

UNDERSTANDING PARTICIPATION IN THE UNDERGROUND ECONOMY IN
OAKLAND

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UNDERSTANDING PARTICIPATION IN THE UNDERGROUND ECONOMY IN
OAKLAND

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ABSTRACT

UNDERSTANDING PARTICIPATION IN THE UNDERGROUND ECONOMY IN OAKLAND

By Ida Wilson

This thesis investigates how individuals subsist by participating in the informal economy. Specifically it explores the lives of participants involved in three different sectors of informal economy in Oakland, California. Participants in the study include two sex workers, seven day laborers, and two individuals who sell narcotics. The purpose of this study is twofold: to humanize individuals who are involved in these forms of work who are otherwise viewed as criminals and problems to neighborhoods and to discuss the participants' experiences that led to their involvement in the underground economy. I address these issues by asking the following questions: What are the factors that led participants to seek work in the underground economy? To what extent does working in the underground economy help or hinder participants' upward socioeconomic mobility and participants' involvement in the legal economy? Findings reveal that participants used the underground economy as a means to an end and that the underground economy served as a means for them to financially provide for themselves and their families. The answers to these questions are explored from an anthropological perspective that relies upon ethnographic methods of interviews, observations and use of secondary sources. The goals of this study are to contribute to the scholarly knowledge and understanding of informal economic activity and provide different perspectives of the underground economy and its participants.

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LIST OF DEFINITIONS

Finesse (verb): The act of persuading someone

Cutthroat (noun): Reference to a ruthless individual

Crabs in the bucket: A metaphor referring to how individuals undermine others to get ahead

Come up (verb): Reference to an improvement of one's circumstances.

Square (noun): An upright and honest individual

Ratchet (adjective): Description of an unruly person

The Track (noun): A place where some sex workers look for work as known as *the stroll*. In Oakland, International Blvd and San Street are infamously known as tracks where sex workers frequent

E14th (noun): Street that is now formally known as International Boulevard. Oakland natives still use this name instead of International Boulevard

'Hood (noun): Term for lower socioeconomic communities. Shortened from the term neighborhood but used specifically in reference to these communities

Dope (noun): Crack cocaine

Green Girls (noun): Naïve girls who become involved in sex work without knowing what to expect

Ho'ing (verb): Slang for performing sex work

Dope boys (noun): Drug dealers

Chapter 1: Introduction

The underground economy refers to the untaxed and often unseen ways in which individuals earn an income. The terms *informal sector*, *moonlighting* and the *black market* are synonymous with the underground economy. This study will discuss the experiences of individuals who work in the underground economy. Participants in this study include two sex workers, seven day laborers and two drug dealers. This study will also discuss a myriad of factors that led participants to seek work in the underground economy. I chose these sectors of work in the underground economy because as an Oakland native, I have familiarity with them. I have encountered many individuals who have participated in the underground economy. The prevalence of these forms of work in Oakland can be seen witnessing day laborers seek work on the streets, watching the local news, and reviewing statistics of arrests made in Oakland for drug dealing and sex work. Although there is ample evidence of a significant underground workforce in Oakland (City of Oakland Year End Crime Reports 2013 and 2014), there is a lack of literature that acknowledges the experiences of individuals who are involved in these forms of work. Discussing individual involvement in the underground economy provides a different perspective on how these individuals are often viewed by politicians, lawmakers and others in society. In many cases, individuals who work in the underground economy are viewed as criminals and problems to communities.

The purposes of this study were to humanize the participants in the underground economy and discuss experiences that contributed to their participation in it. For this study, I asked questions about participants' childhoods,

work histories and job skills. The importance of discussing these individuals' experiences is that it creates the ability to illustrate that these individuals are in fact multifaceted and defy labels and social perceptions. Findings from the study revealed that familial ties with the underground economy, socioeconomic deprivation and ideas of opportunity were factors that contributed to participants' involvement in the underground economy. Work in the underground economy enabled sex workers and drug dealers to achieve upward socioeconomic mobility, whereas the same was not true for some day laborers. Lastly, work in the underground economy did not hinder some participants' mobility into the legal economy.

Following this introduction to the study, the remainder of this thesis will be organized as follows. The remainder of this section provides a literature review and discusses the methods used for the study. The second section discusses the methodology used. The third section introduces sex workers who were part of this study and discusses their lives and experiences in pursuing sex work. The fourth section introduces drug dealers who were part of the study and discusses their lives and experiences as drug dealers. The fifth section provides spatial analysis and observations of day labor hiring zones in Oakland as well as discusses the experiences of day laborers. In the sixth section, I reflect on my experiences of doing fieldwork as well as discuss further implications for research on participation in the underground economy. The final section provides conclusions.

Review of Literature

In the past and even today, economists have attempted to and continue to attempt to create methods for measuring the underground economy (Guttman 1977, Feige 1979, Barlett 1998 and Restrepo-Echavarria 2015). This stems from an economical standpoint that attempts to understand how unregulated income can impact the overall economy and the economies of other countries. The problem of trying to measure the underground economy, according to the literature, is that it is challenging to do and it does not take into account factors that contribute to individual involvement in the underground economy. These challenges create a space for other disciplines to analyze the underground economy and provide different perspectives.

Anthropological studies of the underground economy date to the 1960s when anthropologist Keith Hart coined the term “informal sector.” During this period, he studied the informal employment of urban, low-wage workers in Accra, Ghana (Hart 1973). Hart’s study of the underground economy reflected the effects of urbanization in Ghana. His study served as a platform for other international labor organizations to study labor markets in other countries in Africa as well as to study the effects of globalization in third world countries (Losby et al 2002). Hart’s study served as a catalyst to understand informal economic activity in the United States. Eventually researchers would study informal economic activities in urban neighborhoods (Losby et al 2002, Ferman and Ferman 1973, Lowenthal 1979, Dow 1977). The significance of the literature is that it focuses on how the underground

economy enables supplemental-income making strategies for individuals from an anthropological standpoint.

Philippe Bourgois' ethnography, "In Search of Respect", is a significant literature in anthropology with regard to the study of participation in drug dealing. His work revealed the experiences of Puerto Rican drug dealers in East Harlem in the 1980s and reflected the complexities of the daily lives of individuals who straddled the poverty line and subsisted via participation in the underground economy. The experiences of these individuals were in reaction to social marginalization and socioeconomic deprivation. While enduring social marginalization and socioeconomic deprivation, the drug dealers struggled to earn and maintain an income from their occupations in the underground economy while trying to attain respect and dignity. What was significant about Bourgois' work was that it provided insights into social and economic factors that contribute to individual choices to become involved in the underground economy.

Nicolas Walter, Philippe Bourgois and H. Margarita Loinaz (2004) and sociologist Gretchen Purser (2009) conducted research on the spatial organization of day laboring hiring zones in the Bay Area. Nicolas Walter, Philippe Bourgois and H. Margarita Loinaz (2004) and Purser (2009) also focused on analyzing aspects of masculinity of day laborers in the Bay Area. These articles are significant in assessing identities that are significant to day laborers as well as assessing how space plays a role in the work environment and experiences of some day laborers. However, these articles do not provide much insight into the lives of day laborers

and their experiences of working in the underground economy from an economic standpoint.

A source to determine the demographics of day laborers was the National Day Laborer Survey (NDLS), conducted in 2004 to learn about the demographics of day laborers, including their immigration status, their working conditions and their interactions with employers (Gonzalez 2007). This survey was significant because it was the first nationally representative survey of day laborers in the United States. It was considered as one of the best tools to provide information about day laborers at the time. The survey drew information from Oakland, San Francisco, San Diego and Orange County. It included 2,660 participants and the data was collected in the summer of 2004.

The literature discussed has played a pivotal role in the understanding and perspectives of the underground economy and particular sectors of the underground economy over the past decades. Yet there remains a lack of current literature in anthropology concerning participation the underground economy. There also is a lack of literature that focuses on humanizing participants involved in informal economic activity and sharing their experiences. This study can contribute knowledge and humanization of participants in the underground economy.

Chapter 2: Methodology

In the beginnings of the field of anthropology, anthropologists were interested in conducting research on cultures that were unfamiliar. It was not until the 1960s that the field began to be focused on studying urban phenomena. Notably, anthropologist M.N Srinivas (1966) advocated for the study of one's own culture. He

believed that studying one's own culture was a step towards a better understanding of one's own rapidly changing community (Messerschmidt 1981). These sentiments were a catalyst for my interest in doing a study on the underground economy in Oakland. As an Oakland native, I have known many individuals who have participated in the underground economy. The people whom I have known to participate in the underground economy used it as a means to alleviate financial hardships they faced living in low-income communities. Acquiring this knowledge inspired me to pursue this study. I believed that it was important to discuss how some individuals subsist in the underground economy and why they do it. This investigation provided an opportunity for individuals to share their experiences. In many cases, such opportunity is not permitted. In many instances, drug dealing and sex work is discussed as a problem that needs to be fixed. There is little information on day laborers in Oakland, though they are visible and undoubtedly play an essential role in neighborhoods and businesses in Oakland.

I chose these three particular sectors of the underground economy because, as an Oakland native, I know how common these jobs are in Oakland. Conducting research on a familiar phenomenon can create several challenges. For instance, conducting research on a familiar phenomenon can lead one to be oblivious to certain issues. Assumptions can be made and maintaining an objective viewpoint can be challenging. As I conducted this study and began writing this thesis, I had to remind myself of the importance of being objective and treating everything that I learned from participants as something new regardless of my familiarity with it. Conducting research on a familiar topic can be challenging in regards to maintaining

objectivity. On the other hand it gave me the advantage of access to participants, whom I met through people I already knew. One of the participants was a schoolmate and someone who was close to a family member. Other participants I met through other acquaintances. Meeting research participants through a familiar source lessened the time that I would typically need to build rapport with individuals; it enabled me to establish trust with participants more quickly. The participants were more trusting of me because of the mutual people we knew.

The study was conducted over the course of six months and relied on qualitative methods and secondary sources. Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were used to collect information from the sex workers and drug dealers. The interviews ranged in length from an hour to four hours. Informants who were familiar with the day laborer population were informally interviewed. Short, video recorded interviews with day laborers from a nonprofit organization's website were used to collect information on day laborers' experiences. Participant observations were used in day laborers' meetings in a nonprofit organization as well. Observations were used at day laboring hiring zones.

Semi-structured interviews were used with sex workers and drug dealers because I felt it was the best way to learn of their individual experiences. On the contrary, I used secondary sources for the day laborers that are discussed in this research. The secondary sources included previous information published about day labor populations in California as well as videos of recorded interviews with laborers who are members of the non profit organization called The Oakland Worker's Collective. The videos were translated from Spanish to English. I also

attended day laborer meetings at The Oakland Workers' Collective once a week for a few weeks. The meetings lasted about an hour to an hour and a half. The Oakland Workers' Collective, also called *la colectiva* is a non-profit organization dedicated to organizing and advocating for the health and safety of day laborers in Oakland. This organization is worker-led and is comprised of about fifteen members who are day laborers. The significance of this organization is that it provides a positive image of day laborers and provides resources for the day laborers to be aware of their rights.

The data on the day laborers in this study are different than the data on the drug dealers and sex workers because day laborers were reluctant to be interviewed; as a result, I had to use eclectic methods of data collection for that group. During the beginning stages of the study, my goal was to use qualitative research methods for all of the participants; however, it was a challenge to build rapport with day laborers and interview them. It was difficult to build rapport with the day laborers because they were suspicious of someone they did not know asking to learn about them. Since many day laborers are undocumented, they are reluctant to talk to outsiders. Many day laborers establish their own networks and interact within these networks. Also, the day laborers that were on the streets seeking work were less concerned with talking to a stranger who was not interested in employing them. From my encounters with day laborers on the street, I found that many of the men were dismissive once they learned that I was not offering work. Due to day laborers' reluctance to be interviewed, qualitative research methods were less likely to be useful to learn about this group. As opposed to the sex workers and drug dealers, I conducted observations on the day laborers that were a part of this study.

Observations were used because the day laborers' work in the underground economy is visible as opposed to the sex workers and drug dealers who were in this study. Conducting observations also enabled me to learn where many day laborers in Oakland seek work. Observations were used in the day labor meetings at the Oakland Workers' Collective as well because they enabled me to learn of some experiences of day laborers' since I could not gain this knowledge from one on one interviews.

Chapter 3: Sex Work

Sex work is quite common in Oakland. There is a street that has long been infamous for the presence of sex workers: International Boulevard, also called *the track*. International Boulevard is a long, continuous street that intersects different residential areas and communities. Today, there are fewer sex workers visibly seen pursuing work on this avenue than in past decades. Over the years, the City of Oakland and the Oakland Police Department have been proactive in minimizing the prevalence of sex work. In 2009, there were 643 arrests for sex work. In 2014, there were 258 arrests (City Oakland Year End Crime Reports 2013 and 2014). The Oakland Police Department has been conducting multiple sting operations to end the trafficking of sex workers (Oakland North 2010). Currently, the Oakland Police Department has a website that posts pictures of individuals who were arrested for pimping and soliciting sex work (CBS Local News 2015). According to a statement from the police department, establishing this website has helped them accomplish their goal of "identifying and rescuing victims of trafficking and locating and arresting perpetrators of this crime" (CBS local News 2015). As this is a significant

goal, it dismisses the experiences of individuals who willingly pursue sex work. This chapter will discuss the experiences of two women who are sex workers from Oakland.

Home Beginnings

There are many reasons why women pursue sex work and many ways in which they initially become involved in the trade. Their participation may stem from the ability to become self-sufficient at a young age. They might become involved by being introduced to it by someone they know. Sex workers can vary in age. For example, at the age of fourteen, many girls may spend their time doing schoolwork or hanging out with friends. This is not true for Jo who is a 23-year-old sex worker. At the age of fourteen, she had to learn how to take care of herself. If anyone were to meet Jo, one would think that she had a typical childhood. Unbeknownst to others who meet her, her childhood was anything but typical.

Jo: I learned how to take care of myself at 14. That's when I learned how to be myself and take care of myself. One day my mom just decided that she wanted to do drugs and not be a mother, so she just dropped me off at my aunt's house. My aunt is who I consider my mother.

Despite her mother's absence and her decision to continue to use drugs, Jo lived her life in a state of relative normalcy for a young woman of her age. During this time in her life, her aunt was the only maternal and family figure that she had. Her father did not want anything to do with her.

Often when parents abuse drugs, it leads them to make poor decisions, abandon responsibilities and negatively impact those who are close to them. Jo's family is an example. Jo and her mother did not get along because of her mother's continued drug abuse and the unsettled feelings of her mother's abandonment.

Whenever Jo spoke to her mother about these issues, her mother ignored her feelings and disregarded the situation that she created. Her mother had a nonchalant attitude towards her drug use and how it affected her family. As a result, Jo and her mother had a tumultuous relationship. Her mother's abandonment led Jo to develop calloused and indifferent feelings towards life at a young age.

Jo: My mother and I do not get along. Once I got older I tried to stay with her and it just didn't work out. She has this "Oh well, get over it" attitude and we always clash because of it. She doesn't realize that the reason that we don't get along is because of her!

At the age of 17, Jo became pregnant with her first child. Her pregnancy did not deter her from doing things that one at that age was expected to do. At 18, she gave birth to her son and graduated from high school. Soon afterwards, she worked to provide for him. Six months after her son's birth, she began working as a sex worker.

Although Jo's mother abandoned her as a child, her mother's abandonment did not directly cause Jo to pursue sex work. It was the experience of having to be self-sufficient that enabled her to become independent and pursue jobs that she felt would enable her to maintain her independence. According to Jo, her mother's abandonment motivated her to provide for her son and be there for him as she felt a mother should be. These are qualities that she felt were not modeled by her own mother and she believed that these are qualities that every mother should have.

Unlike Jo's experience, Ashley came from a large family and is the youngest girl among her siblings. She is a 27-year-old sex worker who has lived in both Oakland and Houston. She and her siblings grew up living with their grandparents because her parents spent time in and out of jail. For the most part, she believed that

she had a great childhood because she had the luxury of being taken care of by her grandparents. She stated that she lived in ghettos during her childhood.

