“DEAR HIGHER EDUCATION, THERE ARE SEX WORKERS ON YOUR CAMPUS”: RENDERING VISIBLE THE REALITIES OF U.S. COLLEGE STUDENTS ENGAGED IN SEX WORK

By

TERAH J. STEWART

(Under the Direction of Chris Linder)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the realities of U.S. college students engaged in sex work. Specifically, I focused on motivations, histories, how social identity in relation to power informed their sex worker experience, what/how they were learning as a result of sex work, and what college and university leaders could do to support them. I focused on college student sex workers with racially and sexually minoritized identities. I used a genre-blurred critical narrative inquiry that combined aspects of the biographical genre (life history) and the art-based genre (creative non-fiction). Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) and the polymorphous paradigm (Weizter, 2010) served as the theoretical framework for the inquiry and the Listening Guide (Gilligan, 2015) served as my analysis process.

I developed six key findings including: critical differences between student sex workers with minoritized racial and sexual identities and those with dominant social identities, queer (in)visibility as it relates to their sex work, a lack of trust in college/university administrators, a lack of their ability to imagine how institutional leaders could (or would) support them; a clarity

of: power and dominance, the violence of men, and a development of their overall confidence. I offer a discussion of the findings, implications, and future directions for this area of research and inquiry.

INDEX WORDS: Sex work, College student sex work, LGBT, Students of color, Narrative inquiry, Intersectionality, Creative non-fiction.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the most important person in my life, my late-mother. To Anna M. "Candy" Stewart, thank you for all of the unconditional love over the course of many years. Thank you for each sacrifice. Thank you for reminding me to enjoy the small things and to also not sweat the small things. Thank you for teaching me what it means to live, laugh, love; long before it was cliché to "live, laugh, love". Thank you for instilling in me a radical Black politic and for showing me what it means to love *everybody,* especially those in the margins of the margins. Thank you for always being with me, even on days when it feels/felt like you weren't. Thank you for writing so I can always look back and remember just how much you love me. I did it. *We* did it, and I hope my life honors yours forever and ever. I love you endlessly.

--

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*Love Mommy. (*Written over a decade ago).

--

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Ase. Amen.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Dear Health Center,

There are sex workers on your campus. We need your help and your support. I doubt we are the biggest thought on your mind, but we exist. We need resources, like free STI testing. We want non-judgmental care, if needed. We want acceptance, not pity.

Dear campus community,

There are sex workers on your campus. We are here. In your classroom, downtown at the bars, in restaurants. We're your roommate, your coworker, your friend. It's not that we don't want to tell you, we just don't know if we can or how we could. We have to stay safe and stay hidden. The best way to support us is to not joke about "becoming a stripper" if your classes are too hard. Stripping/other sex work is not an "out." It is not a back-up plan or only for college drop-outs. It is not a failure to be a stripper/sex worker. We work hard. Our job is not a joke.

Dear University President,

There are sex workers on your campus. We would appreciate support and understanding. We understand the limitations you have as to not condone illegal activity, but you can't ignore our existence. We want visibility, even if we have to remain anonymous (and most times we will). Illegal does not mean impossible. We exist.

Dear Higher Education,

There are sex workers on your campus.

-Kathleen

The doctoral process has thoroughly shaped parts of my core identity. I have developed as a writer, as a thinker, and most of all as a person. Through this experience, I have developed a hunger for deconstructing all the ways that power and dominance show up in the world and I have become determined to keep my focus on people and populations within the margins of the margins. The topic of sex work is complex, and I believe research and writing like this dissertation is needed to help render visible a population that is often ignored, paternalized, and viewed as pathological by people who hold systemic power.

A Researcher's Dilemma

Later in this dissertation I discuss at length how I came to this topic specifically and what it means for me, my positionality, and how I approached the inquiry. However, there was a very real dilemma for me as a researcher that I had to reconcile and that I want - at the very beginning of this work - to address because it informs everything hereafter. When I began examining the vast literature about sex workers, the history and legacy of sex work, and the experiences of sex workers, one thing was painfully clear: sex workers (past or present) rarely control or publish the dominant narratives about their experience. Since sex workers are not given agency to document their own experiences in academic literature, I wanted to be mindful and mitigate some of the harm that could come from not attending to this reality.

One of the pieces of literature that I relied on heavily was written by a former sex worker, author, and journalist Melissa Gira Grant. In Grant's (2014) book, *Playing the Whore: The Work of Sex Work,* she examines and reports in vivid, inclusive, and accessible writing a holistic picture of sex worker realities; including highlighting the differential experiences of Black sex workers and sex workers of color. One of the themes throughout the book is how sex workers are

often regarded as a population needing voice when, in fact, Grant demonstrates that sex workers have plenty of voice. The problem lies in the matter of people not listening to sex workers and generally society does not believe sex workers where and when it matters. Grant (2014) implicates individuals, systems, and structures for this problematic behavior - of speaking for or over sex workers - including the media, politicians, legislators, the police, and as it turns out, researchers.

As I read and processed her text, I dealt with ongoing struggle with how to move forward holding these realities, given that I too, am not a sex worker. Two particularly impactful passages nudged me to stay in deep reflection about this dilemma. In the first passage, Grant (2014) examines the violence of sex worker surveillance and offers:

> Surveillance is a way of knowing sex workers that unites the opportunity for voyeurism with the monitoring and data collection performed by law enforcement, by social service providers, or by researchers. Even under surveillance, sex workers' own words aren't to be trusted without the mediation of those who are almost always regarded as superior outside experts. As motivation, such surveillance isn't meant to expand the public knowledge of the lives of sex workers; it's to investigate some form of harm to the public that's believed to originate with them. (p. 60)

Through this passage, I interpret Grant offering a few different considerations for me as researcher. The first issue is irresolvable in that, I am not a sex worker. Depending on the future of this work through publication and presentation, my work will likely be in line with the notion that I am operating as a mediator between sex workers and many who do not (or would not) view sex worker voices and experiences as legitimate without the “superior voice” (mine as researcher) that Grant notes.

