Sex-for-money in Durban and adjacent residential areas: an exploratory study of some features of prostitution

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Introduction

It is impossible to state with any certainty precisely when the commercial selling of sexual services first appeared in human society. However, 'the evidence from the most ancient societies suggests that it has existed from the most remote historical times' (Henriques 1962:15). Prostitution has thus at least existed since the beginning of recorded history. It has always been a subject of great interest to many people. Today a vast amount of literature exists on this phenomenon.

Sex-for-money was studied for the first time in 1837 by Parent-Duchatelet (Rasmussen 1979:21). Although the public stigmatisation of sex-for-sale has seriously hampered and still is a barrier to scientific study of prostitution, quite a number of studies dealing with the subject have been published. The increasing number of investigations into prostitution, especially since the second half of the previous decade are encouraging.

Prostitution in South Africa has to date received scant attention. As far as can be established only two studies had been published in South Africa until 1977. One of the studies was undertaken by Freed (1949), who mainly conducted interviews with prostitutes in Johannesburg, while the other study was carried out by Crause and Botha (1977) in Port Elizabeth's harbour area. The latter two researchers selected a girl who had to infiltrate the meeting places of prostitutes and other people in this subculture, and, on the basis of her five-week-long observations, made a functional
analysis of the social system of prostitution centred in the harbour area of Port Elizabeth by night.

It appears that since the late seventies there has been an increasing tendency among South African researchers to investigate sex-for-sale. The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) decided during 1977 to introduce prostitution in the studies of deviant behavior undertaken by its Institute for Sociological and Demographic Research (ISODEM) and has since then intermittently conducted research on this phenomenon. Apart from the HSCCR’s studies (Schurink 1979a, 1979b, 1983, 1986; Schurink & Winterbach 1979; Minnaar, Venter & Schurink 1980 and Schurink & Levinthal 1983) three studies undertaken as master’s dissertations (Kilian 1982; Milwidsky 1984 and Visser 1985) have been completed since 1977.

The church, doctors, police and certain organisations and individuals have from time to time expressed their concern about prostitution and its impact on the quality of life and welfare of Durban and surrounding urban areas. As far as Durban is concerned, Personality (13 January 1988) reported that some 1 000 prostitutes operate in the Point area of the city’s dockland alone. Although prostitution has occurred in Durban for many decades, it can be argued with some certainty that these numbers are on the increase as a result of the influx of large numbers of people (especially blacks) to the city.

During the planning phase of the research in Umlazi and KwaMashu, it was decided to investigate accounts by informants and casual observation that women living in both communities exchange sex for money in Durban.

Aims

The objectives of this article arise from the preceding paragraphs, namely to describe major elements and dimension of prostitution in Durban, Umlazi and KwaMashu. More specifically this contribution strives to shed light on the following:

- the social world of prostitution, that is the various prostitution work roles, the vast variety of activities of all the people involved in the enterprise and the multifaceted roles and relationships between these various participants;
- the nature of crimes found in the prostitution subculture; and
- KwaMashu and Umlazi residents’ perceptions of and attitudes towards prostitution.

Methodology

From the outset we decided to observe prostitution in Durban and recruit, as subjects, prostitutes living in Umlazi and KwaMashu but plying their trade in the city itself. There were two important reasons for this: firstly, prostitution was fairly easy to observe in Durban but difficult to observe in Umlazi and KwaMashu; secondly because in the light of certain practical considerations (e.g. limited funds and time) it was realistic to concentrate the study on the harbour city. It was argued, for example, that Schurink, who acted as project leader in Durban, would be able to establish contact with prostitutes relatively easily (in this city prostitutes solicit men openly in the street and also recruit enough business women and other participants in the trade). We accepted that this procedure would probably not provide information on all aspects of prostitution (e.g. certain prostitution activities and trends in Umlazi and KwaMashu). Consequently we decided, as far as funds and available time would allow, that we would also try to visit localities in Umlazi and KwaMashu where prostitution could possibly be observed. Visits to a few such localities, and the interviews held, yielded valuable information on certain aspects of prostitution in these two residential areas. However, this information could not always be verified. In the light of the foregoing as well as on account of the fact that no information could be gathered on some other important dimensions of prostitution in Umlazi/KwaMashu and Durban, the findings and conclusions of this investigation should be regarded as exploratory and provisional and not reflecting the complete prostitution scene in the Greater Durban area.

Research strategies

For the greater part, research was conducted within a qualitative methodological framework supplemented by a quantitative approach. The data-gathering methods mainly employed were: participant observation, unstructured or in-depth interviews, and unsolicited documented material.

Participant observation

Participant observation with varied degrees of participation and observation were employed by ourselves and a former KwaMashu female student of Ndabanidaba who was temporarily employed to assist with the gathering of the data. With regard to visible street prostitution use was made mainly of ‘mobile ethnography’ originally developed by Cohen (1980). In this method the researcher’s participation in his/her subjects’ activities is restricted and data are gathered by observing the activities of prostitutes and other street actors. ‘Mobile ethnography’ is particularly appropriate for studying street prostitution. Firstly, prostitutes working the streets are propositioned, almost exclusively, by people in cars. Secondly, the speed and mobility of the
car facilitates the study of street interaction and events spread over the city. Finally, this method provides a relatively high degree of safety, convenience, and concealment which cannot be secured when conducting research on foot. Schurink spent more than 30 hours observing the various prostitution locations in the city and gathered valuable information first-hand on prostitutes, patrons, passersby and other people. Especially informative was the information obtained on the strategies of solicitation used by street-walkers.

Another variant of participant observation which proved to be very useful was to stroll along beats or streets were business ladies or prostitutes were soliciting kays/gumbulas or patrons. Schurink conducted observations unobtrusively by walking near to but past prostitutes, pimps, patrons and other bystanders. He employed this strategy on the beachfront area where his hotel was situated. Since Schurink was openly solicited by prostitutes in this area it was not difficult to direct the conversation to the research and to ask questions about their services, working hours and the hazards in their line of work. On various occasions he was approached by Indian pimps who initially saw him as a potential gumbula. After Schurink explained that he was part of a research team conducting a scientific investigation into prostitution two of these pimps acted as referees for him.

With regard to ladies’ bar in certain hotels where prostitutes and especially Umlazi and KwaMashu girls operate, similar tactics in observing them and other bar people were employed. Individually or together, we would visit some ladies’ bars endeavouring to enter into conversation with people present in these settings and/or to observe events. While we found ourselves feeling somewhat uneasy at times (we were inter alia afraid that we could get caught up in a bar fracas) we generally succeeded in overcoming such feelings and managed on some occasions to obtain valuable information. In general, we found it much more useful to engage in casual conversation and to speak on any topic the subject might introduce, than to set up a formal interview situation. On a few occasions on which participants in bar settings were willing to grant interviews, we interviewed them either in the car or in Schurink’s hotel room.