When she was fourteen, Ashley's family members told her that women were powerful. As these values were instilled in her at a young age, she became interested in exploring how she could exercise her power as a woman. What served as a catalyst for her to exercise a form of power stemmed from watching television shows about sex workers and members of her family teaching her that women are powerful.

Ashley: At fourteen I was told that I have power. I didn't know what kind of power it was, but I was told that since I am a girl I had it. When I was younger I watched those shows about escorts on HBO. I think the names of the shows were called *Hookers on the Corner*, *G-string* or something like that. I think the point of the shows was to discourage people from doing it. But they didn't do a good job. Those girls had money, shoes and everything. The guys on the shows did what the girls wanted and they got paid for it. From watching those shows I was like, "Hmmm. That doesn't look so bad" [laughs]. I just knew that I didn't want to be on the street doing it.

Jo and Ashley had contrasting childhood experiences. Particular childhood experiences did not directly influence them to pursue sex work. However, in some ways their childhoods each informed particular attitudes that they developed at a young age. Jo's mother's abandonment enabled her to develop independence. The idea that women hold power was instilled in Ashley and eventually she would seek ways to exercise this power. As teenagers, Jo and Ashley may not have predicted how these values that they learned at a young age would play a role in their lives in the future.

Becoming Involved in Sex Work

Jo began sex work six months after giving birth to her son. She became involved in sex work because she had a boyfriend who was a pimp. She thought his work was odd, but accepted it because at the time she was in love with him.

Although he did not pressure her into becoming an escort, she became involved because she loved him. Her first time doing sex work was not anything out of the ordinary. She described it nonchalantly and was indifferent about it. It is unclear if her demeanor towards sex work is a result of how she viewed sex work itself or if her feelings towards it are a result of her calloused feelings she developed towards life at an early age. In either situation, the income was a far greater attraction and her sole reason to continue sex work.

Jo had a clerical job before she started sex work but eventually she quit that job and pursued sex work full time. According to her, the hours of escorting were too demanding and prevented her from doing well in her clerical job. Pursuing sex work full time was far more significant and fulfilling than her clerical job.

Jo: I had a job when I started escorting. I would do my little clerical job, then I would do escorting. I would go escort and then get up and go to my clerical job. But eventually I started messing up in my clerical job because I'd be up all night escorting. It got hard for me to escort and then get up and go to work, so I quit my other job and just escorted. I saw more money as an escort than I did at my clerical job anyway.

Jo quit her clerical position because she felt that the income she was earning from sex work far exceeded what she received from her clerical job. As a sex worker, one can make money on a daily basis instead of on a weekly, or biweekly cycle. The income from sex work is highly unpredictable; however, one has the freedom to

negotiate how much she would like to earn. This can be appealing when the day's or night's earning can surpass what one's salary in a typical job in the legal economy:

Jo: It's fast money. One day I can have a really good day and then I can have a really bad day. Like, one day I can make twenty-five dollars, another day I can make twenty-five hundred dollars.

Ida: What is the most money you have made in one day?

Jo: One night in Vegas I made \$30,000. You know, Vegas has a lot of rich guys who go there, get drunk, and spend up all of their money.

Ida: You made \$30,000 in one night? That is someone's salary. People can work for a year and make that much money!

Jo: I know. That's the thing about this. You never know how much you're gonna get. It goes up and down. You have good days and bad days. That time was a good day.

Jo was not sure how much money she earned in her career as a sex worker, but the money that she earned in the beginning of pursuing sex work led her to believe that financially this was the job that she wanted to pursue.

In contrast to Jo's introduction to sex work, Ashley became a sex worker at the age of fifteen. She became involved from watching her god sister.

Ashley: My first time encounter with sex work was when I was with my god sister. She didn't tell me what she was doing, but I knew. One day my sister walked to the track and got in someone's car. I followed her but she didn't know it. She went in some car and shortly after got out. When I saw this happen I thought, "Oh, that's what she was doing!" Sooner or later I tried it. I went to the track. On my first day I made \$800. At fifteen you're like, "Wow! This is a lot of money!" When I touched the amount of money that I had, I was hooked. When you first start you think every day you're gonna make a lot of money like that but you don't.

For Jo and Ashley, the income they received from sex work was appealing. When Jo quit her job in the legal economy, she valued the income that she received as a sex worker over what she earned in her previous job. Similar is true for Ashley.

She became involved in sex work at a young age and the money that she made during her first experience was appealing enough for her to continue it.

Ashley's story is an example of how familial ties with the underground economy led to her involvement in sex work. Her god sister was a sex worker and she eventually became involved in sex work from watching her. During my interview with Ashley, she shared that all of her older sisters were sex workers at some point in their lives and that her brothers and uncles were pimps. Due to her family members' involvement with sex work, she believed that it was "in her blood" to be a sex worker. A family member did not influence Jo to pursue sex work, but someone to whom she was close did.

Being A Sex Worker: Morality Versus Reality

Engaging in sexual activities for money is illegal. Despite the illegality of paying for sex in many states in the United States, corporate America media often promotes hypersexuality. Hypersexuality can be seen in American media in commercials, music and other forms of advertisements. Despite the prevalence of sex in American media, Jo and Ashley believed that sex work is condemned in society because of social emphasis monogamous relationships.

Jo: People think it is wrong that I sell my body for money. I don't think of it like that. It is my job; it is how I make money. Many people think it's nasty that I sleep with different men for money. It's the same thing as women going on dates and hooking up with the guy later. I'm doing the same thing I just get paid for it and there are no strings attached.

Ashley: People stereotype girls and sex workers too much. Women have all of these boyfriends and it's like, you could've had the same six guys in your life who could have paid you.

It's not even always about the sex. Doing this allows you to learn a lot about divorces and relationships. Some men just want to talk. They could want to

talk because they are going through a break up, a divorce or sometimes just want some company. You'd be surprised. Some of my clients are college kids. Crazy right? Like here is some regular guy. Why can't he just go and get a girlfriend?

Some guys even pay me to slap them and yell at them in public.

Ashley, who has had experience as a sex worker on and off the streets was completely against underage girls pursuing sex work. Experiencing sex work at the age of fifteen contributed to her opposition of young girls getting involved in the industry.

Ashley: Sex work is rough; I have had some hard times doing it at a young age. It ain't for everyone. That is why I am a part of sex worker advocacy groups that work to get the young girls off of the streets. If I see a young girl on the streets I will call law enforcement.

Ida: Why are you strongly against young girls pursuing sex work when you became involved at a young age?

Ashley: Because I know how hard it can be. I remember when I first started my brothers' friends would see me and tell me to go home. I call the little girls who try to do it these days "Green Girls". They get involved thinking that they are going to make all of this money and that things are going to be dandy when it isn't.

It's dangerous out there; women get raped, beat and robbed. And then they get hooked up with these pimps who sell them dreams. The pimps are all like, "Yeah, stick with me and I'll get you this and get you that" [*she says mockingly in a male's voice*]. The truth is, yeah, they may be able to get some of the stuff that they promise, but the reality is that they [the young girls] can get those things on their own. People say that pimps protect them and save girls' money but they can do that on their own.

Those young girls go out there thinking they know everything and they don't. They mess things up for everyone else who have been doing this for a while. The girls don't even listen to the women who have been in this game for a minute. Older men also prey on younger girls for that reason. I kind of support some of the sting operations, but I think police should focus more on getting those little girls off the street. They don't know any better. They should be in school or doing something that kids their age do. They don't realize that things are good when you're a new face on the street, but that'll get old real quick. You're not "the new girl" forever. When you're not pretty

anymore no one is going to care about you. Think about what you want in life. I didn't live a teenage life, but I had an eventful life.

Aside from Ashley's opposition to younger girls pursuing sex work, she also continuously stated that sex work is not for everyone. She told me five questions she suggests any girl interested in pursuing sex work to take into consideration:

I always say that there are five things a girl should ask herself before considering escorting because the outside of it seems appealing:

1. Is she prepared for her family's lack of acceptance? A lot of people do not agree with escorting. I mean, it's someone's daughter, sister, granddaughter who is doing it. A lot of people are not going to accept that. I know there are a lot of girls who don't even speak to their families anymore because of it. Some girls out there don't have any family and because of this, there are a lot of cold girls out there; they don't care about anything. Luckily I have a great relationship with my family. They all know what I do.
2. If you have kids, is the job worth being away from them? Escorting requires a lot of travel; a lot of get up and go. I know girls who have nannies. I have babysat for some girls when they have gone out to work, but I couldn't imagine leaving my kids, if I had some to do this. I helped raise my niece; kids need a lot of attention.
3. Is she willing to wait to have kids? Like I said, women travel a lot for this job. Moving around a lot does not create a stable environment for kids.
4. Think about not being in a relationship. A lot of people are not willing to accept that this is some girls' job. It can create issues. Guys can say they are comfortable when they aren't, jealousy and guys thinking you're cheating can be an issue, all types of things.
5. Save and invest in yourself. Girls have a lot of money going through their hands. Because of this, girls find themselves spending a lot of money and having nothing to show for it; then, they are spending their time trying to make back all of that money they spent.

Jo's perspective on sex work contrasts with what she perceived as society's notion of propriety. In contrast, Ashley's view aligns with what she believed to be inappropriate for younger girls who become involved with sex work. In a sense, Ashley advocated for the protection and preservation of young girls' innocence. Believing in the importance of protecting young girls' innocence is in line with what many children are expected to do socially at particular ages. Ashley also discussed

how sex work might have an impact on social relationships. At many points of the interview, she alluded to experiences of sex workers in relation to other individuals. Ashley's emphasis on relationships with other people not only humanizes and shows experiences of a sex worker but also reflected dilemmas that people deal with in everyday life.

Self Respect

Jo referred to herself as an escort. As such, she distinguished herself from other sex workers. From my interviews with Jo and Ashley, I was led to believe that the term "escort" in relation to sex work refers to a sex worker who is likely to have wealthier clients. As a result, escorts can be viewed as more respectable than other sex workers. Jo upholds this notion when she stated, "I'm an escort. I don't mind telling you that. I'm classy. Being an escort, you have to learn how to be classy. I'm not ratchet or anything like that. I'm not on the track." Drawing upon this idea, it could be assumed that there is a hierarchy among sex workers especially with regards to how they view themselves as well and how others may view them. Jo saw herself in the top of the hierarchy.

I eventually learned that the term escort is often used loosely in the sex work industry; however, the indication that there is a hierarchy between sex workers is still prevalent. Ashley supported this claim.

Ashley: ...It's all the same thing. You know how everyone looks up to Kim Kardashian and Amber Rose? They do the same thing, everyone else has been doing: they are meeting these famous men and having sex with them. But because it is them, they have money now and are famous; no one says anything about them. They are or were ho'ing like anyone else.

Ida: So, what is the difference between an escort and a sex worker? Do they mean the same thing?

Ashley: It is just a term. Everyone wants a title. It all means the same thing. It is just a title. I call myself a companion, so I am above all of them.
[referencing sex workers]

Ashley also mentioned how having self-respect enabled her to deal with work.

Ashley: There are times when some guys will be very disrespectful and be like “Come here you dirty little whore.” You don’t talk to anyone like that and I definitely don’t see myself as that.

Ida: How do you deal with those situations?

Ashley: It doesn’t bother me because at the end of the day, I am getting his money and he is doing whatever I say.

Self-respect was important to Jo and Ashley in their involvement in sex work.

It was significant to them because it enabled them to maintain a sense of personhood despite how they felt that society looks down upon sex work and demonizes women who do it.

Both Jo and Ashley discussed hierarchies in sex work. They placed themselves at the top of the hierarchies in the sex work industry. This may be because of the competitiveness in the industry. Ashley shared with me that sex work is highly competitive and that women involved in the industry often do malicious things to one another in effort to get ahead or belittle other women. She also shared with me many experiences that she had in brothels and hotels when she traveled with other groups of women. Some women out of the group would steal, discard other women belongings and other tactics that they thought could prevent other women from working.

Job Skills

I was interested in learning how and if particular skills valued in the traditional economy are valued in the underground economy. Also, I wanted to learn how participants in the underground economy placed importance on particular skills in their jobs. The purpose of this was to learn which skills were considered valuable in the jobs in the underground economy and learn if the value of particular skills were essential to participants' disengagement from the legal economy.

The reality of sex work is that it is a form of employment for individuals. Jo and Ashley treated their jobs as sex workers as if it were any other occupation in the legal economy. It may be difficult to view skills utilized in sex work as being equivalent to skills needed in a job in the legal economy, but in some cases they are applicable. When I asked Jo what type of skills she utilizes in her work as a sex worker, she described skills that are essential for any job.

Jo: You need people skills and life skills. Like, be nice, be respectful and smile and things like that. I've been on my own since I was fourteen so I know how to take care of myself. Of course you need to know how to count. The thing about me escorting is that I have experience doing this and having a legal job. I actually have a resume because I have had other jobs and not just this. I know other women who do this. They don't have a resume and can't get another job because this is all they can do and know how to do.

Luckily for Jo, she had the mobility and opportunity to attain jobs in the legal economy whenever she chose to. Similar to Jo, Ashley stated some of the same skills needed in sex work that are applicable to the legal economy. I was impressed with how Ashley utilized particular skills in her job. Ashley solely operated as a sex worker from a business and marketing standpoint.

Ashley: You have to have a business mind work from a money aspect. You have so much money coming through your hands you have to know what to do with it or you'll just spend it and not know what happened to it. Invest it. Girls think they can be like the dope boys and save their money in a shoebox, but no. That won't work. You'll just spend it. You can't take all of that money to the bank. I have an accessory line. I invest some of my money in that. I have some former clients who invest in my businesses. When I go to school, I pay my tuition. For one semester I let the school pay, but other than that I do it myself.

I spend eight hours a day advertising myself.

Ida: Advertising yourself?

Ashley: Yes. I have an actual website. So I spend a lot of time every day updating my website, checking messages, everything.

Ida: Is that how you receive clients?

Ashley: Yes, I receive clients from my website. I also have a job. I have had other legal jobs too: I was an In-home Care Provider and I worked at Macy's. See, girls don't be thinking. Like what are you going to do if you get caught with all of that money? You have to have proof of how you got that money. If you deposit all of that money into the bank you have to have some proof for it. For some girls, this [sex work] is all they do. I know women who are forty and sixty years old doing this and this is all they have been doing. I don't know how people do it full time. I work and I escort. I don't have to escort and I often take breaks from it. I make money off of my products. You know, there is no retirement plan or health plan. You have to be smart about how you spend your money.

Jo and Ashley both had experiences in the legal economy and Ashley had legal jobs during the time of our interview. Both participants illustrated the importance of having legal work experience. Having legal work enabled the women to make a transition from the underground economy. Acquiring legal work experience illustrated that Jo and Ashley's work in the underground economy did not hinder their mobility into the legal economy. They had other experiences as well as skills that could enable them to participate in the legal economy.

Lifestyle

Jo and Ashley explained that sex work is the “fast life” meaning it is unpredictable; money is spent as fast as it is earned and time is spent in pursuit of making money. Due to the fast-paced lifestyle that comes along with sex work it is possible for some women to develop certain attitudes and become entrapped in different lifestyles that are provided because of the nature of their work. For example, Jo developed a calloused demeanor towards life that could be detrimental to her wellbeing. She developed this demeanor because of the unpredictability of her work.

Jo: This life is not easy. You never know what can happen to you when you meet these men. They can kill you; they can do whatever they want to you. I’ve been robbed, stabbed, raped, everything. You know, when you do this, you kind have to be like, “fuck it.”

Ida: You have been in dangerous situations from escorting. How are you able to continue with this work with the possibility that you could be in danger?

Jo: At the end of the day, I am making money. Life could be worse. I’ve been through rough things. That’s just life.

Ashley also believed that the lifestyle that comes along with sex work could lead other women to develop callous feelings and in many instances commit malicious acts. She has had dangerous encounters as well.

Ashley: It ain’t easy. I remember when I got busted for the first time in L.A. [Los Angeles]. I was 20. The police officer was nice and let me go. He told me to get out of this business because it was really rough and that he did not want to see me again. He said that if I kept doing it that he would see me again. I knew what I was getting myself into and I did not see him again. I kept escorting and traveling a lot. I would go everywhere except L.A.

