sensitivity and pragmatism. In particular, interventions which address public health and safety concerns must be responsive to the marginalisation, social organisation and power dynamics of people living in the Long Grass. Interventions that are not underpinned by this form of knowledge run a significant risk of exacerbating the disadvantage and social exclusion experienced by homeless Indigenous women.

The findings of this study relating to contextual aspects of everyday life in Darwin's Long Grass are consistent with those described in earlier studies. The present study, however, has opened

up a fissure in our knowledge about the social organisation and processes surrounding transactional sex. In doing so, it has revealed the extent of the atrocious life conditions experienced by this population, in particular, by women, who both endured and perpetrated violence. Women did not perceive there to be safe places for them to live and nor did they view police and police spaces as necessarily safe alternatives. This study has also revealed that women among this population were routinely subjected to sexual assault and rape from a range of perpetrators - one of the most significant findings to emerge.

Transactional sex cannot be separated from the broader life worlds that shape the drivers and experiences of homelessness. Brutal processes of colonisation and dispossession and the continuing marginalisation, spatial policing and intergenerational trauma endured by these women have created an environment where transactional sex is an historical and established mechanism for basic survival. Since Darwin's beginnings as a frontier town, the position of Aboriginal people living rough on the margins of society has changed little, with women continuing to operate in the informal economy as a 'sexual commodity'. Aboriginal people living in the Long Grass are still highly stigmatised and constructed as problematic, with their urban presence regarded as offensive to the wider society. This population rarely have the opportunity to participate in the formal economy.

From this historic framing, selling sex can easily be viewed as inherently violent, where women have no real choice. Yet rather than placing unequal gender relations at the fore, or the act of sexual exchange, as the abolitionist feminists have done, it is the inherent and structural violence of colonisation -- that is the context surrounding the sexual transactions -- which have shaped these women's lives and the



choices available to them. As Razack (1998) has stated, it is not simply about gender relations but also about space:

Space determines who belongs to the nation state and who does not, and consequently, who has rights and who does not...to be displaced, homeless or a migrant, that is, to be without place, is to be without moral standing. These conditions – displacement, homelessness, migration – create prostitution and what prostitution upholds creates them (p.367).

If transactional sex is a problem, it is one that cannot be understood in isolation as simple immoral behaviour but as part of a much larger complex narrative. It is paradoxically both an expression of women's agency and a symbol of continuing racial oppression and disempowerment. Yet mainstream society has a 'vampiric dependence' on intervening in the lives of Aboriginal Territorians (Lea, 2008; p.13). It is therefore acknowledged that presenting information about the social organisation of transactional sex among homeless Indigenous women will come with the expectation of discussing policy implications and outlining 'helping' recommendations geared towards interceding in their lives.

These expectations raise moral and ethical dilemmas which will influence the nature of the interventions. Should they be responsive to the position that sees TS as dangerous, fundamentally violent and immoral? Should interventions position TS in a practical way and be responsive to the lived world that these women inhabit? The answers are largely dependent on how TS may be defined as a problem and by whom.

If TS is an activity that should be stopped, then a punitive approach will serve to further criminalise and marginalise women, compounding the hardships linked with homelessness. To advance down this pathway, Indigenous women who spend time in Darwin's Long Grass must have access to alternative life opportunities which have the capacity to redress the deeply embedded social, racial and gender inequalities that they endure.

One thing is clear; unlike the moral and ethical debates connected with selling sex, the women's routine exposure to rape and sexual assault during their homelessness is a form of violence that most of society would agree is unacceptable. This study concludes that as a first response, the primary focus for policy and interventions must respond to this violence and create safe places for homeless Indigenous women to inhabit.

Policy and program implications

Ethnographic research informing policy and interventions

This study is all about policy; policy that has created and sustained gender inequalities and Indigenous homelessness and social disadvantage, giving rise to a socio-economic and political milieu in which transactional sex emerges and thrives as an informal economy. While this study has focussed on Darwin, its findings have applicability to policy and practice in all jurisdictions where homeless people exist.

Comprehensive views of the lived trajectory of homelessness that emerge through ethnographic research, such as those captured through this investigation, are critical if improvements in the health, wellbeing and safety of homeless populations and the general public are to result. Policy formulation and related interventions that draw from research which gives agency to homeless individuals, as experts in their own lives, make a useful contribution to this objective.