I decided to continue with this inquiry because of the dearth in literature about college student sex workers, specifically. To this end, my commitment to students (particularly those in the margins of the margins) was powerful enough that I felt I should move forward, albeit thoughtfully and carefully. It is critical that higher education practitioners and scholars help facilitate a context for student sex workers where they can be comfortable being open about their realities and experiences in higher education, if that is what they wish. I do not believe we - educators in higher education - can achieve this goal without work like this study. To this end, I deliberately centered sex worker voices and their realities with as little interference as possible. In addition, I urge people in the academy that might engage my work (through consuming my publications and presentations), the importance of listening to and believing sex workers first and foremost. I hope through being mindful, careful, and bold, I help to disrupt the violence of silencing and erasing their voices.

The second issue that Grant raises, I believe is addressed by informed consent. Beyond the fact that I do not have an ethnographical portion of my study (which in some ways could be considered a form of surveillance), any student sex worker who would collaborate with me on this study would do so willingly and be able to withdraw willingly. By collaborate, I am referring to a more intentional and inclusive practice that moves study participants beyond a unilateral engagement with me and the study. In addition to centering knowledge co-construction as part of the process, I also elected to provide more agency to collaborators (study participants) which I discuss later in chapter 3. Finally, throughout this dissertation I actively work to disrupt the idea that sex workers are problematic or harmful to the public. In nearly every case I have worked diligently to position sex workers within a *labor* context and always with power-consciousness in mind.

The second passage that Grant (2014) wrote forced me to consider how I might avoid leaning into a form of confirmation bias that seeks to perpetuate harmful misinformation and stereotypes about sex workers,

> What we should also bear in mind when considering any study or news story that purports to examine prostitutes or prostitution is that many who are described with these terms do not use them to describe themselves. When many researchers and reporters go looking for prostitutes, they find only those who conform to their stereotypes, since they are the only people the searchers think to look for. If sex workers defy those stereotypes, that is treated as a trivial novelty rather than reality. (p.20)

Here, Grant (2014) names the ways reporters and researchers often engage in a practice of confirming stereotypes about sex workers that reduce their complexities to harmful tropes and seek to essentialize these experiences to the experiences of all sex workers. Grant also names how language matters and often writing and research about sex workers - when they are framed as prostitutes/prostitution - are problematic from the beginning because they write and speak about sex workers in ways they do not necessarily speak about or think of themselves. Further they often only reflect the experiences of *some* sex workers. Conversely, I worked to find often erased voices within the community of sex workers (e.g., LGB sex workers, Black sex workers). I endeavored to center multiple minoritized voices deliberately - above and beyond - those of other sex workers who hold more dominant identities (e.g., cisgender-heterosexual white sex workers). I hope that this work can help render visible the experiences of sex workers with more minoritized identities, as they have often been left out of research and writing about sex workers in both historical and contemporary contexts.

On Citations

In many instances in academic writing it may be frowned upon to repeatedly cite works from the same or similar authors; however, where appropriate I have elected to do so when those authors *are* sex workers, have been sex workers, where they have primary sex worker data that is non-deficit, or where they deliberately center sex worker voices. This is not to say all the literature that I used met my standard. Instead, I mean that where the/a citation is *repeated* my criterion for centering sex workers' voices were likely met in that research or writing. When this is true, those texts are sometimes books and as such included more depth, context, and information to begin with. Therefore, re-using their work and their voice more deliberately uplifts sex worker voices, knowledge, and experiences in a firsthand manner. Where possible, I have sought to reinforce those repeated citations with findings from other sources and included them, however if I was unable to find additional sources, I elected to use those primary citations anyway.

Research Purpose, Theoretical Framework, & Methodology

As a researcher, it is important to me to remain true to my values, principles, and beliefs. Part of remaining true means troubling and abandoning parts of the research process that are not useful to the work I seek and intend to do. To this end, I decided against utilizing research questions as part of my inquiry. Research questions are limiting and restrictive to critical and constructivist work, and furthermore abandoning research questions - at least at the onset of an inquiry - is not unprecedented in research. As an example, grounded theory research begins without "narrow research questions or hypotheses common in other research designs" (Birks & Mills, 2011; p. 21). The research topic is kept relatively broad to allow for "flexible and dynamic research methods to be employed" (Birks & Mills, 2011; p. 22). Further, by the time a grounded

research study is complete the "initial research question can have changed almost beyond recognition" (Willig, 2001 p.72).

While I did not utilize a grounded theory research design, I argue that a practice of utilizing a broad research topic and allowing the data to clarify the/a question or purpose is prudent for my study. Further, emerging literature appeals to doctoral students to write a dissertation differently, to embrace and abandon parts of the research process as needed. Doctoral students are,

> …guided advised and supervised through their doctoral experiences, pushed and pulled by their advisors, other academics, fellow students and by book after book describing exactly what a thesis is. They learn to read, they learn the major language of qualitative research methods, they learn what they must see and do and they learn to construct a text that fits within academic discursive contexts as "a thesis." In short: they learn what is expected of them. (Honan & Bright, 2016, p. 735)

Rather than prescriptive processes and doing what is expected, I embraced what is known as a minor literature (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), which is a "writing which minorizes the major language of the doctoral thesis, interfering with its practices of which they speak" (Honan & Bright, 2016; p. 741). In the case of a dissertation, minorizing the major language refers to rejecting the status quo of academic writing and inquiry and instead creating "an inquiry that might produce knowledge and produce knowledge differently" (Lather, 2013, p.635). I sought to center my collaborators (participants) in dynamic and material ways. Part of the praxis of centering collaborators was allowing them to guide me where to go as I set out to explore the topics of interest. It is in this spirit that I contextualized my study through a research purpose only.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of college students engaged in sex work. I focused on student histories, motivations, how power (or lack thereof) associated with social identity shapes their experiences, what they are learning/have learned as a result of sex work, and what college and university leaders can do to support them. I took a learning and asset-based perspective to inform and to guide the study, and I focused specifically on sex workers with racial and or sexual minoritized identities.

Theoretical Framework

My study deliberately invoked the praxis of centering those in the margins of the margins. It was not enough to focus just on sex workers but those with racial and or sexual minoritized identities. As such, I centered the experience of Black students, LGB students, and other students of color. I selected these identity groups because they often experience violence at high rates including state violence and sexual violence - which are closely tied to violence directed toward sex workers. To this end I utilized intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1991) as my theoretical framework to inform the research design.