After that story, recounted another about her experiences with other sex workers at a brothel.

Ashley: Another time that I had an encounter with law enforcement was when I went to a brothel in Houston [Texas].

Girls can be cutthroat. Me and some other girls went to this brothel and eventually we fell asleep. I don't know why we fell asleep but we did. When me and the other girls woke up, our clothes were missing and we found our purses in the trash. We knew that some other girls stole our stuff, so we went to go find them.

Ida: Did y'all get your things back?

Ashley: We did. Girls in this business are so competitive. They thought that by taking our things that we would be at a disadvantage and would have to make that money back, but we were already ahead of them. Girls will get stuck if they think they have to compete.

Ashley believed that the fast life that is associated with sex work can enable women who are involved in this work to get caught up in materialism or as she called it, glamor.

Women get caught up in the glamor aspect of it. Women buy all the Brazilian hair [hair extensions] and red bottoms [Christian Louboutin high-heeled shoes] and not ever talk about paying a bill [*laughs*]. Girls just spend up all of their money.

Social media has changed the game as well. Girls get on there showing off. It's [the sex work industry] not even discreet anymore. Sex work is supposed to be underground but girls these days are promoting it. I don't promote it.

Despite the lifestyle that could come along with sex work, Ashley shared that she takes breaks from sex work from time to time and relies on her family to keep her grounded.

Ashley: Luckily I have my family and their support to keep me grounded. I don't understand how girls can do this for 365 days a year. Sometimes you have to give your body and soul a rest [*laughs*]. I usually don't do it for too long at a time. I take vacations in between. See, some girls don't know what that is. They think anytime they travel it is a vacation, no. I mean a break from drinking, a break from smoking or whatever else it is that you usually do; that is a vacation.

Ida: It seems that the lifestyle isn't appealing to you. How do you refrain from being caught up in the glamor aspect of it?

Ashley: I stay to myself and keep myself balanced. My nieces keep me from pursuing it full time. I have always either worked and escorted or went to school and escorted, or have done all three at once. Ever since I was younger I knew that I did not want to pursue it full time. I did not go to a traditional public school so I always had free time.

I never wanted to pursue it full time because it was a fairytale. People are caught in it for the pursuit of money. If you are only in it for the money you won't succeed. When you get greedy, that's when you get caught. So whenever I say I am going to make a certain amount of money I quit and take a break. The glamor is wasteful. You get to the point where you have so much money and not know what to do with it. I remember one time I was just giving out \$5 to every homeless person I saw.

Aside from the fast-paced lifestyle that comes along with sex work, Jo believed that being a sex worker was worthwhile because it was a means to allow her to take care of her family and live how she wanted to. She illustrated this in our interview when she stated, "I mean, I'm fine being an escort. I have my own car, I have my own place and I have no roommates. I take care of my son on my own. Being an escort allows me to live comfortably." Sex work has enabled Ashley to provide financially for her family as well: "I have paid off a lot of debts and have done a lot for my family. I paid for my mom's condo. I don't even have a car, but I have paid down payments for my brothers' and sisters' car. That's a part of the good that comes out of escorting."

Jo and Ashley discussed dangers that can come along with pursuing sex work. They stated how the experiences of sex work could enable some women who are involved to develop particular attitudes such as becoming competitive or becoming cynical due to the known dangers that one could encounter in sex work. Despite the lifestyle and dangers that may be confronted in sex work, the income from their

work allowed them to provide for their families financially and the potential negative impacts did not deter either woman from discontinuing sex work.

The ability to provide financially in many ways shows how Jo and Ashley's work in the underground economy has enabled them to obtain socioeconomic mobility. Ashley stated that she lived in ghettos growing up and Jo had to take care of herself at a young age. The income that these women obtained from sex work allowed them to live beyond the circumstances that they were once a part of. These women also used the substantial income from their time as sex workers to financially provide for themselves and their families in many ways.

Importance of Family

Jo and Ashley shared that their involvement in sex work required them to travel a lot. Often Jo shared that she flew out to different states to meet clients. According to Jo and Ashley, traveling contributes to the fast-paced lifestyle that comes with being a sex worker. Jo stated that whenever she traveled, she ensured that her son was taken care of before she left and would stay away only for a weekend.

According to Jo, work never distracted her from her duties as a mother. She believed that she is a mother before anything else. The monetary aspect of sex work was appealing to her and is why she continued to do it. For Ashley, her family played an essential role in how she engaged in sex work. Her family was supportive and they were what kept her balanced in her experiences as a sex worker. Ashley believed that family support could enable women who choose to pursue sex work to endure it.

Ashley was family oriented. During our interview, she often discussed how much her family meant a lot to her and contributed to her hiatuses from sex work. She had nieces and nephews and believed that it was important that she be a role model to them. She shared that she often calls the police on young girls she sees pursuing sex work because she believed that they should not do it because of the risks that comes along with it. She shared that whenever she sees young girls on the street, they remind her of her nieces.

Values and Aspirations

Despite Jo and Ashley's jobs as sex workers, they believed that their involvement in sex work was short term. They had other goals that did not align with the lifestyle that sex work can provide. Their short-term involvement in the underground economy and the goals that they had were similar to goals that individuals who work in the legal economy may have. At 23 years old, Jo aspired to have a career, businesses and a larger family.

Jo: I have goals and things that I want to accomplish. I don't want to be an escort forever. I can't make a career out of that.

Ida: What is the meaning of a career to you?

Jo: A career is something that you do forever. This is not a career. I can't do this for the rest of my life. I have a five-year old son. He is young now so working now is like working the night shift for any other job. Once he gets older, he'll start putting the pieces together and I don't want him to grow up and be like, "My mom is a prostitute [*laughs*]. She doesn't have a real job."

Ida: What goals do you have?

Jo: I want to own a house, have my business and have investments. Everyone has to get somewhere and have goals in their lives. Give me about one more year and I'm out. I need to earn about \$50,000 or \$100,000 and I am out.

Ida: What would you see yourself doing if you were not escorting?

Jo: I would be in college right now. Right now I can't go to college and escort at the same time. I don't want to be enrolled in school then kicked out for missing too many classes and then I'll get behind. Once I am ready to settle down I'll go to college.

Ashley too, aspired to have a family and businesses of her own. According to her, having a family would end her involvement in sex work.

Ida: You have been involved in sex work for a long time. What would you see yourself doing if you were not doing this?

Ashley: I probably would be in school and working some nine to five or going to school. I give myself about four more years doing this. If I had a family of my own I would quit doing this cold turkey. I don't see how people do this with kids. If I were to get pregnant next week I would just quit. I want a family one day. A family would be my way out of this; I don't want to do this forever. If I had kids, I would explain to them what I do, but most likely I wouldn't be doing this if I had kids. I wouldn't want them to be made fun of because of my job as an escort.

The goals that Jo and Ashley had were similar to others who work in the legal economy. In many cases people work and would like to be able to sustain and provide for themselves and their families. Jo and Ashley were not different. They aspired to be well off socioeconomically. Their ways to pursue these goals and aspirations may not involve legal work; however, they chose a route that they felt would enable them to attain their goals. Jo and Ashley had particular perceptions of careers. They believed that sex work was not a viable long-term career for them; because of this, their goals involved being a part of the legal economy in the future.

Jo and Ashley also emphasized the importance of motherhood. Motherhood often shapes the identity of women. Motherhood and family were ideals of which Jo and Ashley placed high value. Both women were also aware of how their identities as mothers and their jobs as sex workers conflicted with what they believed are

societal standards of propriety; because of this, they did not want to pursue sex work long term because of the effects it could have on their children. Their concerns of how their jobs as sex workers could affect their children revealed their concern with societal standards of propriety and ideas of acceptable types of work in the legal economy. The women mentioned that they could not make a career out of sex work emphasizing the idea that career connotes the idea of longevity, which holds similar value in the legal economy.

Taking Precaution

As Jo and Ashley discussed, sex work is dangerous. Due to Ashley's extensive involvement in sex work and having experiences on and off of the streets, she strategically kept herself unharmed and have avoided conflict with law enforcement. Ashley considered herself fortunate and shared how she avoided trouble.

Ashley: One thing I can say about this is that I am very blessed. I have only encountered the police three times. I have a clean record and have never been to jail. Many girls can't say that. These young girls get into it thinking they know everything. They start doing it for about six months and have been to jail nine times already within their first six months. They don't think and fail to realize that they may not be so lucky every time.

Ida: How have you stayed out of trouble?

Ashley: It's about how you carry yourself and who you are around. Like right now, if you were in the room with me and I got caught, you would go to jail too. Girls these days are not discreet. They talk too much, brag and are obvious. That's why I am always by myself. I see those type of girls and be like, "Oh, okay. I don't need to be around them."

Ida: How do you get your clients?

Ashley: I receive references from other girls [sex workers] I know. We all talk to one another and sometimes have the same men. So I can call one girl up and be like, "Have you seen 'so and so'?" I don't work with clients whom I

haven't seen in more than six months. In a year, I don't know who you are, what you do and nine times out of ten, I won't even remember your name. The women have to stick together. Networking each other is the only way we can keep each other safe.

I screen guys. Another girl taught me this.

Ida: What do you mean by "screen"?

Ashley: I look them up. You have to do your research. I use a lot of sources to see if someone is who they say they are. Google teaches you a lot [*laughs*]. But screening helps me fish out some guys. It helps me keep more of the crazy guys out of the way and allows me to see who I am really dealing with.

Ida: Do you work with the same men?

Ashley: Yes. I work with the same men.

Ida: How do you keep in touch with them?

Ashley: I have their contact info. From time to time I may get a little gift or send them a little gift to let them know that I am thinking of them.

Also, I travel on call and have the pre-arranged appointments. I schedule my appointments in advance.

I am like a chameleon. I blend in where ever I go. Whenever I travel to a place I look up the trends, what the people look like and how they interact with other people. For example, I have never been to Boston, but if I were to go to a college town I would wear college gear or business attire.

I build hotel points. Hotels are smart. It's how you carry yourself. Sometimes I wear business attire and am on the business side of the hotel. That's how a lot of hotels in the West Coast got busted and get busted all of time. Girls were walking around like ho's in the hotel like it was Vegas. Sex work in Vegas is legal, only in brothels. So if you are in a hotel walking around in glittery heels, you are a ho. If you aren't ho, it will be assumed that you are because that is not a shoe of a regular shoe buyer; that is a whore shoe. You can't be in whore attire and think that you are not going to get caught. Some hotel managers don't care about escorts because it makes the hotel more money.

I remember one time some one at the hotel red flagged me because I am Black and was with a White man. I had already paid for the room. I went in to check in and the woman said that I my card was declined. I was like, "No, my credit card was not declined because I just used it in Vegas." We looked like a regular couple too; I had on a sundress and he had on a shirt and some pants.

He wasn't even one of my clients; he was my friend. But because I was a Black woman with a White man it was assumed that I was an escort.

Not being greedy keeps me out of trouble too. I try not to see no more than three guys a day but some girls work differently. If you have all those men coming back to back to your room, then you are obvious. I know some girls who will say, "Girl, I burned out my room."

Ida: What does "burn out your room" mean?

Ashley: It means seeing too many men back to back.

Ida: Oh, okay. I see.

Ashley: But yeah, being greedy definitely gets you caught up. I'm like, 'how did you burn out your room? Shouldn't you give your body some rest?'
[Laughs]

Building relationships with police and studying their maneuvers also helped Ashley remain out of trouble.

Ashley: I call the police whenever I see little girls on the street. I do it mostly because they don't belong out there and it isn't a life for them. On the other hand, I'm like, "Hmmm. Maybe if I get close to this officer and show that I am helping getting these little girls off of the street then he will be less likely to know that I am an escort and won't be worried about me."

I am always online doing research and reading articles about sex workers. Whenever I travel I look up sting operations. So if there are any current sting operations I won't go to that place. There is a national sting every summer.

Ida: Wow. I did not know that.

Ashley: Yeah! Watch the news. I also know the police schedules. I know what time they are going to patrol the streets. Memorial day is another time where there is a big sting. It's often in the San Jose area and they get all of those little girls.

Ida: Yeah, San Jose has a lot of issues with sex trafficking of young girls.

Ashley: Yeah. I'm not against the stings if they are getting all of those little girls. But yeah, every year there is a big sting usually in the summer. The cops try to make their national quota for the end of the year so that's when a lot of the busts happen.

I think it was last year, but there was a thing like a rally or something for Oscar Grants' death. I think it was at the Fruitvale Bart, but there were tons of women out there on E14th. They were out there because more police officers would be at the rally and not patrolling the street.

Ida: That is really strategic!

Ashley: Yeah, we monitor things like that.

Ashley revealed many survival strategies used to protect herself and in many cases ensured the safety of other sex workers. She illustrated that building community and how creating survival strategies can play an essential role in how she and other women are able to thrive and protect themselves in the sex work industry.

Finding Legal Routes in Sex Work

In the United States, pursuing sex work on the street is illegal. Nevada is the only state in the US that allows legal sex work, which is only permitted in licensed brothels in eleven counties in Nevada (Prostitution.procon.org). The brothels in Nevada must uphold particular standards such as having STD testing and participants are required to use condoms (Prostitution.procon.org). Despite the illegality of sex work in California, some women involved in sex work may mask their participation in the industry by obtaining escort permits according to Ashley: "You can get a license to be an escort. I just found out that you can get them in Arizona. I was so mad when I found this out. They're cheap too. They're like twenty dollars."

Arizona and a few cities in California such as San Francisco and Palm Springs offer escort permits. Escorts are legal, but sex work is illegal. In legal terms, an escort is defined as "any person who, for a fee, commission, hire, reward or profit

accompanies other persons to about social affairs, entertainment or places of amusement or consorts with others about any place of public resort or within private quarters” (Sanfranciscocode.org). Once sexual favors are involved between an escort and another individual, it becomes defined as prostitution according to California penal code 647(b) (findlaw.com). The legality of escorts calls into question why sex work is illegal. It is legal to pay for companionship, but it is illegal to pay for sex.

According to Ashley, becoming involved with pornography sites is a legal outlet for sex work. Sex websites could play an essential role in the change of the sex work industry.

Ashley: I have a friend who is a webcam model. She can actually file it on her taxes. Some pornography websites are legal. She is working on those companies’ websites as an independent contractor.

Ida: What is a webcam model?

Ashley: A webcam model is someone who is on a sex website and people pay to watch them. There are some private rooms when they can interact with some of the people too.

Ida: Oh, I understand now.

Ashley: Yeah, I did not know about it until my friend told me about it. Then I did more research on it and starting to pay for them to see how they worked. I did it once and made a lot of money for like thirty minutes. It’s different than typical escorting, but it makes a lot of money by the minute. Now that I have learned about this, I can file it for taxes.

Webcam modeling seemingly is another and more recent aspect of sex work; however it is unclear how to make the distinction between webcam modeling as pornography or as sex work. Nonetheless, webcam modeling illustrates how technology shapes interactions today as well as how it is changing the sex industry.

If webcam modeling is used to solicit sex for payment through pornography websites, it is illegal; however, it seems that it can be used as a ploy for participants to mask the illegality of sex work.

Interviewing Jo and Ashley enabled me to learn of different experiences in the sex work industry as well as learn how their jobs in the underground economy have been beneficial to them. Both women had different experiences as sex workers; however, sex work had been beneficial to them in similar ways. Their jobs allowed them to have upward socioeconomic mobility. The “fast money” that they received from their work allowed them to financially provide for themselves and their families. Jo and Ashley had mobility to enter the legal economy due to the fact that they once had jobs in the legal economy and had skills and experiences other than what they have acquired in the underground economy. Ashley’s part-time involvement in sex work and her legal job could enable her to have a job in the legal economy alone. Both Jo and Ashley had similar goals and aspirations and had short-term plans of working in the underground economy. According to these women, work in the underground economy did not permit long-term viability that was suitable for them.