As in the case of the former two contexts in which solicitation took place, Ndabandaba who visited a shebeen in Umlazi, which also served as a brothel, gatered data through observation and conversation.

**In-depth interviews**

In-depth interviews were conducted with several persons, including members of both the South African and KwaZulu Police, pimps and prostitutes.

Interviews were recorded and ranged from 20 to 100 minutes. Prior to beginning each interview, we introduced ourselves and informed the subjects as to the objectives and nature of the research. In general, we limited our contributions to the interviews as far as possible. While Schurink developed a list of themes, some of which were related to existing constructs (e.g. theories and typologies) and empirical research findings, to guide the interviews, it was seldom rigidly applied. Instead, we endeavoured to maintain a conversational flow in the interviews, trying to get the subjects to reveal the sense and meaning that they attached both to prostitution and their own lives.

In order to win the confidence of prostitutes and pimps and to encourage them to respond openly and truthfully they were assured that anything they said would be confidential and that neither their names nor the names of people we might discuss would be revealed in the report. They were also promised that the names of persons to appear in the publication would be fictitious.

**Documents**

This study made use of unsolicited documents, namely newspapers and especially magazine articles. This data source was especially useful since it was relatively inexpensive and provided data on certain dimensions of prostitution that could not be obtained by utilizing other methods. Furthermore, it provided data on prostitution and prostitution-related events that had already taken place and over which we had no influence. Finally, the study provided data against which the accuracy and consistency of information gathered by and insights gained both from interviews and participant observation could be verified.

**Qualitative analysis**

The qualitative methods employed in the study generated a large volume of qualitative data on the meaning that prostitutes and other people involved in this sex-for-money enterprise attach to it. These various meanings, definitions and experiences were captured, as far as possible, by means of field notes and transcribed taped interviews. Examples from the data that typify certain patterns found in people’s perceptions and thoughts, and in events, interactions and social processes, as well as examples of exceptions to or deviations from such patterns or norms, will be provided in what follows. However, only the clearest examples or quotes will be presented.

It is important to note that while important insights into various dimensions of prostitution were obtained, practical issues such as lack of time and funds did not allow for an extensive study of all facets. A holistic, ideographic or contextual analysis of prostitution was therefore not possible. In the light of this, the reader should regard the description of prostitution in Durban and surrounding residential areas as incomplete.
Social survey

In order to determine Umlazi and KwaMashu residents' perceptions of and attitudes towards prostitution a few questions were included in the questionnaire that was used in the survey.3

Analysis of qualitative data: the social world of prostitution

Prostitution within Western societies at least in a complex phenomenon that entails a vast variety of forms based on the activities of all the people involved in this sex-for-money enterprise and the multifaceted roles and relationships between these various participants. Since the prostitute, the pimp and the customer are generally regarded as the main actors in the world of prostitution, the discussion in the remainder of this section will focus on them.

Prostitutes

If asked in our mind's eye to visualise a prostitute, most of us would probably imagine a woman with certain characteristics (e.g. seductively dressed). Although such an image does, in fact, conform partly to reality, it excludes many women and men who are not ostentatious in their physical appearance and who do prostitute themselves.

Male prostitutes

While male and 'boy' prostitution has always been hidden from public view in South Africa, many reports in the media have during the last few years revealed that many teenage and adolescent boys in Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban make a living by engaging in prostitution (cf. Personality, 27 January 1990:27-28; Personality, 12 February 1990:8-10). In Durban in particular male prostitution is a well-known phenomenon, and male prostitutes have been active for a long time and are known as ongingili or ixi labane.

While data on male prostitution in the present study are scant, it was found that both rabbits/rent or rent-pieces and transvestite/transsexual prostitute hustle or exchange access to their bodies for material gain (money, food, entertainment, or a place to eat, bath and/or sleep) in Durban. From both interviews and observations it appeared that rabbits/rented themselves especially in meat markets or slangparke including certain streets or beats, gay bars and clubs and public toilets in Durban.

While these prostitutes employ various techniques in selling themselves, they typically solicit men in the street or advertise their services on the walls or doors of male public toilets. As far as the latter is concerned the following is relevant:

I parked the car in West Street and sat and watched an Indian guy who appeared to be in this early twenties. He stood just off the corner of West and Field Streets and from the way that he looked at the vehicles passing by I assumed that he was looking for a score [customer]. It only took a few minutes before he walked to me and asked, 'How are you, my boss?' I replied, 'I'm well, how are you?' He didn't answer and I asked him whether he always stood there. He replied that he wasn't always there and that he would only come out during weekends. I wanted to make sure that he was really a rent and asked, 'Have you had any breaks tonight?' He replied in the negative. After a few moments he asked it he could join me in the car. I didn't trust him and said no. I then decided to tell him that I was a member of a team studying prostitution and that I would like to meet black men selling themselves. He either didn't understand or didn't want to listen and remarked, 'You've got a big cock'. I told him that I wasn't looking for sex but wanted information on black male hustlers. He replied that he could help me right away. A 5 was about to tell him that I would prefer black guys staying either in Umlazi or KwaMashu he asked 'Let me see your cock'. I ignored his request and asked him what I would have to pay him for finding me black guys.

‘Invitations for sex are scrawled on the walls of almost every male public toilet, with dates and times given. Directions to specific cubicles for specific perversions are stated in bold koki pen.' 'These walls are always cleaned' said vice squad member Mark Talbot while taking Personality on a tour of Durban's men's toilets, 'but the next day, it's all back again. No sooner are the holes [through which anal ex is practised] patched up then they are gouged back into the doors and walls'. The grand public toilets next to the Durban City Hall are known as the 'bargain basement', one of the busiest quick-sex places in the city. Even the public toilet of an up-market department store in the city centre is a favourite hangout for businessmen during lunch time. The toilets in the Botanical Gardens are said to be the haunt of the 'closet homosexuals' because they are hidden by trees and bush... Anstey's Beach and Brighton Beach are full of explicit 'essays' written in a young hand extolling the virtues of regulars to the toilets and describing their sexual encounters there (Personality, 29 January 1990:27).
He answered that it would depend on myself. He then remarked, 'You white men don't want to go with Indians'. He revealed that he had tried to negotiate with a white guy earlier in the evening and that this man was also only interested in black men. I decided to leave and told him that I had to go ... (Fieldnotes, 28 May 1989).