Methodology

At the time of this writing, few sex workers conduct research and publish – or given the opportunity – through traditional academic avenues (books and articles) or in traditional academic spaces (peer-reviewed research journals). Given that I am not a sex worker, I felt a necessary responsibility to create a process that more deliberately amplifies their stories directly. To this end, I designed a study that elevates the voices of collaborators with as little interference as possible through using a genre-blurred narrative inquiry which includes components from the biographical and art-based genre (Kim, 2016). I collected data through narrative interviews and

through collaborators' creation of two artifacts which included written letters to themselves and a person or entity at their college or university. I conducted data analysis through a process known as The Listening Guide (Gilligan, 2015), and I report part of my findings through a form of creative analytic practice and creative nonfiction writing.

Definitions, Terms, & Concepts

Throughout this dissertation, I use various terms and concepts related to sex work, each of which have a deep, complex, and messy history that are connected and interrelated to each other. These terms and concepts include: prostitution, sex work, sex trafficking, prohibition, legalization, and decriminalization. I will describe each of these terms, how I have used them within this dissertation, and how contexts inform the terms' delineations and their use.

The Industry

Sex work does not only include people who have sex for money. Some individuals use the terms sex work to mean only sex for money - or prostitution in a historical and contemporary context - and other times they mean *all* sex work. As for sex work as an industry, contemporary considerations of sex work involve more than just the sex trade,

> There is no one sex industry. Escorting, street hustling, hostessing, stripping, performing sex for videos and webcams—the range of labor makes speaking of just one feel inadequate. To collapse all commercial sex that way would result in something so flat, and shallow that it would only reinforce the insistence that all sex for sale results from the same phenomenon—violence, deviance, and desperation. (Grant, 2014, p. 49)

Regardless, all sex workers experience stigma associated with sex work in varying levels, degrees, and consequences to the *type* of sex work selected and sex workers engage in certain types (or multiple forms) of sex work for different reasons. Varying degrees of consequences

exist depending on the type of sex work one selects within the industry (Grant, 2014; Roberts, 1992). For example, some escorts would never give up their privacy by working in a strip club (risking seeing someone they know), just like some strippers would never give up their privacy by working in photography and film (to be posted and viewed online; Grant, 2014). The type of sex work a sex worker chooses informs their experiences and their contexts.

Prostitution

Prostitution is probably the most widely known terminology as it pertains to sex work, specifically escorting and individuals who have sex for money (Sanger, 1937). It is a term that many (if not most) sex workers avoid using to identify themselves because it is an incendiary and stigmatizing term (Breshears, 2017). Prostitution or prostitute as terminology invoke negative images of sex workers as almost universally female and "brings with it layers of 'knowledge' about her worth, drug status, childhood, integrity, personal hygiene and sexual health" (Smith, 2013, para. 3). Further,

> The person we call "the prostitute," contrary to her honorific as a member of "the world's oldest profession," hasn't actually been around very long. The word is young, and at first it didn't confer identity. When prostitute entered into English in the sixteenth century it was as a verb—to prostitute, to set something up for sale. (Grant, 2014, p.14)

In this way, where possible I have avoid using the term prostitution in this proposal. When I use that term, it may be for any of the following reasons: because researchers or writers referred to sex workers as prostitutes in their text or writing, because it was in a direct quote, or to illustrate a particular point in time (e.g., older texts or historical time periods that predate the sex worker terminology). Finally, where and when I use the term prostitute/prostitution, I do not refer to all types of sex work, though it is unclear if writers and researchers have done the same. In other

words, I use that term and only refer to sexual escorting or people who have sex for money, but other writers who have used the term may have referred to all or multiple types of sex work/sex workers.

Sex Work

The term sex work(er) did not enter the discourse until the mid to late 1970's and sex work as a term was reportedly published for the first time in the early 1980's (Bindel, 2017; Leigh, 2004). The emergence of the term occurred in concert with a wave of activism during the same time-period and with seemingly two reasons for using it. Initially, sex workers advocated for a language shift away from prostitution to help manage the stigma associated with sex work (Leigh, 2004). Throughout history and time, language has served as a way to create culture and reinforce it. Language possesses instrumentality and whether we understand it or not, words are often *doing* something (Dillard, 2006).

Utilizing the term sex work seems to be more humanizing and affirming of sex workers experiences and sets them apart as a "thing" or "item" for sale (Breshears, 2017). Sex workers do not "sell" their bodies, they sell a service. Further, sex work as a term has been used by sex workers and advocates as a way to legitimize sex, as work (Bindel, 2017). In other words, as the wave of activism in the 70's commenced, it was important to situate the lives, experiences, and choices of sex workers within a larger labor context. Where possible, and in nearly all cases, I use the term sex worker for these reasons. Further, when I use the term 'sex work' within this dissertation, I am referring to *all* types of the work including exotic dancing/stripping, camming, phone sex, nude modeling, domination and other types yet to be named.

Escorting. Escorts typically focus on companionship and time with clients. Often escorts are paid to attend events such as dinner, a night out, a wedding, or sometimes domestic and

international travel. Sex can sometimes occur, but it does not always happen. The exchange is first and foremost time for money (De Fay, 2017). Different types of escorting include: working as a sugar baby or sugaring where typically an older financier (sugar daddy/mommy) helps a younger person (sugar baby) who needs money. These arrangements can range from platonic friendships to proper relationships and many variations in between (De Fay, 2017).

Escorting as terminology is utilized for types of sex work that may fall outside of this explanation because many people resolve to using "escort" to avoid using "prostitute." In this dissertation, when I use escort, I am referring to the explanation here. If I use "sex for money" or "person who has sex for money" that can include escorts but may not be exclusive to them. For example, sex workers in brothels do not focus on companionship or time spent together. Instead, sex workers in brothels and others who have sex for money simply focus their work on sex in private and unless otherwise requested, less engagement or quality time is expected (De Fay, 2017).

Pornography acting. Pornography (porn) actors are actors in adult-themed movies that usually include sexual acts in front of a video camera, or occasionally live audiences (Escoffier, 2007). Scenes are recorded and usually distributed individually or a part of a website/studio membership.