Chapter 4: Drug Dealing

Drug dealing is common in some areas in Oakland. Contrary to today, there used to be particular areas in Oakland where drug dealers would stand on several corners and wait for customers to approach, and make a quick exchange of drugs and money. Today, drug dealers are less visible in the sense that they are not standing on several corners that are commonly known as areas where one could

purchase drugs. Today, some drug dealers may stand outside, but their presence as drug dealers is less obvious than it was in earlier years when drug dealers would occupy different street corners. Drug dealers today come up with different ways to maneuver. Some of their tactics are obvious whereas for some, their maneuvers are less obvious.

The drug dealers who participated in this study stated that they became involved in drug dealing because drug use and drug distribution were around them as they grew up. Terrance was a 24-year-old Oakland native who sold prescription drugs and marijuana. He believed that his involvement in selling drugs was a result of what he witnessed growing up.

Ida: How did you become involved in the underground economy?

Terrance: It was just something I got into. My granny sold her prescription pills when I was growing up; my mom did it, my aunt, everyone did it. It was normal. So I did it too. The money helped pay for a few bills like a light bill or something every now and then.

I first started selling marijuana when I was 18 and I had to start paying for things on my own. I paid for little things like a phone bill or a pair of Jordan's [shoes] or things that I wanted.

Similarly, Maurice who was a 33-year-old marijuana dealer, shared that the presence of drugs existed in his childhood as well.

Maurice: My mom did drugs when I was growing up. I think my dad did too; I don't know. But growing up, I was always around drugs and drug use, so eventually I would become involved in it. I mean, growing up it wasn't like "Oh, that's what I want to do." But it just ended up like that.

Ida: What kind of neighborhood did you live in growing up?

Maurice: I grew up in a home in Berkeley, but eventually I moved to Oakland.

Ida: Did you grow up in a rich, middle class or poor neighborhood?

Maurice: I grew up in the 'hood.

For people like Terrance and Maurice, the exposure to drug distribution was something they were acclimated to from childhood. For Terrance, his drug dealing was a result of the economic deprivation that his family endured and a result of seeing his family members engage in the drug trade facet of the underground economy to earn a supplemental income. Like Terrance, familial ties would ignite Maurice's involvement with drug distribution.

I grew up in a foster home. One day CPS (Child Protective Services) came in and took my younger siblings and me. My mom and dad were arguing on this day and CPS came in at the same time. My brothers were older so they stayed, but the younger kids were taken away.

I grew up in foster homes not knowing where my siblings were. Eventually I was adopted and had a foster mom. She took care of me the best she could. I did not have a foster dad. It was just her. So growing up I always wanted that male relationship. I found my older brothers and things started to go bad since then. My older brothers sold drugs, so I'd end up running errands, bagging stuff up, anything just to be around them. If I had never met my brothers, I would not have been involved in drugs. My foster mother kept me away from that side of my family and I know why.

Maurice's involvement in drug dealing started from his desire to be close to his family members. He did not communicate with his older brothers after their separation inflicted by Child Protective Services. He and his brothers reunited when Maurice was 17 years old. According to Maurice, he had longed to be reunited with his brothers and had spent years trying to find them. Another factor that contributed to Maurice longing to be around his brothers was the issue of the lack of male role models in his life. In such instances, young men can rely upon each other

for mentorship or look up to other males as role models who may not be the best role models for them (Fitch 2009). In either situation, the results can be detrimental to the well being of young men. This is what happened to Maurice. Maurice shared with me that his father did not have a consistent presence in his life. He and his brothers had an absent father and being adopted by a foster mother did not provide him a male role model either. Due to the lack of male leadership in his life, Maurice sought such influences from his older brothers.

Skills and Work Ethic

Both Terrance and Maurice explained how they felt that skills used for drug dealing were the same skills that they believed are utilized in typical day-to-day functions of any job in the legal economy. They believed that applying work ethics as if they were working a typical job in the legal economy contributed to their success as drug dealers.

Ida: What skills do you think are needed for your job that can be applied to jobs in the legal economy?

Terrance: You need people skills. You have to know how to talk to people and how to be friendly. When you are friendly and have people skills, people are more likely to buy from you. It's like having a sales job. You need to need to have negotiation skills too. You know, you need to know how to negotiate prices and make sure that no one is finessing you.

Ida: Finessing? What does that mean?

Terrance: It's like persuading for someone's own benefit; smooth talking. Like I can try to persuade you to buy something from me when I know it is a bad product. You won't know that it is bad, but I make you think that it is good and you believe me because of my finesse, persuasion.

You also have to know how to count; you definitely have to know how to count.

Maurice answered the question similarly.

Maurice: Well most importantly, you have to know how to count on the spot. You have to have good salesman skills. It's like you are a car salesman at a car dealership. You have to know how to sell your product. Even when it is bad, you have to know how to sell it. You also have to be able to have a good reputation with people. If you are known to have a good product, then people will be more likely to buy from you. It's about the quality of your product.

Both Terrance and Maurice treated their jobs as drug dealers the same as one would be expected to treat a job in the legal economy. Job skills that Terrance and Maurice stated that they used in their jobs as drug dealers are used in many jobs in the legal economy. As Terrance and Maurice utilized skills necessary for drug distribution, Maurice described the work ethic that has contributed to working as a drug dealer for the past fifteen years.

Maurice: I consider myself a professional because I have been doing this for fifteen years. I've seen the ins and outs of it. You have to work long hours to do this. My policy or my thing that I tell people is that I am available around the clock 24 hours a day. I get up early every day like I am actually going to an actual job. You have to work your way up.

Maurice treated drug distribution as a business like any business in the legal economy. He adopted a policy and business philosophy for how he did his work. The time commitment that he put forth in drug dealing also highlights the adopted work ethic that is prevalent in working in other jobs in the legal economy. In the legal economy, one can receive a promotion or put forth a lot of effort in a job with the hopes of advancing. Maurice illustrated a similar idea in how he describes the hours he work in his job as a drug dealer.

Drug Dealing Experiences

Similar to Jo and Ashley's experiences as sex workers, Terrance and Maurice discussed how their experiences as drug dealers could allow them to live the "fast

life". They believed that the fast life promotes materialism and that it can lead one to be caught up in this lifestyle.

Maurice: When you become involved you are chasing the money. It is the fast life.

Ida: How would you describe the fast life?

Maurice: Everything is fast. It's called the fast life because you lose the money as fast as you get it. Eventually you are living above your means. You get a lot of money then you buy a car; then you're always going out to eat; then you're partying. You spend a lot of time around a bunch of girls because they're always around because you have money. Then you get into drugs. I smoke a lot of marijuana. The more money you have the more bills you have. But that's for anyone who has money. People who own houses or are middle class have more bills than someone who is poor. This is the culture for people who are involved in it. A lot of drug dealers are flashy. They get all of this jewelry, cars and big rims because they can do that. But they are often trying to make that money back after they spend it on all of that. They are living beyond their means. I don't promote that lifestyle nor do I promote what I do.

Ida: What do you think contributes to this idea of living beyond one's means and attaining material things?

Maurice: Money makes the world go around. That is how it is in America: The more money you have, the better off you'll be. You can't do much without money. When you do this, it's all about the money. This is all for the need of money. The need for money is the direct result of poverty. You hear people say all of the time, "I was just trying to feed my family." That is what I am doing, I am trying to feed my family; and that is what some of the people do when they are doing this: they are feeding their families in ways that they know how.

Terrance shared a similar perspective as Maurice.

People are always hustling. People have been hustling since the beginning of time. America is the biggest hustler of all time. I feel like hustling originated in poor or urban communities and it will always exist there. People hustle to have things that they wouldn't have from being poor. People hustle to have cars, to have the nicest clothes and purses, anything. That's why people from the 'hood wear a lot of designer clothes. We normally cannot afford that. So we hustle so we can have those things.

The need for money played an essential role in Terrance and Maurice's involvement in drug dealing. The money they were able to receive from drug dealing enabled them to attain things they felt they would not otherwise have the opportunity to have. Maurice discussed his belief of how having money in America can enable one to be better off socioeconomically or merely have the means to attain things needed. From Maurice's perspective, the need for money enabled him to provide for his family financially. According to Terrance and Maurice, this need for money can also lead to a materialistic lifestyle. Their profits from drug dealing allowed them to attain luxury as well as provide financially for their families.

Employment

Terrance had been involved in drug dealing for five years as opposed to Maurice's long-term involvement of fifteen years. During their involvement in drug dealing, they held jobs in the legal economy as well. Terrance was an In-home Care Provider for his aunt and had a few other jobs. Despite the dual employment in the underground economy and in the legal economy, continuing jobs in the in the underground economy was seemingly more worthwhile for the men. Having a job in the legal economy helped Terrance avoid encounters with the law.

Terrance: This is not all I do. I have a regular job too. I do in-home care for my aunt so a few days a week I go check on her and help her with a few things. It helps me slow down from running the streets. Selling prescription drugs help me make a little more money other than what I do for the in-home care. If I ever get in trouble with the law or anything, I can say I have an actual job because I do. What's really cool about doing the in-home care is that I have flexible hours.

Although Maurice worked as a drug dealer full-time, he had jobs in the legal economy.

Maurice: In between my time selling drugs I have had a few little part-time jobs here and there. When I graduated high school I was a Certified Nursing Assistant. I enjoyed doing that because I genuinely like helping people. I knew that I didn't want to go to college and needed to make money quick so I enrolled in a CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant) Program. It was a little 9-month program so I had work shortly after the program was over. I kept that up for a while but I ended up getting fired because of my drug charges. Then I had a few jobs after that. But the little money you get from those little jobs isn't much and is not worth it. You know you work those little jobs for what, minimum wage? You can't do much with that. I always say that if I can sell water or anything like that legally and make the same kind of money I do now, I would do that.

Terrance was content with having a job in the legal economy because he had the flexibility to work minimal hours with his part-time position. He also had a job in the legal economy to allay any suspicions of earning an illegal income. In contrast, Maurice had jobs in the legal economy but felt that the pay that he received from jobs in the legal economy did not equate to what he was able to earn as a drug dealer in the underground economy. Although Terrance and Maurice had contrasting views on employment in the legal economy, they both enjoyed the flexibility to work hours that they would like. Maurice also mentioned that he enjoyed having a job where he can work his own hours, which was a major attraction for him in his fifteen years he worked as a drug dealer.

Their involvement or past involvement in the legal economy illustrates mobility into the legal economy. Like Jo and Ashley, they had legal work experience and could be a part of the legal economy. They all had the ability to transition from working the underground economy to the legal economy but chose to remain working in the underground economy. Jo left her legal job because her income as a sex worker exceeded what she earned from her previous job; Maurice believed that the money he earned from his legal jobs did not equate to what he was able to earn

as a drug dealer. Ashley and Terrance were not fully withdrawn from the legal economy and that helped them avoid the law by having a legal source of income.

Structural Racism and Its Effects on Drug Dealing

Since the 1980s, the United States declared a “war on drugs” to eradicate the distribution of illegal drugs. These laws disproportionately affected the lives of Black Americans leading them to be convicted, arrested and imprisoned for drug charges. During the 1980s drug use was prevalent in the suburbs but mandatory sentencing targeted Blacks and other minorities in poor neighborhoods (Buck 1992, Goode 2002:1991) The effects of the war on drugs continue to impact Black Americans. According to the FBI Uniform Crime Reports from 2012, there were 10,326 arrests for drug abuse in California. Drug abuse violations consisted of the sale and manufacturing of drugs as well as the possession of drugs. 31.2 percent of these arrests were Black Americans. As of December 13th, 2013, 526,000 Black males have been convicted on drug charges (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2013). The alarming disproportion of how Black Americans and Black men are affected by punishment for drug distribution was not surprising to Terrance and Maurice. In fact, they used this knowledge as a justification for selling drugs as well a means to avoid law enforcement as much as possible.

Ida: How does the illegality of drugs impact your work?

Terrance: I know selling marijuana is illegal, but as a Black man I could be doing worse. I’m not worried about going to jail for selling marijuana. It’s all money in “The Man’s” pocket anyway. If I go to jail, he is going to profit off it. He profits off of everyone who is in jail. So, I might as well make my money anyway. I could go to jail for things way worse but either way he is going to make a profit off of my body in jail anyway.

Ida: Who is “The Man”?

Terrance: The Man is White America. It may or may not be one person; it could be a group of people, but he or those people are what run the country. Everything in this country is about profit or making some kind of money. You see that with the amount of Black people who are in jail. I have people who are in jail for petty stuff. White people aren't going to jail as much as Black people do. It's slavery. All of those Black people are in jail for the White man or white America.

Ida: How has "The Man" or "White America" affected you and people in your community?

Terrance: The man is why we hustle in the 'hood or urban communities. We learn it from them. As a matter of fact, the people who started America were the biggest hustlers of all time...from slavery, to bootleggers, everything! Everything is about money.

Maurice shared similar sentiments as Terrance.

Maurice: I try my best to stay out of trouble. Many good things have come out of selling marijuana and bad things have come out of it as well.

Ida: What are the good and bad things that have come out of drug dealing?

Maurice: The good thing that has come out of it is that it helps me provide for my family. I have younger siblings and I have a son who will be two in February. I am able to provide things that I did not have growing up. The bad thing about it is that you can go to jail. I have gone to jail for it. I have White friends who do the same thing and they don't go to jail like my Black friends do. Because I am African American I am more suspicious. I have to be more careful about things. My skin color, my hair, everything. I have to take more caution. I have a 50 thousand dollar car. I have to make sure everything is up to date and everything. It is easy for cops to pull me over and look all into my car. It has happened before. They're like, "Oh, here is this Black man with that kind of hair driving that car. Something's not right. Let's pull him over." That doesn't happen to White people as often as it will happen to Black people.

Terrance and Maurice referred to the racial inequality in laws that they believed to impact Black Americans. The discussion of race often is an uncomfortable one in the United States. Often when race is discussed in the United States, it is discussed dichotomously in reference to White people and Black people or White people and people of color. This dichotomous perspective of race and the

understanding of structural racism can influence the maneuvers and schemas of many people of color.

An example of this perception of racial dichotomy in the United States is how Terrance referred to capitalism as “The Man”. Referring to capitalism as “The Man” stems not only from the perspective of race and how it is often viewed in America, but also with regards to intersectionality of race and class. In 2011, Latinos and Black Americans had higher rates of poverty than Whites and Asians (Public Policy of California 2011). During that year, 23.6 percent of Latinos and 24.2 percent of Black Americans lived in poverty in contrast to the 9.8 percent of Whites and 12.6 percent of Asians. The idea of “White America” is a perception of White Americans being disproportionately well off socioeconomically and having access to resources in contrast to the number of minorities who live in poverty. Due to this idea, many people in poor communities may personify capitalism as a White male who has access and control resources that people in these communities lack.

As Terrance shared his perspective of how structural racism plays a pivotal role in law enforcement and how Black people are treated, he explained how he believed structural racism impacted his employment endeavors.

Terrance: Racism not only exist with police, it’s with jobs too. I applied for a custodial job with Berkeley’s school district. I went to the interview and everything. But I didn’t get it. You know why? It is because I am Black.

Ida: Why do you think your race is the reason why you didn’t get the job?

Terrance: I can tell. I met all of the requirements: I have a high school education and some college education. I went to a university for a few years until I had that accident. I can tell that they were shocked to see that I was the person on the paper. They were not looking to hire a young, Black male. This has happened to me with other jobs too. But having this job with in-home care and doing my hustling on the side, I don’t have to worry about

not having a job because I am Black.

For Terrance, employment in the underground economy enabled him to make money and not deal with the potential impacts of structural racism in employment. Although there is no evidence that Terrance was not offered a job in the legal economy because of his race, it is important to acknowledge how other people like Terrance may share those feelings and experiences. The impact of structural racism in employment is another factor that can contribute to employment in the underground economy. Participants not this study did not share that they were denied work in the underground economy based upon their race or denied work in any way. If one has obtained a job in the underground economy and feel that he or she is incapable of obtaining a job in the legal economy based upon race, employment in the underground economy could be more appealing.

Legality Versus Illegality and The Marijuana Trade

Both Terrance and Maurice believed that selling Marijuana was not wrong. They believed that it is deemed wrong and considered a crime because economically, society does not profit from it in certain places. They believed that once the government is able to control and regulate it, the perception of marijuana distribution would change.