The preceding extract illustrates that rents often show their interest by opening the conversation with a sociable query. If they are convinced that the other person is really interested in sex they would drop the pretence of purely sociable interaction and would start making direct proposals.

The interviewees generally agreed that rents consists of children, teenagers and young adults, who often sell newspapers and are frequently homeless children and school drop-outs. It appears that the great majority of the rabbits are black.

Another category of male prostitution also found in Durban albeit to a far lesser extent than rent prostitution is transsexual/transvestite prostitution. These prostitutes generally solicit men on the street and rarely operate in other contexts such as escort agencies and massage parlours. They always sell themselves to men while dressed in women's clothing. In general, they dressed more flagrantly, outrageously, conspicuously and scantily than female prostitutes.

Both prostitute and pimp interviewees mentioned a black transvestite prostitute who operated in Point Road. He was originally from Umlazi and is approximately 24 years old.

While none of the interviewees were aware of any rents or transsexual/transvestite prostitutes plying their trade in Umlazi or KwaMashu, it is conceivable that they would on rare and isolated occasions do business there.

Female prostitutes

As noted above prostitution takes a variety of forms in present-day society. 'Prostitutes are available to fit almost any sexual demand across a wide range of prices for the service' (Little 1989:29). Women who are willing to exchange sexual services for money or gain are referred to in Umlazi, KwaMashu and black townships in general as izifebe, rubbernecks, licky lines, onontoloisi, izeqamgwago and onondlwana. The most important business styles, as far as heterosexual prostitution in Durban and its surrounding residential urban areas are concerned, include: streetwalkers, hotel, bar and night-club prostitutes, shebeen and brothel prostitutes, and escort agency prostitutes.

Street-walkers

These women solicit potential customers who drive or walk by their beats, that is particular roads, 'red light' districts, street blocks, intersections, corners, bus stops, alley or doorways which they frequent. These locations include, but are not limited to, the main thoroughfares for traffic from and to Durban, south coast and north coast towns and surrounding residential areas including Umlazi and KwaMashu; Umbilo Road between Blake Road and Edwina Swales V C; Berea Road between Gum Tree and Keits Avenues; Smith Street between Fenton Road and Field Street; Umgeni Freeway in the area of the Durban Station; Victoria Embankment from Russell Street to Albert Park; Point Road from West Street to Browns Road; Pickering Street from Mazeppa Street and Point Road, the Beach Front area and especially the areas around Brighton Place, Tyzack, Gillespie and Sea View Streets; Playfair Road between Sandwown and Somtseu Roads; and the area around Blue Lagoon, the Umgeni Bird Park and Windsor Park. The Point area including Pickering Street and its adjacent streets is generally regarded as the harbour city's 'red light' district.

While women of all ethnic groups solicit men on the street the great majority of them are black. Important themes related to black prostitutes in many of the interviews were: they live predominantly in black townships and travel daily to locations in Durban where they sell themselves; they typically do conventional work (e.g. in the domestic line) and practise prostitution on a part-time basis; a substantial number of them are still at school and exchange their services for gifts or money; they seldom accept black men as kays (customers); they generally do not employ the services of kays; and they give their customers a fair deal and will, except for possibly a few isolated instances, never victimise their lucks (customers) (e.g. stealing from, robbing or stickling (swindling) them).

Street-walkers cannot always be identified by their mode of dress. This was the overall impression gained after hours of observing prostitutes operating in Durban. While some of the street-walkers were clad in tight short shirts, hot pants and brightly coloured slacks and blouses that at times appeared suggestive and 'sexy', the majority dressed casually (e.g. jeans, slacks, T-shirts) and in a fairly conventional manner. These djekas or nightworkers would seldom expose their breasts and would be careful not to attract the attention of the presto (police). However, some clown catchers would dress in a particular way in order to attract lucks:

Some ladies wear short clothes when they come on the streets to show their legs. Other ladies wear tights. They use make-up, wig, perm and other suggestive hairstyles ... They like earrings; the big ones.

If street-walkers were not always distinguished by their dress, they were conspicuous in their use of body
language and other tactics, such as their manner of walking down the street swinging their hips, their hand gesture and their whistling at and verbal remarks to prospective customers. These modes of behaviour would generally indicate to both potential patrons and other people the prostitute status of a woman. However, these strategies of advertising would be in vain unless the luck had prior knowledge of the locations where prostitutes could be encountered. This information can usually be provided by taxi drivers, bartenders and hotel employees.

Through observation of women soliciting men on the street, it appeared that these women in accordance with street prostitutes elsewhere in South Africa (Schurink & Levinthal 1983:154–163) to some extent also market themselves by employing what Rasmussen (1979:85) calls seduction rhetoric techniques. Street-walkers often presented themselves in such a way that it was fairly obvious to prospective customers that their needs would be satisfied in a very ‘special’ way. It was made quite clear to them that they would not waste their money during business with these women.

After a prostitute has attracted the attention of a luck, the next step is to make contact with him. This was accomplished in various ways by the women interviewed.

The street-walker typically solicits men from her beat, or the particular street corner and/or block which she frequents. She either works alone or in cliques. A prospective luck wishing to make contact with a prostitute will typically drive up and down the street or around the block, sometimes four or five times. The strategies of solicitation used by the subjects varied. While the majority of the street-walkers waited for customers to take the initiative, quite a large group simply asked any guy who seemed interested with a prostitute will typically drive up and down the street, and asks me what I want. He asks me what about the money. I tell him R20 or R30. Then we agree and I get into the car and we drive off.

I approach the guys but sometimes they approach me. I walk up to the guy and greet him. He greets me back. I ask him: ‘Where are you going to?’ He would tell me, ‘I’m taking a walk’ or something. I ask him: ‘Are you looking for company?’ He would perhaps say: ‘Yes’. I would ask him: ‘For how long do you want me – only for a couple of hours or for the whole night?’ He’ll tell me. I’ll tell him the price …’

Those street-walkers who waited for customers to take the initiative in soliciting did so in order to protect themselves from being arrested on solicitation charges by members of the vice squad posing as lucks. This does not mean that street-walkers who initiate a conversation with a prospective customer do not use protective measures against disguised kërels/sixteens (police). The contrary is true since they will usually not discuss monetary matters with a score (customer) until they are reasonably certain that they are not talking to a detective.