Exotic dancing/stripping. Exotic dancers focus almost exclusively on performing through dance. In some cases, they may work in clubs where there is no mutual touching or where the dancers can touch clients, but clients are not allowed to touch the dancers. Strippers often create, rehearse, and perform routines on a stage in an adult club where they remove some portion or all of their clothing or costumes (De Fay, 2017). Their performances can include pole dancing, acrobatics, or other athletic and artful techniques.

Camming. Camming is a form a sex work that involves performing sex "shows" online and usually they are live via webcam (hence the name). Camming can include exotic dancing/stripping, sexual acts with other performers, partners, or clients, and/or various types of role play. Camming usually takes place in someone's home, personal office, or studio. Clients pay for access to the livestream or session and some shows have chat features whereby viewers can communicate with the performer about what they would like to see (Richtel, 2013). In addition to a fee or membership to access the livestreams, viewers can also request the performer to perform certain acts or scenarios and pay for those live and in real-time. Some performers have pre-established "tip" goals where if they reach a certain amount of money, they might perform a certain act, routine, or fantasy on the stream. Camming can be a one-on-one experience, or a stream with many viewers and only one or a few sex workers/performers (Richtel, 2013).

Phone sex. Phone sex operators host phone lines/phone services where clients can call in to speak with an operator. Operators engage with clients in different ways from simple conversation to fantasy and roleplay. Clients are usually charged by the minute and can call in to speak with a different person each time or call to speak with the same operator (Gillett, 2015). Some phone sex workers work independently and create different personalities and personas that their clients can engage (Thompson, 2016).

BDSM/Domination. BDSM stands for bondage and discipline, dominance and submission, sadism and masochism. BDSM comprises a number of sexual activities involving role playing and power-plays between two or more consensual partners (Thomas, 2017). BDSM is also known as "kink" and there is a vast community of individuals who engage in this form of sexual activity/community unpaid. Some people are paid for their BDSM services to serve as a

dom/domme (a dominant sexual role) and/or a sub (a submissive sexual role) (Thomas, 2017). BDSM/Domination is a *type* of sexual community and non-sex workers also engage in BDSM. Further, BDSM is not necessarily exclusive of other sex work mentioned here. For example, a person can work as an escort but offer BDSM/domination services. BDSM can also be part of a role-play or scene in a webcam show (Wyatt, 2015).

Sex Trafficking

Sex trafficking is a human rights violation where individuals are forced to perform sex as a form of slave labor; a practice that includes the use of threats, abduction, deception, and other forms of coercive violence toward the goal of exploiting an individual (Ditmore, 2008; Paglia, 2017). Sex trafficking and human trafficking are sometimes used interchangeably because they are nearly the same thing. Human trafficking in general involves forced labor, slavery, and or sexual exploitation (SWOP, n.d.). To be precise, sex trafficking would usually include some form of forced sexual activity whereby human trafficking may or may not.

Sex trafficking is often conflated with sex work - both intentionally and unintentionally - by advocates, law-makers, and policy makers (Grant, 2014). I explore the conflation at various points throughout this proposal to uncover why it happens, and why it is sometimes detrimental to both sex workers and individuals being trafficked. However, when I use the term sex trafficking, I refer to the definition offered here.

Prohibition, Legalization, & Decriminalization

Throughout this proposal, I do not refer to the terms prohibition, legalization, and decriminalization often, but they are concepts and contexts to be aware of. At the crux of the debates around sex work is how law-makers and policy-makers should govern the issue of sex work. The literature on legalization versus decriminalization vary based on the country or

national context in question. Within the context of the United States, three major viewpoints dominate the discourse around sex work from a legislative or legal perspective and what *could* or *should* happen.

Prohibition. Prohibition is the current reality in the U.S. as it relates to sex for money. Prohibition means sex for money is illegal and those who engage that process are considered to be engaging in criminal behavior (De Fay, 2016). The prohibition ideology of sex work is one reason why contentious relationships have materialized between sex workers and police and why there is a pathology thrust on sex work as a public safety, public health, and moral issue (Weitzer, 2010a). Further the legality of sex work contributes to moral arguments against sex work because for something to be illegal makes it *inherently* wrong, to some.

Legalization. Unlike prohibition, legalization would situate sex work as a legal form of labor and commerce. Specifically, sex workers would find their work regulated under legalization in terms of where, when, and how the sex work could take place (Mullins, 2015). Legalization is complicated because while it may seem like an ideal situation for sex work on the surface, a legalized context would still criminalize those who do not or cannot meet the bureaucratic requirements of such legalization, such as paying costly fees for licensing and maintaining ongoing up-to-date registration (Outshoorn, 2012). In countries where sex work has been legalized, a great deal of illegal sex work thrived and expanded underground (Outshoorn, 2012). Legalization has also manifested in exploitation of sex workers while pimps, business owners, and conglomerates profit greatly (Mullins, 2015; Outshoorn, 2012), which further marginalize sex workers and limit their agency.

Decriminalization. Decriminalization would be a legal standing that deliberately centers the needs, desires, and better outcomes for sex workers. Decriminalization would simply mean

removing all laws, legislation, and regulation involving sex work. Unlike legalization, decriminalization gives sex workers the best opportunity to avoid being exploited by pimps, businesses, and conglomerates while also protecting them from dealing with the police and legal implications (around sex work). However, decriminalization – as it stands – would not be the universal fix for all sex worker realities. Decriminalization is a single-issue response that does not incorporate or control for the system of oppression and dominance. For example, Black sex workers have been vocal about the shallow nature of decriminalization and how it would not have the same material impact on Black and trans sex workers as they would on white sex workers and those with other privileged identities (Survivor, 2018). For example,

> Decriminalization is not enough for Black/poor/trans sex workers because we are marginalized in other ways. Some of us have a record. Y'alls need to reduce it to something "simple" in the face of our complex reality is racist and classist and falls short of real justice. (thotscholar, 2018; n.p.)