Terrance: It's only bad because the White man isn't making money from it. If he made a profit there would be no problems. The only problem there would be if marijuana was legal in California is that it would put all of the drug dealers out of work. Then they would have find another hustle of course, but it would be a problem because for some people this is the only way they make their money. Honestly, I don't mind that marijuana is illegal. It keeps money in peoples' pockets.

Maurice: It's not what you do, it's how you do it. There are a lot of marijuana

clubs and dispensaries operating. They're regulated. It's about the system. They look at it as being bad because they don't know how much we are making or selling and we are not paying taxes. So because White America isn't regulating the marijuana trade, they're going to say it's bad.

Terrance and Maurice believed that the morality of selling marijuana is not approved by society due to who is making a profit. They believed that the profit from marijuana sales would be deemed admissible if larger society were able to control it and make a profit instead of the drug dealers. This belief goes back to the idea of the control of resources and capitalism that Terrance alluded to previously in what he calls "White America". Maurice and Terrance believed that their employment as drug dealers is problematic because it is a facet that society is unable to control or regulate economically.

Aspirations

Despite the fact that Maurice's life as a drug dealer may contrast with the lives and work of individuals in the legal economy, he aspired to one day to have a life disassociated from the underground economy. He was well aware of the dangers and consequences that are risked when one chooses the job of a drug dealer. The possibility of upward socioeconomic mobility and freedom to choose work hours that is permitted to drug dealers was not appealing enough to him to want to continue with drug dealing long term. Contrarily, he believed that his involvement in drug dealing would be short term.

Maurice: I don't want to make a career out of this. This is just a stepping-stone for better things.

Ida: How is drug dealing a stepping-stone for more things that you would like to accomplish?

Maurice: It's a stepping-stone for entrepreneurship. I want to own businesses and other things like that. I have a son. I want to be a good father. I'd also like a job working with kids or the elderly. I read somewhere that the port of Oakland had some openings for longshoremen jobs. I'd do that too.

Ida: How would you feel if your son wanted to become involved in drug dealing when he got older?

Maurice: He wouldn't and he won't. I keep all of that away from him. I want him to grow up and be as square as possible. I don't want him growing up to do the things that I do. That's why I provide so he won't have to.

Ida: When do you think you'll pursue those goals?

Maurice: I won't be doing this for too much longer. When I get a little bit more money and I'll be out. That's why some people do this for so long. I mean some people like it but I don't; I don't glamorize this lifestyle. Some people say "Oh, I'll get out once I make this much." Then people work towards that goal. Sometimes they get it, sometimes they don't. But people are caught up in this because it's the chase of a dollar. They can make the amount they say they're going to make and feel that since they have accomplished that, they could make even more money. Like I said, some people don't make their goal and continue to work at it; but I definitely know that I won't be doing this too much longer.

Maurice used drug dealing as a means to provide for his family as well as a means to accomplish greater goals that he had. The pursuit of money is what Maurice believed to be a significant motivation for drug dealers and that this pursuit often leaves them entrenched in a monetary cycle. The monetary cycle of gaining money and losing money then saying that they are going to discontinue drug dealing when they make a certain amount of money; meet their goals, then create goals to exceed their previous standards and in turn, continue drug dealing in effort to make more money is why he believed some people are involved in the drug trade for a long time. Maurice recognized this and had goals to avoid those circumstances.

Maurice shared similar goals with Jo and Ashley. They all believed that their jobs in the underground economy did not fit their ideas of a career. They believed

that their involvement in the underground economy would be short term and that the lifestyle that comes along with their jobs was not suitable for a family and could leave them entrapped in it. Jo, Ashley and Maurice mentioned how chasing money could lead one to continue to be engaged in the underground economy because they are driven to make more money. They also discussed how their jobs will be used for them to access upward socioeconomic mobility and eventually lead lives in the legal economy.

Community

Many poor neighborhoods are often viewed as having the same characteristics: high rates of crime, as well as high rates of drug use and distribution. The distribution of drugs and drug use contributes to rates of crime in these communities. Since drug distribution is illegal, drug dealers are often perceived as criminals who pollute neighborhoods. Contrary to the typical schema of how drug dealers are perceived and how the existence of drugs is viewed to impact neighborhoods, Terrance and Maurice had a different perspective of how they believed drug dealing impacts communities.

Terrance: I don't think selling drugs is tearing down the community. The drug dealers are a community; we look out for one another. Like if I don't have something like some weed to sell, I'm going refer the customer to my friend, so we look out for one another. People who sell drugs are not out to tear down the community.

Ida: I have often heard many people in the 'hood say that there's a "crabs in the bucket" mentality. How is that applicable to drug dealing?

Terrance: [*makes disgruntled face out of disbelief*] Some people do feel that way. Whomever say that are the cutthroat people, like they are all for themselves. It's the total opposite of that. It's like communism in fact. We look out for each other. We are a community because we are all in this together, trying to accomplish the same things. It's all for a come up.

[pointing off into the distance in different directions] He probably has some bills to pay and some people to feed, so I'm gonna help him out and in turn, know that same person is going to help me if I need anything. Like, his mom may need groceries one day. I know she has fed me and if I got it, I'm gonna get her some groceries. If my aunt needs something, the same guy whose mom I got groceries for is gonna help my aunt out. No one cares about the 'hood; the people who are in it do. We have to take care of each other because no one else is. The Man isn't going to do it, so we have to do it. I mean, no one wants to live in the 'hood, but we won't do better if we don't help each other.

As Terrance referred to his network of drug dealers as a community, Maurice discussed how he planned to help poor communities with the profits of his drug dealing.

Terrance: When I was selling dope as a kid I thought I was destroying communities; now, being involved in the marijuana trade I don't think I am impacting communities negatively. Marijuana is only considered bad because of White America and they are not making a profit off of me selling it. Many people smoke weed and it isn't harmful. My goal is to actually open up a barbershop and detail shop. Those are staples in the Black and urban communities. We don't have those things in the community anymore, things to call our own. There isn't anything in the 'hood and it's hard to have something going for yourself when there isn't anything there. I don't see what I do as being bad because I am not hurting or harming anyone. The younger generation these days, they are the ones harming the community. They steal and hurt people. They do not work for anything. Like me, I've been doing this for a while and worked my way up. I did it without maliciously hurting anyone. I want to give back. If you are blessed, bless other people; so I want to take what I have and help someone else in the 'hood; they need it.

My friend's dad recently passed. He was 90 and I wish I had more time to talk to him. He once told me that back in the day, Oakland was filled with Black owned businesses. How he made it seem, it was like Oakland was equivalent to Atlanta today how Atlanta has a great amount of successful, Black middle class families. Oakland looks nothing like that today especially with all of the gentrification. I would like to help move Oakland back to the way it was how my friend's dad described it. Us, African Americans in Oakland don't have much of our own.

Maurice also described the network established amongst participants in the underground economy.

Maurice: People in the underground economy are their own community. We all end up knowing each other because we are all involved in the same kind of things. I may know someone who has something I may need and vice versa. It's about networking.

Terrance and Maurice illustrated how they built their own networks in the underground economy and placed importance on community. Terrance emphasized that there is an importance of building community between other drug dealers in neighborhoods as well as the importance of community in poor neighborhoods. From his experience in his neighborhood, he believed that helping one another is best because no one else will. In Maurice's view, poor communities lack resources and he believed that there is an imperative to provide what he calls, "staples" in the community. He discussed how gentrification has an impact on communities in Oakland. Maurice believed that creating resources for poor communities in Oakland could be helpful.

Conducting these interviews with Maurice and Terrance enabled me to learn a lot about them personally. What was significant about our conversations is that I learned a lot about who they are and who they want to be. Learning about them undoubtedly enabled me to learn that they really are no different than anyone else: they have goals, aspirations and families that they provide for.

Chapter 5: Day Labor

Establishment of Day Labor Program and Hiring Zones

In 1999, the City Of Oakland implemented the Day Labor Program. The catalyst for implementing this program arose from the complaints of vendors stating that on a daily basis, approximately 200 day laborers would congregate at the intersections of Fruitvale Avenue and Foothill Boulevard (City of Oakland

Program Proposal 2014). The vendors stated that the day laborers were disrupting their businesses and requested that the City of Oakland develop a solution to the disruption. As a result, the City's Community and Economic Development Agency (CEDA) developed a social service model designed to address the needs of the day laborers as well as the concerns of individuals who own businesses in Fruitvale (City of Oakland Program Proposal 2014). The purpose of the Day Labor Program was to ensure that the day laborers are to achieve self-sufficiency and be productive citizens in society (City of Oakland Program Proposal 2014). The implementation of this program led to the creation of Day Labor Hiring Zones. There are Day Labor Hiring Zone signs that designate these areas.



Figure 5.1 Day Labor Hiring Zone Sign

Spatial Analysis

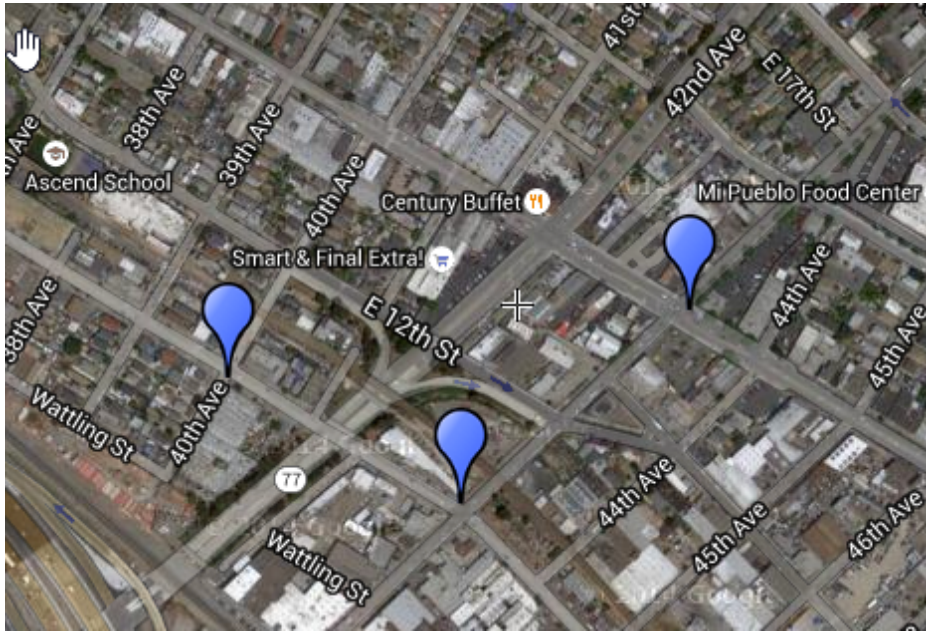
These signs indicate particular spaces or zones where day laborers who seek employment can be and where people can go to hire them. From my observations,

the day labor hiring zones were ambiguous. Based upon the locations of the signs, the day labor hiring zones had unclear boundaries. There were not clear confines illustrating where the zones begin and end, just spaces in between where the signs existed. The hiring zones extended for several blocks located outside the Fruitvale and Foothill neighborhoods. It seems that a solution to establishing day labor hiring zones to address the concerns of business owners in Fruitvale and Foothill neighborhoods was to ensure limited space where day laborers could congregate in these neighborhoods. This is proven to be true because of the signs on Foothill Street that stated that those who solicit day laborers on the premise would be fined. These signs were displayed in a Walgreens parking lot. Adjacent to the Walgreens, there was an O'Reilly Auto Parts store, which shared the same parking lot. Day laborers could be found standing near the O'Reilly's store and its parking lot, despite the display of signs that stated that those who solicit, or seek to employ day laborers in that location could be fined. There were two visible Day Labor Hire Zone signs on High street and one on the intersection of 40th and San Leandro Street, but none on Foothill or on Fruitvale streets, but day laborers could be found outside of the premises where the signs were displayed.



Figure 5.2 Day Labor Solicitation Sign

I saw three visible day labor hiring zone signs, but there were seven areas where I had seen day laborers congregate to seek work. These areas were near two O'Reilly auto parts stores, a grassy area in the entrance of a plaza near the entrance of a Home Depot parking lot, a gas station across from a Mexican market where other day laborers congregated, a lumber store and a welding store. The areas where laborers could be found were usually filled with men dressed in casual jeans, T-shirts, hoodies and often hats. The older men in these areas were often dressed in jeans that had remnants of paint and baseball caps, whereas the younger men whom I had seen usually wore black hoodies, jeans and white T-shirts. The younger men who I observed in these areas were often dressed more casually than the older men.



Map provided by Google and Scribble Maps

Figure 5.3 Locations of Visible Day Labor Hiring Zone Signs

Governmentality and Surveillance of Day Laborers

Michel Foucault (1970) coined the term, governmentality. He defined this term as institutions, procedures, analyses, reflections, calculation and tactics used to exercise complex forms of power and used as a means of security (Foucault 1970: 102-103). The workings of governmentality were prevalent in how day labor hiring zones were established to regulate where day laborers could seek work as well as how and where their presence was regulated. The purpose of the day labor hiring zones was to create a space where day laborers could seek work; however, these boundaries or zones were alienating and restricting.

Many of the stores where day laborers sought work had a separating boundary. Spaces within the day labor hiring zones had gates separating where the day laborers solicited work and where the stores were actually located. The spatial

configuration of the boundaries between the stores and where the day laborers were allowed to seek work placed them near the streets. Permitting space near the streets for day laborers to occupy could be helpful to them because it could enable them to have visibility and potentially increase their likelihood of finding work, but it was alienating and could illustrate the idea that their presence was unwanted near the stores even though legally they were allowed to be in the space.

Visiting day labor hiring zones enabled me to become acquainted with a security guard who was hired to manage day laborers at a lawn where they congregated near the entrance of a plaza near a Home Depot. By the second time I visited the site with hopes of speaking to day laborers, seven men abruptly ran up to me seeking work. Other men were near the street and near the entrance of the plaza yelling, “Labor” and trying to signal to people passing in cars. As the men huddled around me asking for work, some left in disappointment when I informed them that I was not seeking to employ them. The security guard stepped in and started a conversation with me.

Security: Do you need day laborers for any work?

Ida: No. I am a researcher who is hoping to learn about the experiences of day laborers.

Security: Oh. You can talk to me. Ask me questions. I saw that they all ran up to you. I didn’t want you to be scared.

Ida: Do you work here every day?

Security: Yes. I was hired to make sure that they do not go near the store. They cause a lot of trouble. Often the police come.

You see that line over there? [*pointing to the crossing walk lines on the ground that is near the grassy area where many of the day laborers congregate*] They are not supposed to cross that line.

Ida: You were hired just to make sure that the day laborers don't go near the stores?

Security: Yes. I stand here all day and make sure they aren't near the stores.

Ida: So they are only allowed in that perimeter and not allowed to move any further?

Security: No. They cannot go past that. This is where they are allowed to be. The store managers do not want them near their stores. You see? They see I am talking to you and they are moving past the line. Please excuse me.

[He walks towards the three men who are sitting closer towards the entrance of the plaza, which is beyond their boundary. He makes them get up and move. He signals for the three other men across the street to move back within their boundaries as well].

Ida: Why can't they go near the stores?

Security: Because the store managers complain that they bother the customers.

Day labor hiring zones illustrates governmentality because legally day laborers are restricted to find work within particular areas. Law regulates day laborers' presence by providing a space where they can find work. If they do not adhere to these regulations, there may be consequences such as fines. If the workers are undocumented, they risk deportation. The security that was hired to ensure that the day laborers do not go near the store is another illustration of governmentality. He was hired just to ensure that they are not near the stores. He physically regulated the day laborers presence by telling them when they surpassed their boundaries. The day laborers who sought work outside of this plaza were within the hiring zone, so legally they could be there. Despite the fact that the day laborers could be there legally, the store managers within the plaza had the power to keep them out and away from the businesses. The established day labor hiring zones and the

conversations with the security guard reflects the idea of the “problem of day laborers” that Herrera discussed. He stated that the problem of day laborers are addressed by repression and restriction of day laborers as well as a kinder form of policing day labor activity through the establishment of day labor centers (Herrera 2010: 7). The day laborers near this plaza were not being policed by day labor centers, but the security guard and the store managers that did not want them near their stores were policing them.