Although it is commonly believed that the street-walker is virtually indiscriminate in her choice of clients, this was generally not found to be the case. Most interviewees reported surreptitiously screening a customer before setting up an arrangement with him. While the luck is driving around the block or up and down the street the prostitute has a chance to sum him up and decide whether the meets her standards with regard to age, race and cleanliness. Through this screening process the prostitute will be able to decide how much more or less the score will be willing to pay her. As Winick and Kinsie (1971:164–165) point out, an experienced street-walker can often evaluate the appearance of a customer and guess how much he is willing to pay. However, it appeared that a regular luck – that is one who is known to a prostitute and has previously made use of her services – will not be scrutinised. If a regular wants to do business with a prostitute, he will usually drive to the area where she beats. The prostitute on seeing him will immediately go over to him and get into his car, without any preliminary conversation, and they will drive off.

It came to light that prices for the most frequent services required are based on those set by cliques of prostitutes who frequently work together in certain areas. Prices fixed for shakes (masurbating the customer) appeared to be the lowest, while those for bana (intercourse), suckings (fellatio) and unusual sex the highest. Although bargaining often occurred it seemed that the women had a basic price which could be higher than the set price scale but rarely lower.

Street-walkers conducted business with up to eight customers a day, spending on average 20 minutes with each luck. The prices generally ranged from R40 to R65 for short times – that is one ejaculation on the part of the customer and/or about five to 20 minutes spent with him. A customer who wanted a hustler to spend a couple of hours or the whole night with him would have to pay anything from R80 to R300.

While there were exceptions it appeared to be common practice that lucks had to pay ‘up front’ for the services. Clown catchers asked for the fee before rendering their service in order to ensure that they received their payment. Almost all interviewees reported giving their money to friends or pimps for safekeeping so that the customer would not try to steal
the money back. On the whole the hustlers insisted on being paid in cash.

Although some prostitutes reported earning substantial sums of money, very few said that they were able to save any. While the women generally seemed to have the attitude of easy come, easy go towards the money they had earned through prostitution, many spent it all on food, rent, alcohol and/or drugs.

Although street-walkers could work basically any time day or night, they tended to work from 11:00 to 02:00. Their most active periods were however when shops closed and at night from 20:00 to 23:00.

From the interviews it appeared that the sexual services most frequently requested by customers were intercourse and suckings (fellatio). According to the subjects they sometimes also had to engage in what McLeod (1982:68-69) calls non-sexual activities, such as acting as a counsellor (listening to the customer's problem). While some interviewees said they provided any service that the customer requested, it appeared that the subjects as a group would very rarely perform suckings, anal sex or render other services of a perverse and bizarre nature.

Places where subjects effected their transactions were typically rented rooms, hotel rooms, private residences (either their own or the customers') motor cars, the veld, ships and offices.

The subjects viewed getting arrested, health problems such as venereal disease, Acquired Immune-deficiency Syndrome (Aids), pregnancy and victimisation by customers as the greatest hazards in their line of work. While the interviewees were not always fully aware of the dangers of venereal disease and Aids they generally took measures to prevent such diseases.

These measures included: checking the customer, not accepting some men as lucks, insisting on the man wearing a condom, and regular visits to a doctor or clinic. The vast majority of the women took contraceptive measures to prevent themselves from falling pregnant. However, some did not and fell pregnant from their customers and gave birth to a child while others underwent illegal abortions. A 24-year-old KwaMashu mother of two boys who had been soliciting men for three years at a bus stop in Berea Road, responded in the following way when asked whether she was afraid that prostitution would be harmful to her health:

I am not afraid because it has been a long time since I am doing this and I have never got VD or AIDS. I can fall pregnant and I will get the baby - I don't care.

Though there are several ways in which a prostitute is likely to get arrested, it seemed that she was usually caught after having solicited a member of the vice squad posing as a luck. While the majority of the women interviewed were of the opinion that getting arrested is unavoidable, it appeared that prostitutes employed various ways albeit not always effective, of detecting and avoiding, presto, sixteens or kéréls (police). The following include typical and exceptional responses to the question: 'How do you try to avoid getting arrested?'

- I can't dodge the police because they don't wear uniforms, and they also pretend that they are looking for girls.
- They catch me sometimes. They give me a fine, and sometimes I've got no fine and I'll stay in jail sometimes one month, sometimes two months. If I got a fine I pay it and I go. Tomorrow my kids and I must eat so I have to come out again.
- I know which guys to ... approach ... I only go for the old men because most of the young guys can be traps. Only guys with suits [because] you can see they're on business, or those wearing shorts with sandals [since] they are on holiday. That's how I make out. I never approach those with tackies and T-shirts on.

The strategy that was most commonly used to avoid arrest was rather intuitive and remarkably similar to that described by Rasmussen (1979:93). The general impression gained from the material collected was that the women almost always relied heavily on their perception and intuition to determine whether a prospective client was a member of the vice squad or not. More specifically, they seemed to scrutinise a man's dress, hair, manner of speech and the content of his conversation in establishing whether he was a presto. However, it should be noted that this technique was not restricted to possible detectives and was generally used in screening prospective clients.

While the customer is the prostitute's major source of income he can also cause many difficulties in her work including not paying her for her services, physically assaulting her and taking up too much of her time, with the result that she loses considerable income. In order to protect herself the prostitute makes use of what Miller (in Ritzer 1977:302) calls dramatical or manipulative devices.

In addition to various techniques street-walkers employed in their attempts to cope with possible violent behaviour of the customer, they also utilise certain strategies to limit the time spent with him and thus exercised some control over him.

It was clear from the interviews that for street-walkers time equalled money and that they consequently wanted to satisfy the customer's needs in as short a time as possible. Usually they did not want the luck to gain control over the encounter and therefore dictated its pace themselves. Thus, they rarely acceded to suggestions by customers - usually young ones - to engage in pre-coital love-making, preferred to deal
with older men who according to them were usually only interested in some sexual service (mainly intercourse) and during transactions would normally only take off the absolute minimum of clothing.

During the course of the research we observed a specific type of street-walker who was very conspicuous in soliciting kays (she often shouts at passersby pointing towards her vagina in a suggestive manner). In conclusion, therefore, special reference is made to the so-called rustie highway walkers. Historically, their modus operandi has been referred to as ukungogisa - verb derived from ingogo (two shillings and sixpence). This concept of ukungogisa originated in the fact that these prostitutes charged two and six for a round of sex. Nowadays, however their fee is no longer two and six although they are still referred to as ladies who ngogisa. While it was not possible to establish this category's current price, we have reason to believe that their fees are generally in line with the prices charged by other categories of business ladies. Although they were not choosy, our observations were that their most important kays were drivers of heavy trucks (abnormal loads) who occasionally park along highways. Such rustic highway walkers offer the lonely heavy truck drivers sex and company.