National homelessness policy goals

In *The Road Home. A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness* (2008) the Commonwealth Government has stated that addressing homelessness is the responsibility of all governments, the business and not-for-profit sector and the community. Two headline goals for 2020 have been identified and agreed to by the States and Territory governments. These include: to halve overall homelessness; and to offer accommodation to all rough sleepers who need it. The findings of this study reveal the importance of achieving these goals for improving the life worlds of homeless populations, in particular for homeless Indigenous women. By halving the population, fewer women will be vulnerable to sexual assault and exploitation associated with homelessness. Similarly, being able to offer

women in the Long Grass shelter (safe places) will also reduce their exposure to the risk of sexual assault.


To achieve the above goals in the Northern Territory (NT), the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH), agreed by the Council of Australian Governments, has allocated nearly 55 million dollars of Federal and Territory funding to be invested in responses to homelessness which aim to contribute to interim targets set for 2013. These interim targets include:

- Decreasing the number of homeless Australians by 7%;
- Decreasing Indigenous homelessness by one third; and
- Decreasing the numbers of Australians sleeping rough by one quarter.

Expanding homeless definitions beyond housing

The NPAH identifies a suite of programs and services to move towards the interim targets and overall goals, such as *A Place to Call Home*, *Street to Home* and *Tenancy Sustainability and Support* programs. The emphases of these initiatives are underpinned by a shelter-oriented definition of homelessness, that is, house and home are conflated. From this position, homelessness is compassionately situated within an affordable housing and mental health discourse. Resolving homelessness is then logically achieved through the provision of a house in which an individual acquires the skills and behaviours necessary to maintain their tenure.

The shelter definition of homelessness, however, has limitations for those who may not understand home in this way and who may need to shift their attitudes, values and beliefs in order to succeed within this house/tenure framing. As Veness (1993) has commented, when researchers and policy makers implicitly support biased



definitions, they fail to address quality of life issues for marginalised people and reinforce the status quo. Broadening understandings of home and homelessness that extend beyond a shelter-orientated perspective are required and must be reflected in policy statements and related interventions, particularly for those aimed at addressing Indigenous homelessness. For marginal groups, such as Indigenous women, where mobility and maintaining relations with kin are central to survival, better defining home and homelessness have the potential to move policy and interventions towards evidence based best practice. This has important implications for the national headline goals (discussed above), for without redefining homelessness, it is not a realistic proposition that Indigenous homelessness can be addressed/resolved to the extent nominated.

The incongruence of local policing policy with national homeless goals

Layered over this fundamental policy limitation around homelessness definitions, the dominant views of society have constructed Indigenous homelessness as firstly and fundamentally, a problem for people in houses ('residents'), and secondly, as a problem of a population which has a home 'elsewhere'. Cast as 'itinerants', 'transients', 'urban drifters', 'visitors', 'Long Grassers', and more recently 'tourists', the solution for what is deemed to be a diabolical problem is a simple one – they must go back to where they came from. Socially (and politically) constructing Indigenous homelessness as a matter of 'anti-social behaviour' of people who do not belong gives legitimacy to policing and the need for surveillance.

When homeless Indigenous people and groups are in Darwin, they are treated as potentially dangerous and moved from pillar to post by a suite of uniformed officers (police, night patrol, security guards, First Response Patrol, transit police, council and park rangers etcetera). This entrenched surveillance and punitive policy approach neglects the lived realities faced by this population; a life world punctuated by internal displacement, trauma, violence, sexual assault,

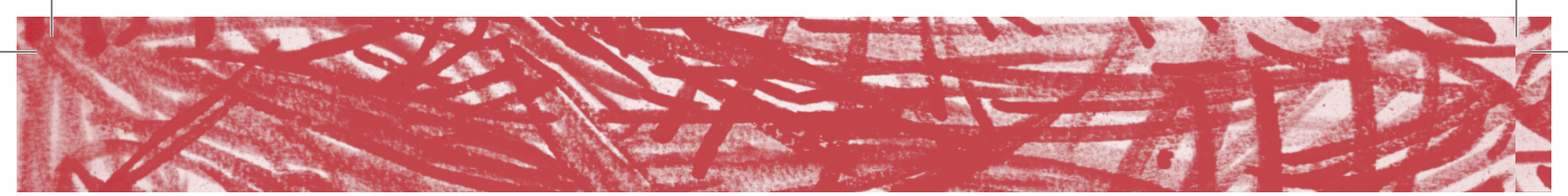
grief, loss, hunger, sickness, disease, disability, pain, fear, loneliness, discomfort, exclusion and addiction. While the answer of doing nothing and ceasing to move people on is inconceivable, it is clear that the policy of perpetual and forced mobility is exacerbating the disadvantage faced by this population.