Outsider’s Perspectives of Day Laborers

As opposed to many of the other jobs that are available in the underground economy, day labor is an occupation that wavers between the lines of legality and illegality. Day labor work can be legal because the work conducted in this occupation does not fall into the category of criminality as other occupations in the underground economy. It is not illegal to employ day laborers; however, it is illegal to work in the United States without documentation. Many of the day laborers in Oakland are not US citizens and are of Latino or indigenous descent. During this study I experienced that some people could have disgruntled attitudes towards day laborers. An example of this was the attitude of an O’Reilly’s employee whom I spoke to one day. The employee was a White woman who appeared to be in her 30s.

Ida: *[offers left over donuts to O’Reilly employees that were given out to day laborers]*

Employee: You have donuts? Give them to the day laborers out there. I’m sure they’ll eat them.

Ida: I have offered some to them and I have extras.

Employee: Oh. Were you looking for one of them for work?

Ida: No. I am a researcher hoping to learn of the experiences of day laborers.

Employee: Oh yeah? There are tons of them out here. At one point they would be near the store. We had to put a gate up out there to keep them out.

Ida: Are you talking about that gate that's near the street?

Employee: Yeah. In the morning there are tons of them out there. Men come load them up in trucks and they get paid twenty dollars an hour! They get paid more than I do! Before I had this job, I was collecting unemployment and not making nearly as much as they do! They just jump in someone's truck and get paid that money. I'm surprised that they didn't take the donuts. Then again, they get taken care of around here. They just stand outside all day and look for work. They get food from people around here and everything.

Ida: They get food from whom? People offer them food?

Employee: Yeah! The taco trucks and restaurants around here give them free food. It's crazy. They just come here, get work and get taken care of and here I am coming to work everyday and not making as much as them.

As I had this conversation with the employee, frustration and disapproval of day laborers was expressed vividly in her tone and in her facial expressions. After she spoke about the day laborers, she segued into a diatribe about how many other immigrants have come to San Francisco and have found work. From our conversation, it seemed that the employee had minimal interaction with the day laborers. I am unsure what caused her discontentment or frustration with day laborers; I am unsure if she felt that that she should be paid more than the day laborers or be paid equally as much. In either case the employee seemed to be displeased with day laborers.

This conversation reflected the perspective of one individual, but it led me to think of how others like herself may share similar perspectives and how such perspectives could have an impact on how day laborers are able to obtain work and experience work in Oakland and in many areas in the United States.

Discrimination

Discrimination undoubtedly is a significant issue that can affect many day laborers. Discrimination against day laborers manifests and functions on multiple levels. It is expressed structurally and socially. Socially day laborers may experience discrimination from the attitudes that some people may have towards immigrants generally. They can experience discrimination structurally when stores force them away and how they are confined to seek work in particular areas. In a short, video recorded interview from the Oakland Workers' Collective website, Roberto, a member of the collective discussed his experiences with discrimination from an employer.

Roberto: There was an employer who only spoke English and with that I have learned in ESL classes, I have managed to understand him. He told me that he needed three more people and told me to go look for people at Home Depot. I brought back three people. The workers did not agree with what the employer was going to pay them and wanted to talk to him. I told the employer, "Look they want to talk" and he immediately responded, "What do you say? Should I call Immigration on them?" He did not know if they were undocumented. I felt terrible by him asking me that question it is as if he were implying that we are useless. That was a social injustice. He discriminated them but I also felt as if he had discriminated against me. Thanks to God, I am documented. But when people make random assumptions that is a form of discrimination.

Another member from the collective expressed his experiences with discrimination from an employer.

But with companies for not being fully documented there are times they perhaps take away work days and we'll have to stay at home without employment. They ask a lot from us. Yes, we cannot speak English fluently, but they also judge us based upon appearance. They also see we are Latino. We have suffered wage theft and it has not been the only form; one employer, but two, three or more.

Employers were not the only individuals who discriminated against day laborers. During a visit to a Oakland Worker's Collective weekly meetings, a member stated that he experienced discrimination from other Latinos.

Other Latinos are people who discriminate. They think that we are just hanging out on the corners. They think that we need to work. They don't realize that this is hard work. We get up early to go to work, go to trucks and negotiate how much we get paid. Some people do not want to go to the corner and find work. We have to something to prove to our own people.

Experiencing discrimination could be a deterrent for anyone who seeks employment. Unfortunately, it is a part of the experience that many day laborers face. Discrimination experienced by day laborers is unfair for myriad reasons. Not only is discrimination unjust and inhumane, it is unfair that there is a possibility that day laborers can face the repercussions of discrimination when it is others who are unfair to them. For example, Roberto mentioned that the workers were discouraged from negotiating payment for their work because the employer assumed that the workers were undocumented and threatened to call immigration on them. If the workers were undocumented and the employer called immigration, the workers would have faced the consequences of the wrongful actions of the employer. That situation illustrates how day laborers can be taken advantage of and how in some cases they are defenseless.

The member of the Oakland Workers' Collective statement about how he felt that day laborers have to prove themselves to other Latinos reveals an issue of pride. The issue of pride is prevalent in regards to how the collective member felt that day laborers have to prove themselves to other Latinos and how he said that some men do not want to seek work on the streets. The issue of pride undoubtedly

was an issue that these men had to grapple with daily when they sought work and tried to earn a living. It takes pride go to the streets to pursue work when there is a possibility that work is not available. It also takes pride to go to the streets to seek work when there are people who are from similar communities as day laborers thinking that they are not working or not working hard enough.

Illegality

Undocumented citizenship is not the only issue of illegality that affects day laborers. Hiring workers informally is not illegal either. What is illegal about day labor is that employers do not always adhere to legal and labor standards. The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 requires that employers verify eligibility of those who they employ by filling out an I-9 form (Gonzalez 2007:4); but there are exceptions to this law. Employers do not to check employees' legal right to work if they are hiring independent contractors, casual workers who perform tasks sporadically, or workers provided by a third party. (U.S. Department of Justice 1991, Gonzalez 2007: 5). Based upon the work that day laborers may do, they may not be in violation of the immigration act. Many employers do not check the legal status of employees. Also, under California common law, day laborers are considered employees under the Unemployment Insurance Code if the person who employs them has control over the workers (Employment Development Department 2004, Gonzalez 2007: 5). Under federal law, day laborers are covered by wage and safety regulations under the Occupational Safety and Health Act (U.S. General Accounting Office 2002, Gonzalez 2007: 5).

In many cases, there is a belief that one of the problems of day laborers' presence is that they are undocumented, when in fact there are larger, structural issues of illegality that affect day laborers. What is problematic about the structural issues of illegality that affects the day laborers is that many of them may not know that there are laws to protect them. One of few possible ways for a day laborer to learn this is if he visits a day labor center where there are resources for them, but many day laborers search for work on the streets. Another issue is that many day laborers who may or may not be documented citizens could be afraid to challenge employers out the fear of facing consequences such as not getting paid or fear that they could be reported to immigration authorities.

Challenges of Working As a Day Laborer

Inevitably there are challenges for any job. One of the most significant challenges for day laborers is obtaining work. In many cases there are more day laborers than there are jobs at the hiring zones, thus creating competition. There are many men who occupy the hiring zones for the same reasons. This may be a reason why many men get up early in the morning to seek work. The earlier they get there, the greater chance they will have of finding work for the day. In some cases, men can find more than one job in a day if they are there early and return to the hiring site. A day laborer from the Oakland Workers' Collective described what it is like to seek work at a hiring site in an interview.

We have a shifting schedule. There has been an employer that has given us four to six hours of work. We have gone to different places to wait for work between 54th and International. Also High Street, Berkeley and San Leandro to try to get at least a few hours of work.

In this case and in many cases, day laborers do not always have temporary jobs where they are contracted to work for a few days. Day laborers spend their days moving around to different areas in pursuit of finding work.

There are many other challenges that affect day laborers as well. Day laborers from the Oakland Workers' Collective discussed challenges they faced with regards to barriers to employment.

Roberto: Honestly, a barrier to finding work has been my age. I have the ability to lift about seventy pounds to one hundred pounds but that is because I have to take care of my health. There are some people who think I am an incapable worker. At times there are employers who judge me by my physical appearance and hesitate to hire me. They don't always stop to consider how we have a great need for employment to survive.

Another barrier to finding work is the area in which I live. There is so much violence where I live. For example, I will get up early in the morning to search for work and when I walk out, two people who want to steal my car greet me. I have no choice but to give them the keys. Then I have to call the employer to let them know that I do not have my own transportation and will have to take the bus up to a certain point where I will then need to be picked up. In this situation I can't take my own tools. When one experiences all these barriers one acknowledges that there are many opportunities in this country but there are also many things that hold one behind.

This morning I got up to drive to work and what do I come across? The sticker on my license plate was stolen! Things seem small but the psychological and emotional impact on me is big. Why? Because the police make sure that everything is in line and if I am pulled over I will no longer make it to work on time. The police are not going to care about your situation. One has time against them. There have been times I want to drive somewhere and when I try to ignite the car it won't turn on. The battery has been stolen. That is ridiculous. And what does the police say? They tell me to put a camera outside my house to try to capture who it is. What a response!

Salvador was a member of the collective who has been in the United States for twelve years. He obtained US citizenship and was very passionate about organizing and advocating for immigration rights. Despite the fact that he has US citizenship, he discussed challenges that undocumented workers face in regards to

obtaining employment.

Salvador: Like any person, one abandons their country in search of a better future. I talk to a lot of people and they feel as if the American dream is escaping us and disappearing. Each day there are more taxes. Each day there is more control over jobs because they now ask one to verify the social security number. It's like they are closing the doors on us to see what we are going to do and it is lamentable.

As Salvador felt that there are now more restrictions, he asserted that it is more difficult for day laborers to find jobs than it was when he used to seek work on the streets.

Salvador: It is much harder. For me it has been eleven...twelve years since I have been here. I used to wait for work in one corner. I would get there at 7am and an employer would pick me up for work and I would return to the corner at 2pm. I would eat some tacos at the taco truck and then at 3 or 4 another employer would pick me up for work. I would get two jobs in the same day.

Carlos, another member of the Oakland Workers' Collective, was a 39-year old day laborer from Guatemala who had recently come to the United States. During an interview he shared that language was a barrier to finding employment.

Carlos: It has been very difficult. One of the first things we find is the language barrier. We do not speak English well. We wait for work on the street. It can be very hard to understand the employers when discussing work.

Juan, another member of the Oakland Workers' Collective also stated that language was a challenge and discussed other challenges that one may experience as a day laborer.

Juan: The first obstacle one comes across when arriving to the US is the language barrier and lack of employment. Another obstacle is that we don't exactly know the types of jobs we will be getting ourselves into. We may not know how to handle some tools. There is a higher probability of accidents and we just do not know all of the safety precautions yet.

Another member of the collective named Ricardo believed that the lack of citizenship was a challenge for him as a day laborer. He shared this in his interview on the Oakland Workers Collective website: "At first, the hardest thing was being undocumented because one must always provide a social security number and valid identification."

Some of the challenges that the day laborers in this study experienced were not a result of their occupations, but challenges they had because of their socioeconomic status. According to the National Day Labor Survey, on average a day labor works about 23 hours per week, makes \$11.32 dollars an hour and on average earns \$259 dollars per week (Gonzalez 2007: 10). Many day laborers pursue this type of work because it is what they are afforded. For example, Roberto discussed how being a victim of malice in his neighborhood impacted his ability to maneuver as well as his job performance. Undoubtedly, Roberto did not live in the best neighborhood and in fact he may have lived in a lower socioeconomic community. Day laborers can deal with unpredictable circumstances when they search for work; as a result they are not always afforded the opportunity to achieve upward socioeconomic mobility based upon the job opportunities that are available to them and the income that they earn from their work. There are many day laborers that come to the United States to improve their economic circumstances. However in some cases, working as a day labor may not enable one to achieve economic growth.

Issues of Safety

There are many dangers that come along with being a day laborer. A significant danger is the possibility of being injured. Injury in the day labor

population raises many concerns. It is a public health issue. Also, many day laborers refuse to report that they are, even the disclosure of serious injuries because it can hinder them from working and obtaining income. According to National Day Labor Survey, seventy percent of day laborers reported that their work was unsafe and ten percent of reported having been injured at work before the survey was taken (National Day Labor Survey 2004, Gonzalez 2007:14). The percentage of injuries reported by the day laborers in the survey was higher than the injury rate for construction workers in California whose injury rate was 6.5 percent (Gonzalez 2007:14).

As many day laborers seek work on the streets, there is a possibility that others can harm them or they can encounter issues with police or other authorities. The streets where day laborers seek work are public. The places where I saw day laborers congregate in Oakland were busy streets with lots of activity so it was difficult to know who passed through those spaces. This could impact day laborers because consequently they could be blamed for many problems that happened on the streets when others occupied the space as well. I learned that many day laborers are often weary of their presence on the streets as they search for work because it can bring unwanted attention to them and can create unwanted encounters with the police.

Pursuing work on the streets can create unexpected experiences and encounters for the day laborers. During a meeting at the Oakland Workers' Collective, Ricardo shared an experience that happened to three of his friends who were also day laborers.

Ricardo: One day three of my friends were looking for work near Walgreens. Some men kidnapped them at gunpoint and took them somewhere. They were held hostage for a few days. The men who took them made them cut up and bag up marijuana. My friends did not know where they were. The men who took them woke them up and told them when to go to sleep. When the men were done with them, they dropped my friends off where they were. They did not pay them or anything.

Such experiences can traumatize day laborers and create negative impacts on employment and life in the United States. Pursuing work on the streets is dangerous. Many day laborers do not know what kind of work they are getting themselves into or know the people who employ them. The men who were kidnapped did not report what happened to them to the police. They might not have reported it for many reasons including the desire to avoid police. I do not know if the men in this case were documented; but if they were not, contacting the police could have put them at risk of deportation. Another concern is that the kidnappers could have come back. Safety is a significant issue that can impact day laborers. There is no certainty to ensure the safety of the day laborers on the streets or in their workplaces.

Coming to America

There are many reasons why individuals come to the United States; undoubtedly the day laborers that ambitiously wake up early to pursue work on the streets have a purpose. Video recorded interviews from the Oakland Workers' Collective website shared why some of the members are here in the United States.

Carlos: I came to this country to accomplish my dreams. What is important is for one is to do the things one does not have in their country. The opportunities that are not available over there are available here. I came for economic growth. My dream is also to provide an education to my children so that they are successful and have a profession when they are older.

Felipe: There is no money so we thought, "Let's go over there, there's nothing

left here.” And that is why I am here fighting for life and hoping things go well. The whole time poverty has been slowly killing us. We do not have work in Guatemala; we are damned over there. Well I guess there are jobs but only for lawyers and others like that, and well we do not have the education for those jobs. The problem is that the government is a thief because it does not want to help us. It wants all benefits for itself and forgets about all of us in poverty.

Well things here have not gone very well for me either. I am not in glory. That is what I had thought, but things here are also difficult. There are days that I work, and there are days where there is no work. There are times I go to work with someone I don’t know and just because I do not know them they give me thirty dollars when I have worked eight hours, but I manage to make it with thirty or forty dollars. I have no choice but to settle with it because where else is there to go? I am in their pocket. In my home country it is the same. Now I have nowhere else to go and no option but to accept it, maybe one day there will be hope.

Ricardo: I came to seek a better future for my family because like all poor people, I had the hope of providing a better life for my kids and for my parents to build them a home back in our country. We all know that the US dollar is of higher value in our countries. At least in my country, I am Guatemalan. The US dollar is worth about eight pesos of our country. Here, thanks to God and to the sweat from our bodies, we make about three times more than what we would make home and with that we can sustain our families.

Felipe, Ricardo and Carlos came to the United States to pursue different opportunities. They came for economic opportunities and for better qualities of life. Although they and many other day laborers may come to the United States with hopes of attaining these opportunities, it can be challenging to achieve these goals. Though, some day laborers’ lives and incomes might be improved than what they were able to obtain in their home countries, such improvements come with other deterrents. One of the greatest deterrents that can impact day laborers is how they are able to sustain socioeconomically. According to the National Day Labor survey, in 2004 day laborers earned an average of \$11.32 dollars per hour. This was an hourly wage that was based upon working around twenty-three hours per week.