• At the hotel you just choose any table you get ... The men will come in and sit anywhere they like, but then he ... sees the lady and he likes her he will go and sit by her ... Sometimes he will not sit with the lady and will call her to come and drink with him. Sometimes the girl will go to him [and] approach him first ... In most cases we know when they enter the hotel that they had come for us ...

• When the man comes he buys a drink ... Sometimes he says, 'Hello'. I say, 'Hallo'. He sits next to me; he joins me at the table where I sit. He asks me what I want to drink. So I say, 'I drink Amstel'. Sometimes my friend drinks Lion. Then we drink and talk, 'Where do you stay?' 'Where are you from?' Sometimes he can choose which girl he likes. He says, 'I like you, I want to go with you'. You say, 'Yes'. Then sometimes you must go to the reception and book a room. When we have finished the drinks then we go upstairs. It depends, we could sleep the whole night or only for a short time ...

While some hotel prostitutes (often those also working on the street) did not stay in the hotel and would either rent a room there or would go to a flat nearby, the majority occupied rooms in the hotel to effect business transactions.

Small numbers of prostitutes also operated in shebeens and discos situated in Umlazi and KwaMashu. In such places the process of making contact with kays, like the hotels, have a more social than business aspect to it. The woman would usually sit drinking until she met a potential kay. The man might offer to buy her a drink and in the course of conversation the possibility of sex for money would be mentioned:

We sometimes meet men from Transkei, Soweto or Umlazi, teachers, truck drivers or business men at the discos ... We try to get money from them. You ask him for some beers or smoke and let him talk to you. Then he talks to you and ask you for sex. Then you do everything he says; he asks me to go with him to another place ... anywhere ... He pays me R50 and R5 for the place to sleep.

From both an interview with Umlazi’s police officials and Ndabandaba’s observations it was established that a shebeen in a particular section in Umlazi was used as a brothel. While it was not possible to establish the social organisation of this establishment it was clear that it was not similar to the houses of ill-repute painted in popular literature on prostitution. There were inter alia no half-naked women in the doorways of either the house or apartments displaying themselves to all interested passers-by.

Other styles of prostitution also found in Durban but about which very little information could be obtained include women meeting customers by tele-
phone usually at their place (call girls); women who entertain at parties for men only and who would, if approached, make arrangements to render sexual services after the party or at some later time (show or party girls); women soliciting sailors at night-clubs (club prostitutes); women rendering sexual services at massage parlours (massage-parlour prostitutes); women working at escort agencies and who are willing to sell sex to customers on the premises or at places of the men’s choosing, normally a hotel room (escort ladies), and women willing to perform sexual activities with men in trucks equipped with a bed and other facilities needed to exchange sex for money (lorry prostitutes).

In conclusion much information regarding the background of prostitutes was obtained of which the following characteristics as applied to black female prostitutes were especially informative:

- **Age:** The ages of the women ranged from 11 to 35 years, with the majority of them either in their late teens or early twenties.
- **Level of education:** The majority of the women had passed Std 4 while a few had completed Std 8.
- **Occupation:** A substantial number of the women had at some stage of their lives worked in a conventional occupation which they had given up for prostitution. A reasonable number occupied domestic jobs during the day while they would sell themselves at night in order to supplement their income. Informants pointed out that some working women, teachers, nurses, factory workers, secretaries, etc would transact their part-time business at any convenient time.
- **Marital status:** While most of the women had never married, a number had at some stage of their lives jolled or cohabited with a man.
- **Children:** The vast majority of the women had children.
- **Place of origin:** Most of the women were from Umlazi, KwaMashu, Lamont or other black residential areas surrounding Durban while others originally lived in Stanger or Tongaat.
- **Use of alcohol and drugs:** The women almost without exception used alcohol fairly heavily. In contrast to prostitutes belonging to other racial groups, most notably whites and coloureds, only a small number of black women smoked dagga or used other forms of drugs.

### Pimps

While a number of people profit from commercial sex (e.g., prostitutes, taxi drivers, bartenders, the owners and managers of various outlets for prostitution such as night clubs, escort agencies and massage parlours), the one individual who, McCaghy (1985:359) rightly points out, profits the most for the least amount of effort, is the pimp.

Scientific studies on pimping are scant and whatever knowledge is available on the phenomenon is largely based on

- ... a number of popular and perhaps somewhat fictional ‘biographies’ such as Iceberg Slim’s *Pimp: the story of my life* (1969), Susan Hills and B. Adelman’s biography of ‘Solky’, *Gentlemen of leisure* (1972), Randolph Harris’ *Trickshot: the story of a ghetto pimp* (1974) and several books by Donald Goines (Boggs 1979:3).

These books, together with a number of films, tend to romanticise the phenomenon of pimping and even justify the pimp’s lifestyle. However, a few studies including those of Reitman (1931), Greenwald (1958), Milner and Milner (1973), Boggs (1979), Symanski (1981) and Lee (1982) have paid attention to the pimp and his world and have provided some scientific data on this phenomenon.

During the course of the present study Schurink succeeded in interviewing two Indian pimps. The two men who were respectively 39 and 40 years old and derived part of their livelihood from the earnings of prostitutes, mainly black *bitches* or *chicks* (prostitutes) plying their trade in the Beach Front area. The following accounts taken from the interviews with the *two hustlers* provide a description of the most salient aspects of pimping and prostitution in Durban:

A man is a pimp when he arranges a woman for a gentleman ... and that’s like his job, ... maybe he hasn’t got a job and there’s no other income coming ... and he knows who to talk to ... He has got plenty chicks ... They don’t live together (but sometimes you get two to three chicks living in one flat ... with the pimp). Sometimes the pimp goes early into town before the chicks come and he scouts around ...

If a pimp is staying with a chick then it’s like a love relationship ... but he would not mind if she goes and screw with someone else ... You get a guy who’s got his own wife, he’s got two kids from her but he’s got her selling herself in the street ... There are plenty whites but there are a few Indians that are doing that too. [They] are legally married, husband and wife ... It’s very difficult to understand ... I wouldn’t like another man tōuch my wife, leave alone being more forward ...

The main functions of a pimp are: to arrange the client and bring the client to the chick; to protect her and to buy her drugs and all those kinds of things; to bail her out when she is arrested and to see that everything [food] is in the flat ... Sometimes when the weather is bad she goes out alone and tells the pimp to stay in the house and [to] look after the house or after the children if there are children there ...