Punitive and surveillance policies must work in concert with health, housing and/or homelessness policies which ensure access to safe places (including, but not exclusively, housing and shelter) for homeless people to legitimately inhabit and conduct their daily business. As found in this present study, this is critical for the life quality of Indigenous women and their lived trajectory of homelessness in Darwin. Once again, the provision of safe and legitimate places to occupy is pivotal to reducing the incidence of rape and alleviating associated mental, physical, sexual and public health consequences.

As homelessness rates have increased, publicly sanctioned surveillance and punitive measures have expanded at a rate disproportionate to interventions which provide crisis care and assistance. This police/care policy imbalance must be tipped in favour of 'care' if the national headline goals on homelessness are to be realised.

Exiting from custodial care into the Long Grass

The study has highlighted that the incarceration of men is an ordinary part of the narrative of homeless women. While significant efforts have been made towards curbing violent behaviour that leads to imprisonment, many men are leaving prison settings and entering into the Long Grass without having participated in rehabilitative programs which address problems linked to violence and alcohol (see Holmes and Stephenson, 2011). Male inmates may well have post-release prison plans which indicate their intention to return to a community outside of Darwin. On release, however, the desire to obtain sex and alcohol has primacy. This typically entails spending time in the Long Grass in Darwin and subsequently places homeless women at risk of violence, sexual assault and rape. While this



situation points to gaps in the provision of services within correctional institutions (and broader social dysfunction), the Commonwealth Government's (2008) commitment of 'no exits into homelessness' from statutory, custodial care and hospital, mental health and drug and alcohol services for those at risk of homelessness is important for the safety and wellbeing of homeless Indigenous women.

Violence and safe places

While women were routinely subjected to forms of violence during homelessness (and also in their community before entering into homelessness), they were also the perpetrators of violent assaults. The hostile environment that they inhabited is one in which the fear of violence cycles into violent reactions by the women, perpetuating ongoing trauma during homelessness. Again, policy and interventions that recognise the burden of fear on women's lives and its relationship to violence are imperative. The provision of safe places, wherein women know that they can escape the daily stress of avoiding or engaging in trouble, is paramount. However, such places must be carefully managed to ensure that violence is not merely transferred from one setting to the next.

With 'safe places' for homeless Indigenous women, there would likely be an assumption and/or expectation that programs on safe sex, alcohol use, violence and other life skills would be simultaneously delivered to this captive client group when they accessed the service. There is strong evidence, however, that while homeless women may acquire the knowledge relating to risky behaviour, this knowledge alone is unlikely to yield changes in their behaviour unless significant shifts occur which lead to increases in their overall economic empowerment (Auslander *et al.*, 1998; Jauregui, 2009; Dunkle *et al.*, 2010). As Auslander *et al.* (1998) have argued, effective interventions must also include skills and incentives for educational planning. Consequently, a safe place that simultaneously delivers programs to homeless Indigenous women must achieve three objectives: (i) immediate shelter and safety (crisis care); (ii) delivery of educational programs surrounding risky behaviour; and (iii) educational planning

that creates economic opportunity and redresses the racial, gender and poverty related power disparities.

The suitability, however, of delivering programs alongside crisis care must be carefully examined and the likely outcomes assessed. For instance, how appropriate or beneficial is it to provide risk management messages to women when they have been recently raped or assaulted?


(Public) health and sex

Improving the sexual health of women in the Long Grass is most dependent on preventing their rape and sexual assault, and again, ensuring women have access to a safe place (especially when intoxicated). Safe places, as a women-specific measure, must form a part of the local and national policy landscape.

While homeless women engaged in TS often carried condoms and accessed Darwin-based clinics, they were unable to assert their use during sexual encounters due to the power disparities derived from gender, ethnicity, poverty and intoxication. Interventions that focus on supporting women to be more assertive during TS may deliver some public health benefits. However, focussing interventions on the more empowered male counterpart in the exchange is likely to yield better outcomes. Whatever the strategy, care must be taken to ensure that the women involved in TS are not further marginalised by interventions which isolate them as a source of contagion. A more generalised focus on sexual health that targets men who may buy sex, have sex with strangers and have multiple (male and female) partners, and which suspends moral judgements on their (legal) sexual practices, is required. Similarly, measures which address appropriate behaviour of men more generally towards women, are also necessary.