On average day laborers earned about \$259 per week (Gonzalez 2007:10). This was an average that was representative of day laborers all over California. The average may varied based upon geographic location, where day laborers pursued work and how many hours they worked a week. Based upon the weekly average presented by the National Day Labor Survey, day laborers who participated in the survey potentially could have made around \$1,036 per month. Based upon this average of \$1,036 a month today, it does not account for the cost of living in California, especially if some of the money will be sent as remittances back to home countries.

Felipe mentioned a dilemma that day laborers could face. Many leave their home countries in effort to improve their situations at home and provide for their families. Many of the men left their countries because they were poor and wanted to seek better opportunities. In many cases some day laborers like Felipe leave their low socioeconomic statuses in their home countries only to enter another low socioeconomic status in America. In this situation, it could be difficult for many day laborers to achieve upward socioeconomic mobility when they are not earning an income that can permit them to do so. As illustrated by Felipe and Ricardo, socioeconomic deprivation experienced in their home countries was a motivation to come and work in the United States. Although many day laborers may not receive an income that is enough to sustain themselves in the United States, the little money that they earn could make a difference to their families in their home countries. As Ricardo mentioned, the US dollar has more value for the currency in his home country; therefore, working as a day laborer and potentially being paid a lower

wage could be significant financially for a family that is in the day laborer's native country.

Masculinity

As I visited day labor hiring zones and attended the Oakland Workers' Collective meetings I noticed that all of the day laborers were men. The gender representation of day laborers reflected gender roles in American culture as well as the gender roles in the cultures that many day laborers were a part of. These gender roles contributed to ideas of masculinity. Many of the interviewees in the video recorded interviews of day laborers on the Oakland Workers' Collective website discussed how the men needed to take care of families. This correlated with the patriarchal definitions of men that defined them as breadwinners. Walter et al (2004) article, "Masculinity and Undocumented Labor Migration: Injured Latino Day Laborers in San Francisco" discussed how day laborers' work ethic reflected how they saw themselves as patriarchal providers and that the patriarchal definition of a male as the primary provider created an importance for day laborers because of the dangers they endured to fulfill their roles as men (Walter et al 2004:1162-1163). Undoubtedly this was true with regard to the day laborers I met. The men went to work everyday despite dangerous encounters they could endure in an effort to provide for their families.

Day laborers in Oakland had varied experiences; but many of the men faced similar challenges of dealing with discrimination, illegality, structural injustices of illegality and issues of safety. Despite these challenges, the day laborers continued to work in effort to fulfill their purposes of coming to America, seeking

opportunities and providing for their families. Learning about these men's experiences provided a new and valuable perspective on the day laborers in Oakland and elsewhere in the United States.

Chapter 6: Reflections On Fieldwork

The field of anthropology is concerned with understanding people, cultures and phenomenon in the context in which they exist. The importance of understanding people and phenomenon within the contexts that they exist is that it provides an objective understanding. From an objective standpoint, I was able to learn of the experiences of individuals involved in the underground economy and learn how their experiences contributed to how they navigate in society. Despite what I have learned from participants, there were many challenges conducting this study.

Conducting Research on Mobile and Hidden Populations

Participants in this study were mobile. Because of this, it was difficult to keep track and stay in contact with them. Working with individuals who were mobile significantly impacted the timeline that I established for data collection. For example, there were many individuals who said they were willing to be a part of the study. They would give me a time to contact them, and in many cases, there were not available at that time. In other cases, my schedule was not consistent with the times that participants were available. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Jo and Ashley traveled a lot, so it was difficult to arrange interviews with them, and it was difficult to get in contact with Ashley in particular. We would call one another and miss each other's calls. It was not until one day that I serendipitously called her with hopes of

scheduling an interview with her and she was available that day. Since my interview with Jo, I have been unable to get in contact with her.

When I visited the day laborer hiring sites, I encountered a few day laborers who said that they were willing to speak to me. Some of the men told me to come back at a particular time, but when I went back, they were not there. It was difficult for me to get in contact with some of these men because of conflicting schedules. In most cases, I did not see the day laborers again. The easiest group of participants to consistently see was the day laborers at the Oakland Workers' Collective. It was easier to stay in contact with them because they had a designated time and place to meet. Luckily I was welcomed into this space.

With the exception of some day laborers, the participants in this study would be considered to be a part of a hidden population. They were a part of a hidden population mostly because of the illegality of their jobs. It was best that Jo, Ashley, Terrance and Maurice and were inconspicuous with their work in the underground economy. In some instances, day laborers would also be a part of a hidden population particularly if they were undocumented. For example, I visited a day laborer site one day. A day laborer approached me and when I told him that I was a researcher, he shook his head repeatedly, said "No papers" and walked away. In such instances, it would be best for some undocumented day laborers to minimize interactions with outsiders due to the possibility that their documentation status could become known and they could potentially be deported. On the other hand, day laborers in Oakland were not a part of a hidden population because not only were

they visibly seen on the streets, but also because legally they had designated areas where they could seek work.

Gender Dynamics

I noticed gender dynamics when interacting with day laborers. When I visited day labor hiring sites in effort to speak with day laborers, I was often mocked. I would speak to the day laborers in Spanish and in many instances the men mimicked what I said in a softer voice and laughed at me. I also noticed that it was difficult to get some of the men's attention. I found this to be true when I attended an outreach event with the Oakland Workers' Collective. For this event, I accompanied the job coordinator, Marisol, and a young male volunteer to go to various day labor hiring zones. We distributed rice and eggs in small, Chinese takeout boxes, and offered water and coffee to the day laborers. The volunteer and Marisol spoke to the day laborers about the services that were offered at the Oakland Workers' Collective and tried to recruit them to be a part of the collective. The day laborers often spoke directly to the male volunteer who was with us instead of Marisol. While I stood next to her as the volunteer held conversations with the day laborers, she explained to me that the men were often reluctant to talk to her or listen to her because she was a woman. During a few of our conversations at the Oakland Workers' Collective meetings, she warned me that I would encounter difficulties talking to day laborers because of the masculine culture that the men were from.

Marisol: There are some things they won't talk to you about. They won't talk about certain things that hurt their feelings. It is because they are "men". They won't speak of certain things in front of other men and they definitely don't want to talk about anything that challenges their manhood. So you'll

have to think of different ways to approach questions. Some things make them uncomfortable and they won't talk about it.

Gender also played a role in how the day laborers in the Oakland Workers' Collective responded to particular questions. As the men discussed their jobs as day laborers, they always emphasized strength. When I asked the men about challenges they faced as day laborers, they often disregarded the question or believed that there were not any challenges at all. If they talked about challenges, they did not explicitly say it was a challenge, but rather an issue that was resolved. If the men did not discuss the challenge in this manner, they often alluded to the idea that as men, they did not have challenges because their strength enabled them to triumph. The ways in which gender was expressed in some of the men's responses illustrated how many of the men viewed themselves as well as reflected masculine ideologies.

Reliance on Informants

Another significant challenge in conducting this study was the reliance on informants. Informants are undeniably significant to gain insight about others, learn about different communities and build relationships. The underground economy is filled with several networks. Due to the illegality of many of the jobs, these networks are closed and individuals involved in these communities are reluctant to welcome outsiders. Although, I have known individuals who were involved in some aspects of the underground economy, I could not solely rely on them. Fortunately, I knew other informants who were able to help and introduce me to others. Informants can play a pivotal role in meeting other people; however, it becomes difficult when an informant does not follow through with what he said he would do. Relying on informants can be beneficial, but also can be crippling to the experience of doing

research. If an informant does not follow through, a researcher could be put at a disadvantage. Gaining participants for this study was quite challenging. There were some individuals who said that they were willing to participate and did not. In other cases an informant had difficulty finding willing and available participants through her networks. Such issues can arise when doing research, but it was challenging for me because I could not have conducted this study solely on my own.

Limitations and Implications for Further Research

As this study highlighted the experiences of individuals involved in the underground economy, there are limitations. One of the limitations is time. Time can be a disadvantage when working with mobile and hidden populations. I encountered difficulties attempting to interview as many people as possible due to time constraints and in many cases the availability of participants. Because of this, I could not optimally incorporate as many interviews and as much data as I hoped. I also had to rely on secondary sources instead of interviewing day laborers. If I had a greater time frame to work on this study, I may have had the time to build a rapport with day laborers and interview them as I initially wanted to instead of relying on the use of secondary sources. The time restraint that I had to conduct this study had a detrimental effect on my ability to incorporate more participants' experiences.

Another limitation is discussing few sectors of the underground economy. The underground economy is expansive and there are many more sectors than what is discussed in this study. Also, although this study discussed experiences and participation in three sectors of the underground economy in Oakland, each sector that was discussed has potential to be its own ethnography or study.

The limitations in this study suggest a need further research. There should be more research on sectors of the underground economy that were discussed in this study as well as other sectors. The underground economy has a significant impact on its participants as well as on other institutions such as businesses and law enforcement. The existence of these sectors of the underground economy will continue to change over time and it would be interesting to pursue research on these subjects to contribute knowledge about these areas as well as provide knowledge on individuals' experiences who are involved. It will be interesting to see how these sectors change over time in Oakland especially, considering the economic and demographic changes that Oakland is experiencing.

Applications of Research and Advocacy

The significance of qualitative research and ethnography is that it can provide insight into the experiences of individuals and in many cases allows an in-depth and objective understanding of a phenomenon. This study can serve as a resource for understanding the involvement of these particular occupations in the underground economy.

Day labor hiring zones and day labor centers were created as solutions to the presence of day laborers. The hiring zones and centers lessened the presence of day laborers in particular neighborhoods, but they cannot guarantee improvements in the conditions that day laborers experience. The Oakland Workers' Collective has an online referral portal that allows individuals to employ day laborers from their collective. The collective also has a job referral and development coordinator who receives inquiries for work for day laborers. The collective has a requirement of

paying day laborers a base wage of \$15 per hour and a minimum labor charge of \$45 per worker (oaklandworkerscollective.org). The collective also provides safety training for the day laborers. As the collective attempts to protect day laborers and ensure that they are treated fairly, there are day laborers who are not members of the collective who, therefore are at risk of mistreatment from employers. Members of the collective are not exempt from ill treatment either. Many employers violate labor laws but the violations go unreported. If employers continue to disregard labor laws day laborers will continue to be paid less for longer hours of work or not get paid at all and continue to suffer other forms of mistreatment.

Recently the minimum wage in Oakland increased from \$9.00 to \$12.25 (SFGate 2014). This increase is beneficial for day laborers because it can enable them to have more money for remittances and their living expenses. The minimum wage increase is beneficial only to day laborers who are contracted to work with companies; therefore, it does not help other day laborers who receive work on the street. Although the city has a minimum wage requirement, many employers do not abide by it and get away with it because day laborers are often paid under the table. Fair wage requirements for all day laborers should be enforced.

Safety precautions and protection of day laborers should be addressed in local and state policies. Unsafe working conditions are illegal. In many cases, day laborers work in unsafe conditions because that is what they have to do to earn money. Unsafe working conditions also are unreported. There is a need to protect day laborers in general. For example, Ricardo mentioned that his friends were kidnapped. There is a need for laws that inclusively allow day laborers and other

immigrants to the United States to know that they too are under the same protection as other citizens.

As there is a great need for more advocacy and policies to protect day laborers, it is imperative that the policies are inclusive and do not focus on alienation. In 2013, California Governor Jerry Brown signed Assembly Bill 60, which allows immigrants to obtain driver's licenses. The bill became law in January 2015 (dmv.org 2015). These driver's licenses are to look different than actual driver's license for US citizens. The differences of licenses create the concern that some immigrants may be treated differently or be discriminated against because they have a different license. Those who are opposed to immigrants obtaining driver's licenses believe that it is unfair for some immigrants, many of whom may be undocumented, to have licenses. Such attitudes can contribute to the discrimination against immigrants and day laborers who have licenses.

On October 21st, 2014, Oakland City Council unanimously voted to expand the Nuisance Eviction Ordinance. This law allows the city to evict private property tenants who causes problems in their communities, especially those who are involved in illegal drug activity or violence (Eastbay Express 2014). City Attorney Barbara Parker proposed an amendment to the law to change the list of nuisances that are listed in the law. The law was expanded to include sex workers. One concern by those who oppose this ordinance is that it enables landlords to have the power to evict tenants at will, which in turn could enable more instances of profiling. A landlord can evict a tenant who may or may not be engaged in illegal activity without cause. According to the document, "Oakland has a severe problem

with nuisance activity associated with gambling, illegally possessing ammunition and engaging in prostitution, pimping, pandering and solicitation at commercial and residential properties. These nuisances are a city wide problem...these tenants and their illegal activities are a nuisance” (Nuisance Eviction Ordinance Amendment September 2014).

Instead of creating more productive and reasonable ways to deal with illegal activity on properties and communities, there is a law that further incriminates individuals and can legally evict them from their spaces. As illegal activities create problems for neighborhoods, evicting and displacing people is not a solution to the problems of these communities. In fact, it creates the opportunity for these activities to take place in other areas or surrounding neighborhoods. This law was amended, but it is vague. Specific types of illegal activity are listed as nuisances in communities in Oakland while others are not. The ambiguity of this document raises many concerns about the purposes of this law. This law is another form of structural marginalization and undoubtedly will have a detrimental effect on many communities. There needs to be more discussion about this law and the potential detrimental effects it can have on neighborhoods and more advocacy so that other laws such as this one are not enforced to displace and disregard individuals’ circumstances.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This study described the experiences and reasons why participants worked in the underground economy. Findings revealed that participants in the study used the underground economy as a means to an end and that the underground economy served as a means for participants to provide for themselves and their families.

There were multiple factors that influenced participants' involvement in the underground economy. As discussed, familial ties with the underground economy, socioeconomic deprivation and ideas of opportunity were factors that led participants to pursue work in the underground economy. Ashley witnessed her god sister work as a sex worker and noted that she had family members who were involved in sex work as well. Terrance witnessed family members sell drugs and he eventually became involved in the drug trade as well. Maurice eventually became involved in the drug trade after being introduced to it by his older brothers. Socioeconomic deprivation also was a significant factor in participants' involvement. Terrance mentioned that the women in his family sold drugs and the profits made were used to pay household bills. Many of the day laborers such as Ricardo and Felipe reported facing socioeconomic deprivation in the home countries and that they came to work in the United States with hopes of escaping poverty. Many day laborers in this study believed that working in the United States could provide better opportunities for their families and an overall better quality of life.

Aside from the motives previously mentioned, participants' motives for working in the underground economy were undoubtedly economically driven. The need for money played a pivotal role in the work that the participants chose. As

mentioned previously, Ricardo and Felipe came to the United States to escape poverty in their countries; for example, Ricardo noted that the high value of American currency versus Guatemalan currency was favorable for his family at home. Ashley, Terrance and Maurice, and the majority of the participants in the study mentioned that they were from poor neighborhoods and pointed out that the money they earned from their jobs helped them take care of their families.

For Jo, Ashley and Maurice, working in the underground economy helped them achieve upward socioeconomic mobility. These participants mentioned how they were able to help their families financially and mentioned material assets they acquired from the income they received from their jobs. On the contrary, working in the underground economy was less of a path to upward socioeconomic mobility for some of the day laborers. Felipe mentioned how he left Guatemala in effort to escape poverty but found himself in similar circumstances in the United States due to the low wages he had been paid for his work.

Working in the underground economy did not impact some of the participants' involvement in the legal economy. Jo, Ashley, Maurice and Terrance had jobs in the legal economy at some point. Although these participants had the ability to work in the legal economy, the income that they earned in the underground economy enabled them to continue with their work in the underground economy. On the contrary, for some day laborers, it was difficult to acquire work in the legal economy due to citizenship status. Salvador alluded to this point when he mentioned that employers ask for social security identification for

employees and in turn, he believed that this prevents many day laborers and undocumented individuals from having other employment opportunities.