Anecdotally, decriminalization as a practice has been shown to be inequitable for individuals living on or at the margins. For example, in the marijuana legalization movement, it is clear that while legalization continues to gain ground, still thousands of Black people are in prisons and with criminal records for the sale or possession of marijuana with no clear indication of how – or if – amends will be made for them (McKenna, 2017; Mohdin, 2018). Certain states like Colorado, Maryland, and Oregon have begun early work on how to rectify this matter (Zezima, 2018), but it is unlikely that they will see a material affect writ large on their experiences as well as the irreparable damage criminalization has had on their livelihoods and lives. Black sex workers have similarly articulated, that decriminalization of sex work is not a *universal* solution from a racial justice perspective. In the following chapters I will connect how

the terms above are related within various bodies of research, literature, and how they inform the experiences of sex workers.

SESTA & FOSTA

At the time of this writing, sex workers are experiencing a violent legislative moment that threatens their livelihood and their safety. The U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives have both passed bills that seek to reduce/eradicate human trafficking in the United States and aim to do so through targeting online/digital web spaces where sex workers often advertise their services. The House bill that is known as FOSTA (the Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act), and the Senate bill SESTA (the Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act) were signed into law by President Donald Trump on April 11th, 2018 (Senate Bill 1693, 2018; House Bill 1865, 2018).

While free-speech and technology advocates oppose SESTA/FOSTA, sex workers will experience the brunt of the inevitable consequences. The rationale behind this harmful legislation is grounded in the desire to eradicate sex trafficking, however many advocates of SESTA/FOSTA are opposed to sex work in general and do not understand the differences between sex work and sex trafficking (Arnold, 2018). Sex workers have already begun to mobilize and push back against SESTA/FOSTA, for example Lorelei Lee, a pornographic actress, posted the following on her Instagram account,

> This bill claims to target human trafficking but does so by creating new penalties for online platforms that are overwhelmingly used by consensual, adult sex workers to screen clients, to share "bad date lists," to work indoors, and to otherwise communicate with each other about ways to stay alive. Data shows that access to these online platforms decreases violence against sex workers, but I don't need data to know that my friends are safer with the ability to screen clients, to share information, and to work indoors. In 2006,

> my friend Sequoia was stabbed and killed by a client while working alone and outdoors. I know that supporters of these bills want to end violence against women and against marginalized people of all genders. So do I. SESTA will only increase violence against the most marginalized. Please, call your Senators and ask them to oppose this dangerous bill. #SurvivorsAgainstSESTA #LetUsSurvive

As Lorelei Lee articulated, SESTA/FOSTA puts sex workers in danger because they now have a more difficult time advertising their services while also screening clients. The conflation of sex work and sex trafficking is dangerous. The authors of SESTA/FOSTA likely lack the nuance in understanding to know the difference (or care to know), which makes the legislation problematic from the beginning. This moment in time is another example of why society needs to listen to sex workers and start to include them in meaningful and intentional ways in the decisions that affect their lives and livelihoods.

SESTA and FOSTA are concerning for a number of reasons and the components of the acts are not only problematic for sex workers and victims of sex trafficking, but they are also dangerous for a free internet/free internet activity (Romano, 2018; Stewart, 2018). SESTA/FOSTA challenge previously afforded protections - known as the safe harbor rule - to creators and entrepreneurs who build platforms online. Section 230 of the 1996 Communications Decency Act states, “No provider or user of an interactive computer service shall be treated as the publisher or speaker of any information provided by another information content provider” (Senate Bill 314, 1996). In other words, internet platforms and internet-service providers were *not* to be held accountable for content generated by users on their sites (Senate Bill 314, 1996). SESTA/FOSTA creates an exception to the 1996 Communication Decency Act and the safe harbor rule that would hold websites and online platforms responsible if users of their sites were

found to post ads for prostitution, sex work, or sex trafficking on their platforms (Arnold, 2018; Romano, 2018; Stewart; 2018).

In theory, supporters of SESTA/FOSTA claim the legislation curbs the prevalence of sex trafficking through cutting online resources, connection, and advertisements of sex trafficking rings (Arnold, 2018; Romano, 2018; Stewart, 2018). In practice, the legislation has caused lots of confusion and classifieds/advertising websites such as Backpage were either forced offline or their owners felt compelled to shut down any advertisements that might blur into a grey area (Rhodes, Pizzi, & Robinson, 2018). SESTA/FOSTA are irresponsible in that contrary to their aims, in practice they put victims of sex trafficking in more danger (Lennard, 2018). If and where there is a prevalence of trafficking, perpetrators will likely just move underground and find other means to connect and advertise which make it more difficult for sex trafficking victims to find the help and support they need.

Conflating Sex Work and Sex Trafficking

The authors of SESTA/FOSTA likely found success in passing the legislation by relying on the prevalent conflation and misconception regarding sex work and sex trafficking. The conflation seems to be more about eradicating sex work than it is about truly focusing on individuals being trafficked. Governments often engage sex trafficking as a purely legal issue, which is problematic because it focuses the energies of law and policy makers on trafficking as a *crime* – through law enforcement and policing – and not as a *human rights issue*. In other words, when law and policy makers govern the eradication of sex trafficking *without* a human rights analysis it makes it easy to conflate sex work and sex trafficking and erases experiences of sex workers who have experienced both. Distinguishing between whose rights are being violated and

whose are not would require law enforcement to understand sex work, and then develop strategies to target ways to reduce trafficking specifically (Network of Sex Work Projects, 2011).

The sex work and sex trafficking conflation is rooted in a Swedish model response to sex work and was adopted by the United States. In 1999, Sweden implemented legislation that criminalized buying sex with aims of decreasing sex trafficking. When the U.S. adopted this model, their rationale was that if no one paid for sex – at all – then sex trafficking would not exist, regardless of consent (Network of Sex Work Projects, 2011a). In this way, attempts to stop sex trafficking may be theoretically about "saving women and girls" – which renders the experiences of boys, men, and gender non-conforming people invisible – their attempts however are also clearly about eradicating sex for money altogether because, "conflating the demand for buying sex with trafficking has fueled speculations that an increase in demand for sex work will increase trafficking" (Network of Sex Work Projects, 2011b p.1).