Now, ... because of the multiracial [situation]
there’s not a lot of jobs for the pimps ... Because a gentleman, if he sees the chick in the street and sense that she’s looking for business, he would rather go and talk to the chick than coming to talk to me, unless he’s [too] shy to talk to her ...

A pimp will [nowadays] have to look for something to make ends meet for himself. Like I’m a pimp, but I’ll never work for any specific woman or be with any woman like a lover, or an escort or something. It is just when I meet a gentleman, a stranger who is looking for something ... I know all the places where to pick the chicks up ... so I just [tell] the gentleman: ‘All-right, now you haven’t got a car, just give me a R10 I’ll use it for the taxi; I can bring you one.’ I am one pimp in all of Durban that never rips any guy off and doesn’t slick anyone, even if I make one R10 out of the gentle man and one R10 out of the chick in one deal, I’m satisfied with the R20 because I’ve got a wife and children ... and a house to see to.

In the Durban area I wouldn’t say there are many Indian pimps because of the multiracial thing. Most of them now would find different things to do. When it wasn’t multiracial there was a lot of them. Now you get a handful of them, between ten to 20 around town ... We all are friends like sometimes we will wait for a few minutes and talk together [before] ... we start spreading out.

The chicks also have friends ... you’ll get coloureds, Indians and whites but not so much the African girls ... You can get a black girl in one second’s time that’s how easy it is, if you don’t get one in this street you’ll get one in the next street. There will be two or three girls [standing] together with no pimps. They have got their boyfriends.

[In] Point Road and Pickering Street you’ll get mostly white women with white guys. [The guys] don’t work, they only want dagga, they want drinks and ... Mandrax, and they send their women to go and do business to get the money ... [Mostly] rich Muslim guys ... pick up the white chicks there ... Sometimes they get ripped off because most girls there only ... slick ... Most white girls here in Durban ... are slickers. [Only] one per cent of the Indian girls are slickers and amongst the African girls there are no slickers ...

The black chicks will [generally] give you your money’s worth whatever you want ... They don’t take people’s money and run away ... These African girls are [mostly] the well-dressed chicks. The Indians are the most nervous chicks, they don’t jump into a car or approach a luck unless you get a few who are drinking. As long as an Indian chick doesn’t drink she’s too nervous to do this business unless a pimp arranges a luck for her ...

Ninety-nine per cent of the chicks are addicted to Mandrax, drugs, dagga and liquor ... Very few people will give you the reason [for this] but they are getting pressurized by their husbands, ... boyfriends or their escorts to make the money [and] to smoke. Once a chick has smoked she wants to smoke all the time. He then has got a grip on her ...

Fifty per cent of all the night watchmen earn a couple of rands out of these chicks by getting them a place to have a quick screw. You’ll even get places like garages that are open [for] 24 hours where the night watchman would tell this chick: ‘Just take your gentleman and go anywhere inside where you think it’s safe.’ He gets a cut [of the money]. Not only these places even hotel receptionists, they too get a cut. When a gentleman is booked in and they know a chick is going up to the room but she’s not booked in and doesn’t stay there, she’ll have to give them something to go up ...

White managers don’t like the chicks but the black and Indian guys they will help the girls ... The managers like to do their job straight ... The pimps are 18, 20 right up to 30, well I’m 41, and I’m doing it. Sometimes you get guys who are 45, 50 those who’re driving the taxi’s ... The taxi drivers are really the culprits in pimping, because any stranger who comes to town can get information on anything he is looking for from a taxi driver ... He might also ask one of the waiters in a hotel where he can get something ... [who] may have the phone numbers of a couple of kids ... So he phones the chicks and says: ‘Now, listen here I’ve got a gentleman in a certain room come ...’

The chick needs the client’s money [but] also sees him as a garack or fool. He treats her like a lady as long as he gets satisfied; he doesn’t even worry whether the chick has satisfied herself or not ...

When a luck wants a man we go by car to the City Hall. We know them [and] call them ... You’ll also find them on the Beach Front ... They are not so cheap [as those] in the toilets. Only the very cheap ones go to the toilets. They are called cheap hustlers ... They will greet each other by saying: ‘Hello sweetheart’, ‘Hello Darling’ or ‘How are you?’

There is no way the police can prove anything unless it’s a trap. If a guy comes after me, asking me for a girl, how will they know? They must have proof ... I’ve been standing on this corner now for three and a half years. I read every man that comes there. In South Africa a man from the beach, a Durbanite, looks far different from a man from Cape Town, Johannesburg, the Transvaal ... We read you whether you are Afrikaans, English, Japanese ... I read it in your face, your looks ... I read a policeman.

From the above it appears that just as there were a variety of prostitution work roles in Durban and vicin-
In Durban, there were also a variety of other persons involved with prostitutes. The most important of these were lucks, pimps, other prostitutes, members of the vice squad and a variety of steers and profiteers who both profited from prostitution and provided supportive services to the prostitutes. The most important persons in these categories included taxi drivers, waiters, receptionists, and other hotel employees, security guards of buildings and garage employees such as those supplying petrol. Secondly, not all prostitutes were affiliated with pimps and other steers and profiteers. Thirdly, the relationships between pimps and prostitutes were varied. While some pimps and prostitutes enjoyed affectionate relationships that were both emotionally and economically satisfying, the relationships between others were based on a purely economic and business arrangement. Fourthly, various types of pimps were found; some would rip the lucks off or encourage the prostitutes to do so while others would not; some would try to gain control over a few prostitutes in order to work for them whereas others would not and would arrange customers for any prostitute, etc. Fifthly, pimps also provided male prostitutes with customers. Finally, the pimps’ ages ranged from 18 to 50 years, they were typically unemployed and while many extensively used alcohol, dagga and other drugs, a number apparently could not be classified as addicted to either liquor or drugs.

Customers

Social scientists have thus far paid very little attention to the prostitute’s customer: ‘The fact that it takes at least two people to complete a commercial sexual exchange is often ignored by social scientists ... There are numerous articles and books about the female side of prostitution but very few about their customers’ (James 1977:401). McCaghy (1985:345) writes in this regard as follows: ‘Although it is a truism that prostitution is impossible without johns [customers], you would never guess it from the great mass of writing on the subject. Research on prostitution deals primarily with questions of who enters the business, why and how they enter it, and what society should do about it. Consequently, one is left with the impression that interviews with the subjects and especially with the prostitutes.