Alcohol, transactional sex and trauma

As noted, this study found that alcohol consumption was positively associated with TS. Whether the objective of policy aims to prevent women from engaging in TS or improve public



health, greater investment in rehabilitative opportunities must occur. Good public health policy should aim to prevent excessive alcohol use by young women by educating about the risks and consequences of drinking – especially before alcohol consumption has become an integral part of life. But like health education messages, these interventions will have little effect if they are not delivered in tandem with education planning initiatives that lead to the creation of greater life opportunities for Indigenous women. Nor will they have much applicability if the stressors which make drinking an escape are left untackled.

Alcohol consumption among homeless people in Darwin's Long Grass has been linked to the self-management of symptoms associated with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (see Holmes, 2006; 2007; Holmes & McRae-Williams, 2009). For example, people drink to manage debilitating feelings, forget painful memories, manage flashbacks and hyper-vigilance and alleviate fear. This behavioural response places homeless people in a position that makes them highly susceptible to further traumatic events – where they (or someone close to them) believe they (or someone close to them) will be seriously injured or die. While there is a high prevalence of life time exposure to trauma among Darwin's homeless population, public health policy and initiatives have been obscured by punitive policy responses which target drinking and anti-social behaviour. It is likely that this situation is occurring in multiple settings across the Northern Territory and also in other parts of Australia where large numbers of disadvantaged groups congregate. Health policy which seeks to address the link between trauma, alcohol and homelessness will require an acknowledgement of the need for specialist interventions to be of any benefit to the target population and the wider community. This direction will have an impact on the public purse, but will have long term benefits outweighing expenditure, that may be reflected in multiple arenas, for example, the numbers of people that enter and stay in homelessness, the rate of hospital admissions (including mental health admissions), the demand for specialist services and the demand on police services, for instance.

Preventing homelessness

The recent investment in Indigenous communities through the Closing the Gap strategy, the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) and the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP), for example, are geared towards improving the education, health and employment outcomes for Indigenous people. In theory, such investment should address the poverty affecting Indigenous communities by improving life quality, creating opportunity and through preventing individuals from entering into homelessness in the first place.

The research findings point to the deep and complex social, cultural and economic issues faced by Indigenous communities in the NT. Homelessness and transactional sex are largely products of these circumstances. As such, policy which specifically responds to Indigenous women and works to improve their social and economic status over time will reduce homelessness and the need for women to engage in sexual transactions.



Further research

Emerging from the findings and conclusions of this study, the following areas for further exploration are highlighted:

1. Health interventions connected to TS in other settings which acknowledge gender, social, economic and racial inequalities (such as Africa, Canada and New Zealand) where women are at risk of, or are, homeless, and where such interventions may have lessons for the Australian context;
2. Exploring notions of home and homelessness for Indigenous Australians, and also notions of home during periods without shelter in order to redefine homelessness and create better policy and programs to support this population;
3. The motivations or characteristics of the men that seek to exchange sexual favours with homeless Indigenous women requires examination to enhance the effectiveness of health and other interventions in connection with TS and homelessness;
4. The interaction between violence, jealousy, sexuality, shame, retribution and punishment among (homeless) Indigenous populations is not well understood and has implications for various policy arenas, institutional practices and effective program development and delivery in multiple settings; and
5. Action oriented research relating to initiatives that lead to the economic empowerment of homeless Indigenous women (for example micro/cottage industry).

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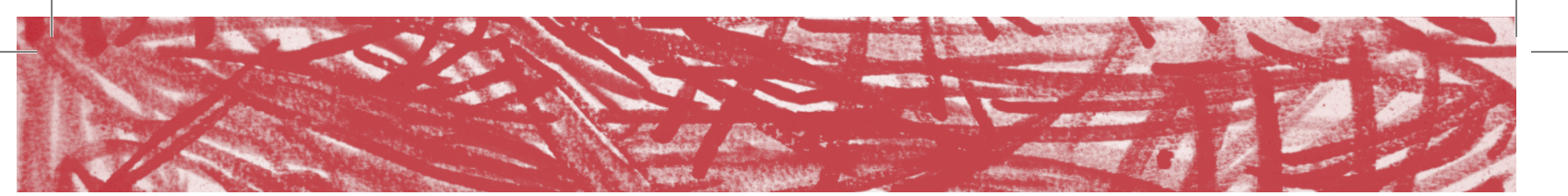
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