Further, the sex work vs sex trafficking discourse is additionally complicated by the reality that some individuals who experience sex trafficking consider themselves sex workers, and there are sex workers who have experienced being trafficked. suprihmbè (2019) offers,

> There are sex workers who have been assaulted/raped while on the job. Similarly, there are people, mainly women and children who come to America and are forced into domestic work or other exploitative situations. There are people *in this country* who are forced into performing erotic labor by family members or other trusted adults, partners, or caregivers. What we need to do is acknowledge that, even though there are some people who have been forced into sex work or other types of exploitative work, they still deserve consideration. People who are trafficked into sex work are still sex workers, just

> like people who were trafficked and forced into sweatshops are still seamstresses deserving of basic rights and safety… (para 15).

Indeed, sex workers complicate the sex work/sex trafficking binary and nuance what consent means within this context. Typically, individuals who seek to frame sex work as especially (only) empowering, seek to do so by weaponizing consent and distancing sex trafficking from sex work altogether (suprihmbè, 2019); when the reality is people experience both, and, are still considered sex workers – even though they may be trafficked into it.

The Impact on All Sex Work

Sex work does not only include sex for money, but also legal activities such as exotic dancing, domination, camming, and phone sex. While escorts and those who have sex for money are the most vulnerable under the current legislation, SESTA/FOSTA has implications on all sex workers. The language of the bill is unclear and as such internet service providers are concerned about their liability under the new law (Rhodes, Pizzi, & Robinson, 2018). For example, Craigslist personals was a popular place for people to place ads to meet other people for consensual sex – that was paid and unpaid. However, it would be difficult for the owners of the site to monitor all the personals pages - and any overt or covert advertising of sex for money - so they shut down the personals section completely. In this instance, if someone was advertising camming services or domination services on that site, they too are impacted by the shutdown, even though that type of sex work is legal.

Significance of the Study

In the most honest spirit, the significance of this study is that these students' stories deserve to be told. Their stories deserve to be uplifted and they deserve to be listened to. The reality, however, is that support for college student sex workers may never materialize in higher

education. The ivory tower is not exempt from perpetuating the violence, dominance, and respectability that is mirrored in our society more broadly, so I do not expect for sex workers to be miraculously supported in ways that they are not supported in our larger society. In fact, higher education may be worse in some ways as we work collectively to resist subsequent manifestations of our existence in the neoliberal imagination and in the fabric of the world. This study and this topic is new(er) ground for higher education and I present this work fully knowing that higher education is not a space that is welcoming or accepting of sex workers, and my hopes for college student sex workers support may never materialize in higher education – in the context that we know it.

Given the realities as they are, I hope to contribute to uplifting the experiences of Black students, LGBQ Students, and other students of color who are largely missing from extant sex work research. It is my hope that one day college and university administrators, policy-makers, and student affairs practitioners will make decisions, provide resources, and enact policy toward supporting college students engaged in sex work. Specifically, I hope college and university leaders work to create contexts that normalize and affirm students in their sex work and help demystify and destigmatize sex work in our campus contexts.

This study is beneficial because it renders college student sex work more visible on our campuses, which is a first step in creating structural and strategic change. College students are under a lot of pressure to be successful as they pursue their studies and many students attend college as a means to survive. College students engaged in sex work must carry the reality of their labor choice and hold it by themselves because we have not created environments or contexts where it might be okay for them to share that information and find support, and we may never successfully create those contexts. Given that so little research exists about this topic, it is

not unfair to assume that support for college student sex workers and their experiences are likely lacking or non-existent. Students finance their education in various ways (Baum, 2016; Nora, 2001). While educators might understand the pressures that come with financing an education, when that labor choice is sex work there are likely contexts that give nuance to their experiences that deserve attention in research endeavors and program/policy decisions. My study seeks to push us along in this regard, even if the only person that is pushed is me. After all, *I am* higher education. *I am* student affairs. By deciding to take this endeavor on, I hope that I give someone else permission to push higher education along by first pushing themselves. I hope we can move the needle on this work today, and every day moving forward. I hope.

Beyond Binaries

Supporters and opponents of sex work often use binaries to engage in debate about sex work. These binaries include discourse that frames sex workers as either having agency *or* being victims and thinking about sex work as inherently degrading *or* empowering (AgustiÌn, 2007; Grant, 2014; Showden & Majic, 2014). Some scholars have troubled the idea that sex work is inherently degrading for *all* people in *all* contexts, referring to that mode of thinking as the oppression paradigm (Weitzer, 2010b). Viewing sex work in that manner is problematic, one-dimensional, and unnecessarily essentialist. The oppression paradigm is a view that "depicts prostitution as the epitome of male domination and exploitation of women regardless of historical period, societal context, or type of prostitution" (Weitzer, 2010, p.16). In addition to being reductionist, thinking about sex work in *only* oppressive ways lacks consideration for how sex work is experienced differently based on privileged identities and minoritized identities (such as men who engage in sex work, or white women who may be oppressed in their gender and sex worker space but not in their race space).

Although frameworks that disrupt binaries are not grounded in higher education or student contexts specifically, they are cited by scholars who do sex work research on students (Sagar et al, 2015; Sagar et al, 2016). As such, the polymorphous paradigm would be better suited for inquiry and discourse to engage the experience of sex workers as opposed to the oppression paradigm (Weizter, 2010b). Weizter (2010b) suggests his evidence-based perspective creates space for a multitude of truths and realities that better accounts for power structures, power differences, and would seek to understand the how and why of any uneven distribution of agency and subordination within sex work (Weitzer, 2010b). In other words, the polymorphous paradigm compels scholars and researchers to consider what other aspects of a sex workers identity, experience, and context might inform *when*, *where,* and *how* they might feel/be empowered and *when*, *where* and *how* they might feel/be exploited,

> Within academia, a growing number of scholars are researching various dimensions of sex work, in different contexts, and their studies have documented substantial variation in how sex work is organized and experienced by workers, clients, and managers. *Such differences also are apparent in the writings of sex workers themselves,* who contribute to online discussion forums. Together, these studies and supplementary writings help to undermine popular myths about "prostitution" and challenge those writers who embrace the *monolithic oppression paradigm*. Victimization, exploitation, choice, job satisfaction, self-esteem, and other dimensions should be treated as *variables* (not constants) that differ depending on type of sex work, geographical location, and other structural and organizational conditions. (Weitzer, 2010b, p.26, emphasis mine)

A polymorphous paradigm is critical for any researcher wishing to examine the prevalence and experiences of sex workers, including students in higher education. Moving beyond binaries

means going beyond reductionist, monolithic, and simple ways of thinking about, researching, analyzing or discussing any given interest or issue. Sex work is complex and engaging this topic means going beyond determining if it is "good or bad," or if it is "right or wrong." Moving beyond binaries means letting go of the reductionist notion that sex work can *only* be either degrading *or* empowering. Sex work is messier than that, more complex, more convoluted. Going beyond binaries within the context of this dissertation means to hold multiple – sometimes competing – truths. It also means that a "good or bad" determination is not the goal but seeking and writing toward liberation and justice are.