Prostitutes operating in Durban regardless of their race and work role, predominantly recruited white and Indian customers and as already noted, seldom did business with black men. The general impression gained from all the material collected was that transactions between black prostitutes and black customers were the exception rather than the rule. The subjects reported that prostitution deals between men and women in Umlazi and KwaMashu were rare. The following explanations were offered for this state of affairs:

- Ladies like me have to come into town ... In Umlazi you can’t get men you can sleep with. They are just like the boyfriends ... Sometimes in the morning he will give you R2 or R5. So what can you do with that money? You can’t do nothing. That’s why if you are like me you must come in to town ... You can get men at a shebeen. If they’ve bought you some liquor it’s finish, you’ll get nothing only the liquor.
- We can’t do it in KwaMashu because the guys don’t want to pay. I’ve never done it with a black man there. I’ll never make prostitution in KwaMashu because there are not black men [customers] there. [If] prostitution does happen the men don’t pay.
- The men and the women don’t want their neighbours to know what they are doing.
- I feel my nation don’t like it ... I know they dislike it because they hate us that we sleep with white people.
- Black girls won’t operate in the townships except perhaps in Claremont, because the nation would kill them. When they stand in the street, the African guys come past them and swear at them calling them ‘bitches’. Sometimes they will even hit them ... To be a business girl in Umlazi and KwaMashu will be very dangerous. The more traditional black people don’t like it.

Crimes accompanying prostitution

The subjects without exception pointed out that many crimes occurred on the prostitution scene in Durban and surrounding areas. Apart from drug abuse, sticking, and, to a lesser extent illegal abortions, the following crimes were particularly linked to prostitution:

- The young lucks are clever, they don’t want to give us money, they rob us.
- You get rough type of black girls who will do very bad things. They will take you and go to a place where they’ve got three or four African guys. They will then rob you of everything, not just the money that you wanted to pay the chick, but your ring, clothing, everything. Even if they
can poke you dead they will poke you dead because they’re illiterate.

- The pimps swop over their girlfriends a lot … One thing happened … This one girl, Tessa, quite an attractive girl who used to slick. She had one boyfriend, Fred, and then she had this other boyfriend, John … It was sort of like one-night stands so neither of them were her boyfriend. She came up the street and Fred hit her and then John hit her … Another [girl] friend of Fred’s then came charging down the street, shouting at him … It was terrible [but] Fred didn’t use his knife … Then they all walked away and Tessa was just sitting there and no-one even walked up to her and said: ‘I’ve won you!’ It was a lot of aggression … There is a very wicked streak in some of them. I know some of the guys would take the girl, drug her and then rape her …

- Maandagaand … toe was hier ‘n bakkleier toe hoor ek die geskree hier op die hoek toe’s dit weer wit en swart prostituee oor een klëint. Die swart prostituee het die ou aan die een arm en die wit prostituee het die ou aan die ander arm, toe trek hulle tou met die ou, heen en weer oor die straat … Dit gebeur dikwels laat in die aand … Die P-hotel is nou die laaste paar maande stil … daar is nou nie meer so baie prostituee nie, dit het nou bietjie kalmer geword maar daar is nog ‘n gemesstelikery … Die kompetisie is nogal straf onder die swart manlike prostituee. Ek het al gesien dat hulle handgemeen raak want elke ou het ‘n beat, sy stukkie waar hy werk …

- Some of the girls don’t want to go to Berea Road because some men, skebengo’s or skelms, wait for the African women there and rob them …

- Twee jaar gelede hier naby Durbanstasie het hulle ‘n blanke prokureur vermoor … Hy het die swart prostitueet voor die stasie opgetel … ‘n Entjie verder by so ‘n oop stukkie grond het hy sy kar getrek. Hy het toe die vroumens begin betas en so aan. Hy het uit die kar geklim om kondome uit die bak te haal. Dit is toe wat ‘n klomp swartes hom betrek het … en sy oë uitgesteek het. Hulle het hom gerob en is toe terug Umgeni Road toe …

While it was already evident from the preceding discussion that prostitution is frowned upon in both Umlazi and KwaMashu, the inhabitants’ attitudes towards commercial sex is scrutinized in the next section by analyzing the quantitative data obtained from the survey.

### Analysis of quantitative data: perceptions of and attitudes of the residents of Umlazi and KwaMashu towards prostitution

As has already indicated, to ascertain what the general attitude of residents in Umlazi and KwaMashu were, a few questions were put to the respondents interviewed during the execution of the survey. Four questions were constructed after a review of the literature reporting overseas research in this field, and included in the survey. The questions as well as the data obtained from them appear in table 1. The data relating to the four topics will be discussed separately in what follows.

- Relationship between prostitution and other social problems: From the table it is evident that the respondents overwhelmingly felt that prostitution was related to the stipulated social problems. The responses were in decreasing order: venereal diseases (84,9%), Aids (82,1%), the selling and using of drugs (70,3%) and crime (68,5%).

- Measures that can be taken to curb the problem: No fewer than 82,4% of the survey group were of the opinion that commercial sex should be stopped. As regards measures to curb women exchanging sex for money, the respondents favoured harsher punishment for people who profit from prostitution directly. Ninety-two comma five; 82,1 and 77,9% respectively believed that harsher punitive measures taken against prostitutes, customers and men living off the earnings of prostitutes would be the remedy for prostitution. Only 10,8% of the sample recommended the licensing of prostitution as a way to handle the problem.

- Possible negative effects on the family and society at large, if prostitutes were not available: While a relatively large number of respondents were uncertain with regard to the two statements derived from Davis’ (1937) functional theory of prostitution, it is clear that the vast majority disagreed that ‘the divorce rate will increase if women selling sex were not available’ (66,7%) and ‘there will be more rape cases if women selling sex were not available’ (67,1%).