Despite the participants' involvement in the underground economy, many of them aspired to have jobs and lives that were a part of the legal economy one day. Jo and Maurice aspired to be a part of the legal economy once they acquired a significant income that allowed them to live comfortably and have what they wished to have. Ashley aspired to join the legal economy and withdraw from the underground economy as well. Jo, Ashley and Maurice's aspirations of being part of the legal economy were expressed through how they felt morally about their jobs and priorities they had for their families.

For this study, I was interested in learning how the underground economy impacted the participants. I learned that perceptions of stigmatization and structural inequalities had an impact on participants. Day laborers in the study faced immeasurable amounts of inequalities. Many of the day laborers were underpaid, discriminated against, and stigmatized by others. Structural inequalities impacted Maurice and Terrance as well. As Black men, they were more likely to face harsher legal charges for the possession of marijuana than any other race in the United States.

This study humanizes participants by revealing why the participants work in the underground economy instead of focusing on the illegality of their jobs, be it in sex work, drug dealing or living and working in this country without documentation. Humanizing the participants is important because it provides an opportunity to show that they are more than criminals and problems to communities. In fact, they

are multi-faceted individuals with goals and aspirations. The participants were business savvy; they were mothers, fathers, aunts and uncles and most importantly, they were providers for their families. These are roles that many of us can relate to. Humanizing these participants and acknowledging their roles as providers creates the ability to confront stigmatizations. Confronting the stigmatization of viewing participants in the underground economy solely as criminals enables us to view them as people and understand why they are involved in informal economic activity.

Setting aside stigmas and stereotypes that we may have about drug dealers, sex workers and day laborers can create possible solutions to how these individuals can become part of the legal economy. Many of the participants in the study mentioned how they were or once were socioeconomically deprived. This was a reason why many of the participants worked in the underground economy. A possible solution is to create more job assistance programs. Creating more job assistance programs for youth and adults in Oakland and training them for employable skills for well paying jobs in the legal economy can deter individuals from pursuing work in the underground economy.

Another issue with regard to the stigmatization of participants in the underground economy is the challenge for people to get jobs because of their criminal records. Maurice briefly discussed this in Chapter 4 when he mentioned that he was fired from his job because of his drug charges. If many employers do not hire people with criminal records, working in the underground economy could seem to be a viable option to earn an income. The inability for individuals with criminal histories to obtain jobs is an issue within our judicial system that needs to be

changed to encourage and enable them to have legal jobs instead of resorting to work in the underground economy.

Undoubtedly day laborers are valuable to businesses and neighborhoods in Oakland and throughout the country. As mentioned in Chapter 6, there is a need for enforced local and state policies to protect day laborers. Of the many forms of work in the underground economy, day laboring is legal in Oakland. This is important. Day laborers may not be viewed as criminals and endure that stigmatization, but in many cases they are mistreated and can be viewed as a problem. Examples of this is how day laborers are confined to particular areas to seek work and how Chapter 5 discussed the security guard who was hired to ensure that day laborers did not congregate near stores. Despite the fact that day laboring is legal, many day laborers are mistreated and suffer many adverse consequences such as wage theft. Employers should abide by labor laws and should be held accountable when they do not.

It would be unrealistic to believe that participation in the underground economy can be completely eradicated; however these few suggestions could potentially lessen individuals' influence to partake in the underground economy.

Although the participants in this study may have contrasting experiences from those who have the same jobs as they do, I wanted to present the experiences of a sex worker who could be found on International Boulevard in search of clients; the experience of a drug dealer who could have been among the 1,376 individuals who were arrested in Oakland in 2013 for drug possession and sale (City of Oakland Year End Crime Report 2013); and the experience a day laborer could be found at a

hiring zone at 6am in Oakland in search of work for the day. All of these experiences are valid to understanding how and why many individuals engage in the underground economy in Oakland.

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Appendix A: Interview Consent Form English

Agreement to Participate in Research

Responsible Investigator: Ida Wilson (Master's of Arts in Applied Anthropology graduate candidate at San Jose State University.)

Title of Study: Understanding Facets of the Informal Economy in Oakland.

Purpose of Study: You have been asked to participate in a study to understand the lives of individuals who are involved in the informal economy. The informal economy is ways in which people make a living that may not be documented as a taxable income. The purpose of this study is also to understand how individuals are impacted by the informal economy as well as the skills that are gained from participating in the informal economy.

Study Procedures: You will partake in an in-depth interview and will be asked questions about your experiences in the informal economy. **The identity of the participants will not be revealed to the extent possible by law.** Fake names will be used to hide the identity of participants. Information that can identify the participant will not be used. Interviews will be scheduled and take place at times and locations that are comfortable for the participant. Interviews will be recorded using a digital audio recorder. The study may be published. There is no compensation for participation.

Participation Rights: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the entire study or any part of the study without any negative effect on your relations with San Jose State University. You also have the right to skip any question you do not wish to answer. This consent form is not a contract. It is a written explanation of what will happen during the study if you decide to participate. You will not waive any rights if you choose not to participate, and there is no penalty for stopping your participation in the study.

Procedures for Maintaining Confidentiality: Interviews will be coded with fake names stored on a password protected file and stored in a lock secured file cabinet.

Promise of Confidentiality: I will not share participants' information with anyone. I will not use any information against the participants.

Risks: A foreseeable risk is the discomfort with sharing personal information. Participants are under no obligation to share personal information. Participants can choose not to participate at any time. Involvement in this project might subject participants to increased risk because of the possibility of legally mandated disclosure, which might affect the confidentiality of data. I will undertake special procedures for mitigating this increased risk, including the destruction of all identifying data after the

is complete.

Benefits: This study can contribute to generalizable knowledge and change perceptions about the informal economy and participants.

Questions regarding the research may be addressed to the primary investigator, Ida Wilson, at (510) 314-1123. Complaints about the research may be presented to Dr. Roberto Gonzalez, Graduate Director, Department of Anthropology at San Jose State University, at roberto.gonzalez@sjsu.edu. Questions regarding subjects' rights or research-related injury may be addressed Dr. Pamela Stacks, Associate Vice President, Graduate Studies and Research, at (408) 924-2427.

Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to be a part of the study, that the details of the study have been explained to you, that you have been given time to read this document, and that your questions have been answered. You will receive a copy of this consent form for your records.

Participant's Name (Printed)

Participant's signature

Date

I certify that the participant has been given adequate time to learn about the study and ask questions. It is my opinion that the participant understands his/her rights and the purpose, risks, benefits, and procedures of the research and has voluntarily agreed to participate.

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

Date

Appendix B Interview Consent Form Spanish

Acuerdo para participar en una investigación.

Investigadora Responsable: Ida Wilson (Candidata Graduada de la Universidad Estatal de San Jos (San Jose State University) en Maestria en Artes en Antropología Aplicada

Título del Estudio: Comprendiendo Facetas de la Economía Informal en Oakland.

Proposito del Estudio: Se le ha pedido que participe en un estudio para comprender como los individuos se ven afectados por la economía informal así como las habilidades que se obtienen de la participación en la economía informal. La economía informal es maneras en las que hacen una vida que no puede ser documentada como un ingreso gravable.

Procedimientos del Estudio: Se tomarán parte en una entrevista en profundidad y le harán preguntas acerca de sus experiencias en la economía informal. la identidad de los participantes no serán revelada a la medida de lo posible por la ley. Los seudónimos serán utilizados para ocultar la identidad de los participantes. Las entrevistas serán programadas y se realizan a discreción de los participantes. Las entrevistas serán grabadas usando una grabadora de audio digital. El estudio puede ser publicado. No hay compensación por su participación.

Derechos de Participación: la participación en este estudio es completamente voluntaria. Usted puede negarse a participar en el estudio en su totalidad o de cualquier parte del estudio, sin ningún efecto negativo en sus relaciones a la Universidad Estatal de San José. Usted también tiene el derecho de omitir cualquier pregunta que usted no desea responder. Este formulario de consentimiento no es un contrato. Se trata de una explicación por escrito de lo que va a suceder durante el estudio, si deciden participar. No renuncia a ninguno de los derechos si usted decide no participar, y no existen sanciones para dejar de participar en el estudio.

Procedimientos para Mantener la confidencialidad: Las entrevistas se codificará con nombres falsos almacenados en un archivo protegido por contraseña y se almacenan en un archivo de seguridad bloqueo gabinete.

Promesa de confidencialidad: el investigador no compartirá la información de los participantes con nadie. El investigador no utilizará ninguna información contra los participantes.

Riesgos: El único riesgo previsible es la incomodidad con el intercambio de información personal. Los participantes no tienen la obligación de compartir información personal. Los participantes pueden optar por no participar en cualquier momento. Divulgar información sobre la participación en la economía informal puede

ser un riesgo para el participante. Participación en el proyecto podría presentar a los participantes con el aumento del riesgo debido a la posibilidad de divulgación obligatoria, lo que podría afectar a la confidencialidad de los datos. El investigador se comprometerá los procedimientos especiales para mitigar el aumento en el riesgo, incluyendo la destrucción de todos los datos para su identificación después de la investigación se ha completado.

Beneficios: Este estudio puede contribuir al conocimiento generalizado y cambiar las percepciones sobre la economía informal y los participantes.)

Puede dirigir sus preguntas sobre la investigación a la investigadora principal, Ida Wilson al (510) 314-1123. Denuncias sobre la investigación se pueden presentar al Dr. Roberto Gonzalez, conjesero del graduado del Departamento de Antropología en la Universidad Estatal de San Jose al (408) 924-5710. Preguntas sobre los derechos de los sujetos, or lesiones debidos a la investigación se pueden presentar a la Dra. Pamela Stacks, Vicepresidenta Asociada, Estudios e Investigaciones Graduados al (408) 924-2427.

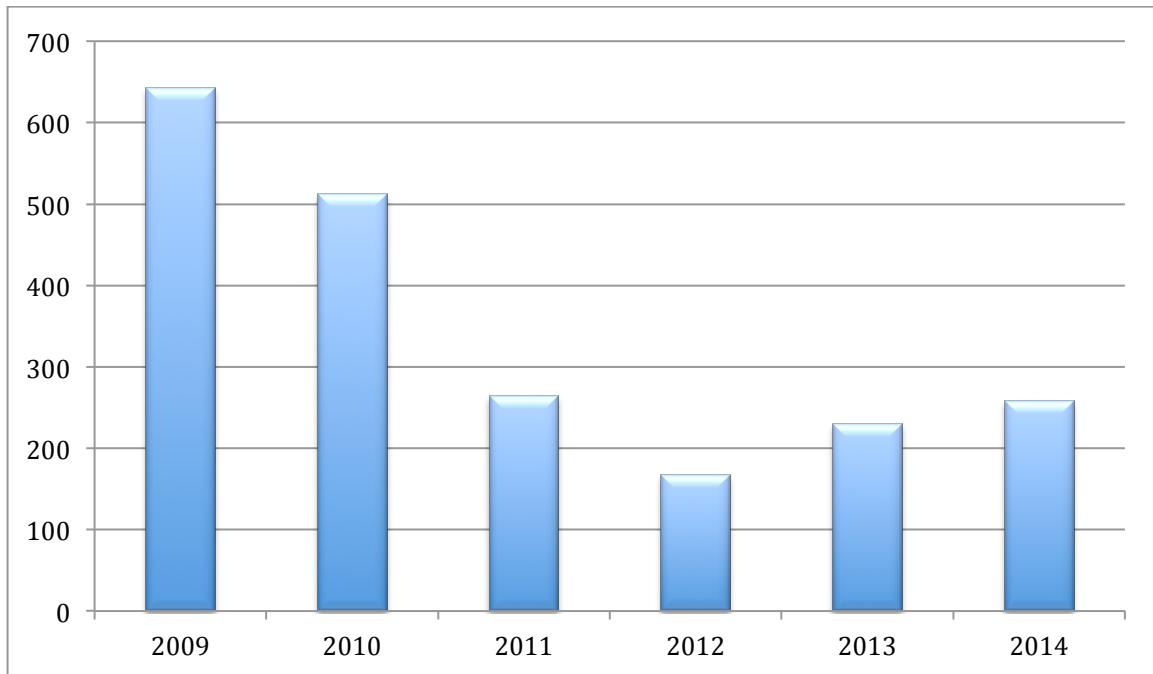
Su firma indica que usted voluntariamente a ser una parte del estudio, que los detalles del estudio se han explicado a usted, que se le ha dado tiempo de leer este documento, y que las preguntas han sido contestadas. Usted recibirá una copia de este formulario de consentimiento para su registro.

| | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| nombre del participante | Firma de participante | Fecha |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------|

Certifico que el participante se ha dado suficiente tiempo para aprender acerca del estudio y realizar las preguntas. Mi opinión es que el participante entienda sus derechos y los efectos, riesgos, beneficios y procedimientos de la investigación y ha aceptado voluntariamente a participar.

| | |
|---|-------|
| Firma de la persona obtener el consentimiento informado | Fecha |
|---|-------|

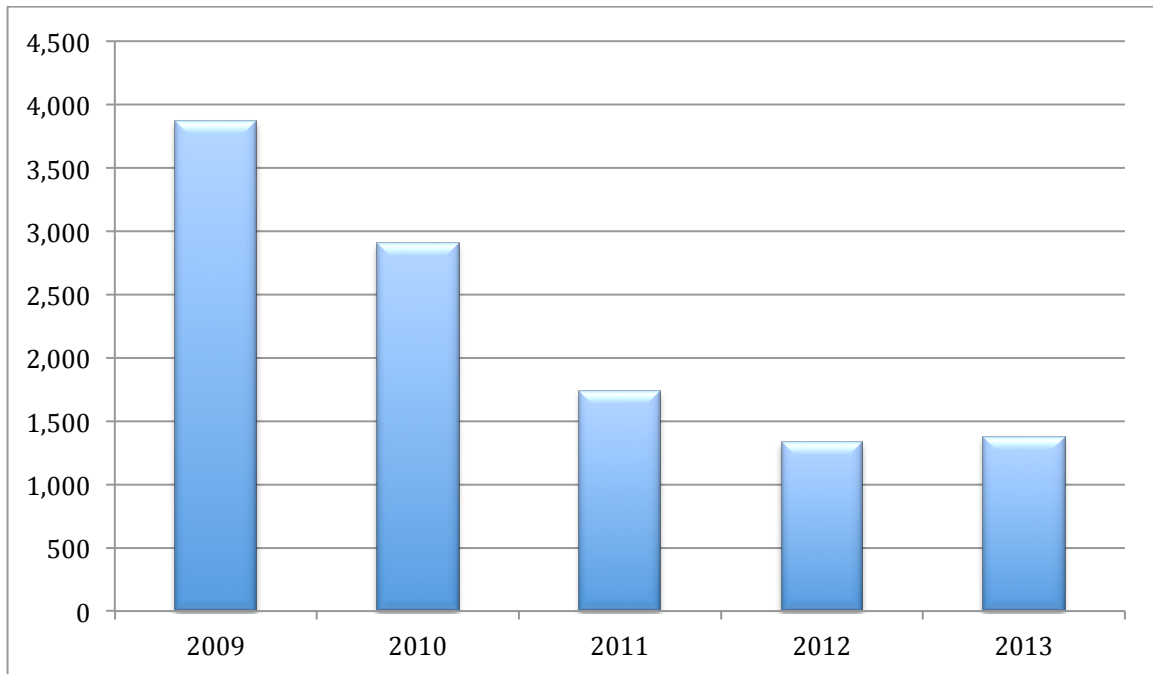
Appendix C: Number of Arrests In Oakland for Sex Work and Commercialized Vice in Years 2009-2014



Statistics Provided by City of Oakland Year End Crime Reports 2013 and 2014

In 2009 there were 643 arrests, 512 arrests in 2010, 264 arrests in 2011, 167 arrests in 2012, 230 arrests in 2013 and 258 arrests in 2014.

**Appendix D: Number of Arrests In Oakland for Drug Possession and Sale In
Years 2009-2013**



Statistics Provided by City of Oakland Year End Crime Report 2013

3,869 arrests were made in 2009, 2,907 arrests in 2010, 1,738 arrests in 2011, 1,332 arrests in 2012 and 1,376 arrests in 2013.