Chapter Summary

Sex work is complicated, messy, and wrought with political aspects and implications that make it difficult to discuss, write about, and study. The SESTA and FOSTA legislation has situated sex workers in a vulnerable space that threatens their livelihood and safety, a reality that informed the experiences of some students engaged this study. Sex workers do not only include people who have sex for money, but also exotic dancers, webcam models, and phone sex operators, among others. I focused my inquiry on centering and elevating the voices of student sex workers by collecting their stories through narrative inquiry. I had a particular interest in student sex workers with multiple minoritized identities and sought to demystify their experiences and uncover ways college and university leaders can be bold through their efforts to support them.

This dissertation is outlined in a total of 5 chapters. Chapter one as you have just read included an overview of the problem, important context, and a brief discussion of the research design. Chapter two provides literature on sex work and intersectional identity, sex work history, sex work and politics/pathology, and sex work in higher education. Chapter three outlines my

methodological approach, theoretical framework, epistemological assumptions, data collection method, data analysis method, and a discussion of my positionality. Chapter four is broken into two parts. Part one presents stories from the seven collaborators in this study which outlines either their first-time engaging sex work or a memorable time. Those stories contextualize part two which is presented as a more traditional findings section. Finally, in chapter five I discuss the findings in relation to existing literature, implications, and suggested future directions in this topical area.

A Letter from Stokely

Dear Head of the Criminology and Criminal Justice program,

I typically don't like begging or asking people in power to give me my rights or to help my people and I survive. But I'm writing this email to you because no one else will.

Whorephobia is the hatred and antagonism of sex workers. As you know, sex work is a form of labor that is criminalized. This means that sex workers are perceived and treated as criminals. With such a significant sex worker population in the United States, it is questionable how much of the population gets no discussion or advocacy within this department and program.

Do we not deserve for people to be educated about us? Do you, too, believe that we deserve as little rights as possible and to remain vulnerable to violence committed by both the state and civilians? As both a sex worker and student of this university and specifically within this program, to be in classrooms where my community is only mentioned for a few seconds, if that, and then moved on from is violence. Even when we are mentioned during classes and in curricula, we are talked about as if also don't have plenty of experiences and research published online, accessible to the public. We are talked about and never actually listened to, yet plenty of professors here love to ask students their opinions on sex work being criminalized and state their own opinions, with looks of amusement on their faces.

Sex workers deserve advocacy. We deserve for people to listen to us and for people to fight for our lives and hold our abusers accountable, especially those who are law enforcement and other agents of the state. This is especially necessary for this program, as you are truly breeding new police officers every day and other agents, preparing them to fall into the same encouraged system of abusing and targeting us for living and existing in the ways we do. You are breeding new police officers and other agents of the state to engage in a system that especially and disproportionately hurts Black trans sex workers, and other LGBTQ+ people of color. This program cannot ignore us forever.

Now what are you going to do about it?

Stokely

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

> *If sex work is oppressive it is oppressive to the extent that it is not a choice, like any other job. It is oppressive if it is not freely chosen, fairly compensated, and respected by the rest of society. I want for sex workers what I want for everyone: good working conditions, fair compensation, and most importantly, for that work to be work they have chosen and that they enjoy.* -Sarah Jaffe (2009), Labor Journalist

Sex work in both U.S. and global contexts continues to be a deeply complex, highly contextual, and especially contentious issue. Historically, sex work (or prostitution as it has often been referred to) was problematic because of how judeo-christian-islamic faith(s) have discussed sex as sacred, and in virtually all cases reserved for marriage between two people: one man and one woman (Wilson & Pearson, 2013). Moral framing from the church informs(ed) on example of how sex work came to be thought about and understood in larger societal discourse, and as such, informed the contemporary politics of the issue (Weitzer, 2010a).

Some scholars and researchers believe that the moral argument against sex work has morphed significantly in the legal and legislative sense over history and across time (Outshoorn, 2005). Given that within the U.S., citizens are supposed to be allowed to practice (or not practice) whatever faith or religion they want (U.S. Const. amend. I), it is illogical to justify law and policy against the manifestation of sex work on a religious or faith basis. However, those opposed to sex work have used the conflation of sex work and trafficking as a way to attack sex work indirectly

(Weitzer, 2010a). While some forms of sex work are in fact legal (e.g., phone sex, stripping, camming), these forms of sex work are not absolved of the moral judgements that come along with the work (Roberts, 1992).

The uniqueness of sex work and its often-problematic conflation with sex trafficking (Showden & Majic, 2014) is connected to many practical and philosophical tensions. However, the crusade against sex work overall is relatively new,

> Until recently, prostitution was not a prominent public issue in the United States. Law and public policy were relatively settled. The past decade, however, has witnessed a growing debate over the sex trade and the growth of an organized campaign committed to expanding criminalization. A powerful moral crusade has been successful in reshaping American government policy toward sex work - enhancing penalties for existing offences and creating new crimes. (Weizter, 2010a p. 61)

Given the new(er) wave of the anti-sex work crusade, tensions are at an all-time high and this topic is ripe for exploration. While there is a significant body of conceptual, scholarly, and empirical literature relating to sex work, very little of the work focuses on college students specifically and their experiences engaging in sex work.