### Interpretations of research findings

Before discussing any of the findings it should be noted that because only a few aspects of prostitution in Durban, Umlazi and KwaMashu, could be studied—and some of them rather superficially—the findings of the study provide only descriptions of certain features of prostitution and do not allow any extensive reconstruction of how the various participants in the sex-for-sale business created social reality. Furthermore, because of limited time and other practical considerations, it was not possible to verify the research results directly by referring them to people involved in prostitution to establish whether they recognise, understand and accept them. It would therefore be inappropriate and naïve to draw final conclusions on the basis of the findings of the study. All findings are subjected to
Table 1 Perceptions and attitudes of the residents of Umlazi and KwaMashu towards prostitution and related facets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions and attitudes</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 Do you think there is a close relationship or no relationship between women selling sex (prostitution) and other social problems like:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close relationship</td>
<td>43,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some relationship</td>
<td>25,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No relationship</td>
<td>14,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>17,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>326(14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venereal diseases?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close relationship</td>
<td>69,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some relationship</td>
<td>15,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No relationship</td>
<td>3,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>11,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aids?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close relationship</td>
<td>73,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some relationship</td>
<td>9,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No relationship</td>
<td>2,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>15,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling and using of drugs?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close relationship</td>
<td>47,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some relationship</td>
<td>22,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No relationship</td>
<td>9,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>20,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2 Do you think the selling of sex by women should be stopped?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>82,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opinion</td>
<td>9,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3 What would you do (or suggest should be done) to stop this selling of sex? Would you –</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>punish the customers of women selling sex more harshly?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>82,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>14,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>3,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>license women selling sex as business operators?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>85,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>4,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>punish women selling sex more harshly?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>92,5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The most pertinent findings include the following:

(a) Prostitution is more readily found in some societies and geographic areas than in others. This very general and trivial premise is demonstrated by the data collected in the present study. Commercial sex is very common in Durban but very limited in Umlazi, KwaMashu, Lamont, Tongaat, Stanger and other adjacent residential areas and towns. One explanation for the fact that sex-for-sale has a high incidence in Durban is found in the works of Simmel, Tönnies, Durkheim, Weber and social scientists belonging to the Chicago Urban School (e.g., Park, Burgess and Wirth) (Cohen 1980:111). Durban’s high population density gives rise to individual variation, accounts for a relative absence of intimate or personal relationships, segmentation of social interaction, anonymity, heterogeneity, superficiality and a transitory community. These circumstances and factors according to Wirth (1938:1–24), typically contribute to the development of variant lifestyles. These conditions, together with other ecological (e.g., business and sanctuary sites, street locations, transportation networks), economic (the existence of an adequate business base to sustain prostitution), and socio-demographic factors, facilitate the selling of sexual services in Durban. Another explanation why prostitution surfaces in the harbour city rather than in Umlazi, KwaMashu and other adjacent areas is provided by the prevailing values and norms regulating sexual behaviour in the two communities. Goode (1984:15), for example, writes: ‘In many ways, prostitution is an extension and a reflection of the values, activities, and institutions of conventional society.’ While it was not possible to examine the existing values and norms governing sexual activities in Umlazi and KwaMashu, it is clear from both qualitative and quantitative data that women selling sexual favours were very strongly frowned upon by the residents. Moreover, they generally favoured harsher punitive action against prostitution and its key actors. Since the taboo against prostitutes is very strong in the two communities under discussion, it is understandable that its residents would as far as possible dissuade women from selling their bodies in the townships. Prostitutes must therefore ply their trade in localities elsewhere. Symanski (1981:262) writes the following in this regard: ‘Prostitutes are geographically set apart from their own societies in a variety of ways. Where women have access to a town or city they frequently move there. Cities provide anonymity and sufficient demand to allow full-time pursuit of prostitution.’

(b) While it was not possible to recruit prostitutes from all types of prostitute work roles in Durban and surrounding areas, the overall impression gained from the material collected was that prostitution in and around the harbour city was generally in many ways similar to commercial sex in and around Johannesburg, Cape Town and Pretoria (Schurink 1987).

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**Perceptions and attitudes (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**punish men living off the earnings of women selling sex (pimps) more harshly?**

- Yes: 77.9%
- No: 13.1%
- Do not know: 9.0%

**Do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding women selling sex?**

1. There will be more rape cases if women selling sex were not available.
   - Agree: 17.1%
   - Disagree: 67.1%
   - Do not know: 15.9%
   - TOTAL: 100.0%
   - N: 334

2. The divorce rate will increase if women selling sex were not available.
   - Agree: 12.9%
   - Disagree: 66.7%
   - Do not know: 20.9%
   - TOTAL: 100.0%
   - N: 333
Viewed from the perspective of black women exchanging their bodies for money, a number of important findings relating to the organizational features of sex-for-money need to be highlighted. Firstly, the great majority of black prostitutes plied their trade in the street, in hotels and in night-clubs. Secondly, while clown catchers often work in conjunction with taxi drivers, bartenders, waiters, receptionists, security guards, garage employees and other people, they generally did not employ the services of a pimp. Thirdly, these djeskas seldom, if ever, accepted black men as kays. According to them men belonging to their ethnic group normally regarded their services as favours which did not require any payment. Fourthly, black women gave their lucks a fair deal and would, except for a few very rough nightworkers never slick (swindle) or victimize them in other ways. Finally, while black business ladies were aware of the existence of Aids their knowledge of this dreadful disease was very poor.

**Conclusion and recommendations**

While it was not possible to undertake a comprehensive study on prostitution in Durban, Umlazi and KwaMashu valuable and important insights were gained. It is clear that the selling of sex is a lucrative business especially in Durban. This has far-reaching implications for the quality of life of many people living in the city and in adjacent residential areas such as Umlazi and KwaMashu. It is therefore important that further research be undertaken in order to obtain a greater understanding of prostitution as well as to establish strategies that strive toward the maximisation of the quality of life of those directly and indirectly affected by commercial sex in the larger Durban area.

**Notes**

The authors wish to thank Morn Lötter who has contributed to the ideas presented here.

1. This article is a slightly revised version of chapter 11 in *Crime and its impact: a study in a black metropolitan area* – research papers (1990) edited by J M Lötter, L B G Ndabandaba and R Esterhuysen.

2. See Lötter and Ndabandaba (1990:1-16) for an exposition of the history and aims of the research undertaken in the two townships by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and funded by its Co-operative Research Programme on Affordable Personal Safety.

3. See Esterhuysen and Schurink (1990:17-49) for a comprehensive exposition of the decisions and steps taken in the execution of the research.


5. The Zulu word for prostitute.

6. The word donotes a woman who is willing to satisfy different men who put their arms around her neck which she twists.

7. The word originated in the fact that certain women were willing to offer sex cheaply.

8. Women who offer sex indiscriminately.

9. Literally this means women who run across roads looking for men.

10. Literally referring to women who roam about looking for customers.

11. While this extract is taken from an interview, the interviewee solicited Schurink in the same way.

12. These questions were put to only half (N = 338) of the adult test group.

13. The questions are reproduced verbatim.

14. The totals differ because all the respondents did not answer all the questions.

15. While informants contend that prostitution is also found in Pinetown and surrounding townships such as KwaNdengezi, Kranskloof and Claremont it was not possible to verify this in the present study.

16. The explanations given by both prostitutes and others familiar with commercial sex as to why and how black girls get involved in prostitution were also briefly examined.

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