For the purposes of this dissertation, I focus the review of literature in a few different areas. First, I will discuss how the experiences of Black women have come to frame my understanding of sex work, specifically from a labor perspective. I will then discuss minoritized identities related to sex work. Next, I discuss a brief overview of law, policy, and U.S. history related to sex work. Then I offer an overview of the politics and pathology of sex work within society as well as public and academic discourses. Finally, I provide an overview of the available

literature on sex work specifically in relation to colleges, universities, and higher education, some of which are situated in non-U.S. contexts.

Black Women & Labor

> *Throughout my life as a Black woman, I have been taught how to take care of family, community, colleagues, friends and relationships, but never myself. Having built intentionally with women in my work, I know this is true for many of us, cis and trans, where our labor is unseen and too often undermined or unacknowledged.* - Patrisse Cullors #BlackLivesMatter Co-Founder, Artist, Organizer, Freedom Fighter.

Throughout this dissertation and nearly all of my scholarship I work to deliberately center a radical black feminist politic. Black women have been at the forefront of nearly every justice movement and society has collectively benefitted as a result of Black women's labor as they work toward their individual and collective freedom. Since there seems to be a scarcity in literature written by Black women about sex work (specifically), and especially in empirical journals and academic presses, in this section I briefly discuss Black women and labor more broadly that help inform my understanding of sex work as a labor issue.

Dating back to chattel slavery in the American south – and likely long before – Black women have labored in ways that no other demographic of people has. In addition to harvesting cotton fields, crops and other agricultural substances, Black women were also tasked with taking care of slavers homes (cooking, cleaning, laundering) and their families (Johnson, 2018); including breastfeeding white slaveowners children,

> Enslaved Black women were forced to provide unpaid labor under brutal conditions for white landowners. While white women's work was relegated to inside the home, enslaved Black women's work was both inside and outside of the home. Outside the home, enslaved Black women were responsible for various aspects of agricultural labor. Inside the home, enslaved Black women were responsible for tending to white families as wet nurses, cooks, housekeepers, and caregivers, and were subject to multiple forms of violence--including sexual and emotional abuse. (Garza, 2016; p. iv)

Indeed, Black women laborers are often forgotten in the halls of history even though they are often the trailblazers. For example, 20 Black laundresses formed an organization – The Washing Society – in Atlanta, Georgia in 1881. They announced they were going to strike unless they were collectively given raises (APWU, 2010). They did strike, and their organization grew to nearly 3000 members. After some struggle with the city of Atlanta, the women were ultimately successful in raising wages and demonstrated to the Atlanta City Council – which reverberated throughout the region – that Black women were a force to be reckoned with and they should not be ignored as a vital part of the New South's economy (APWU, 2010).

Perhaps the strongest factor related to Black women's understanding and advocacy of labor that connects the sex work relates to how they have historically had to navigate both paid and unpaid labor and dealing with a lack of equitable value placement on both (Collins, 2000). More specifically, Black women have dealt with the violence of labor on their bodies by everyone, including Black men. Those realities illustrate early iterations of what it means to have one's labor questioned and unvalued by society at large and the communities that are closest to a person. This is especially true when that labor potentially precipitates dividends from using one's body. When speaking about women's labor generally Zimmerman (2015) writes "Housework is

not work. Sex work is not work. Emotional work is not work. Why? Because they don't take effort? No, because women are supposed to provide them uncompensated, out of the goodness of our hearts" (para 19); a sentiment especially true for Black women. Society deems this – Black women's bodies and labor as a site for economic generation – as problematic because of a prevalent notion that Black women's bodies and labor *should* be available to everyone, for free (Jackson, 2018). To this end when Black women advocate for their work and seek acknowledgement, respect, and payment for their labor, they experience an uptick in the violence toward them and erasure of their knowledges, experiences, and their voices.

Black women's experiences inform what we know about the politics of the body, and particularly help frame in a dynamic way how scholars and educators should come to think about sex work as an equity issue, a justice issue, and a labor issue. When speaking about Black women's labor in and across types and time, Hartman (2016) issues a truth and a caution that scholars and researchers must not forget,

> Strategies of endurance and subsistence do not yield easily to the grand narrative of revolution, nor has a space been cleared for the sex worker, welfare mother, and domestic laborer in the annals of the black radical tradition. Perhaps understandable, even if unacceptable, when the costs of enduring are so great. Mere survival is an achievement in a context so brutal. If we intend to do more than make the recalcitrant domestic, the outcast, and insurrectionist a figure for our revolutionary longing, or impose yet another burden on black female flesh by making it 'a placeholder for freedom,' then we must never lose sight of the material conditions of her existence or how much she has been required to give for our survival. (p. 171)

Indeed, Black women have been laboring for as long as humans have been in existence, and nearly all of the frameworks and language we know about what it means to labor, and the histories and legacies of labor are connected to the knowledge, skills, ability, and wisdom of Black women. My intention is to not move this work forward without naming how Black women have been required to give for our survival. Black women have illustrated what it means to have a body tied to labor, the violence of labor, and what it means to advocate and speak out and seek better labor conditions. In this way, despite the authors I cite in and across this dissertation that focus specifically on sex work – as I work to position it as a labor issue – let it be understood that the grounding of my discussions and articulations have evolutions from what Black women have instructed us about labor, since the beginning of time.

Sex Work & Minoritized Identities

> *Sex workers and anyone perceived to be a sex worker are believed to* always *be working, or, in the cops' view, always committing a crime. People who are profiled by cops as sex workers include, in disproportionate numbers, trans women, women of color, and queer and gender nonconforming youth.* - Melissa Gira Grant, Journalist and former Sex Worker

Sex work cuts across several racial, ethnic, gender, and transnational realities that inform the experiences of sex workers and the contexts they maneuver. In this section I will first discuss the experiences of men engaging in sex work, with intentional attention to gay, queer, and men who have sex with men. I also discuss trans sex workers as well as Black women and sex work. I chose these populations because they are of particular interest to my inquiry as being understudied in the sex work arena or studied in ways that lack an intersectional analysis.

Additionally, police generally target minoritized communities at higher rates (Hill, 2005; Jost, 2013), as such I imagine sex workers who hold the social identities, I previously named have different experiences in the work than sex workers who hold dominant social identities. The polymorphous paradigm is prudent to my exploration of social identity and sex work because those identities inform what parts of engaging sex work and in what *ways* engaging the work is harmful, problematic, or neither.

Men and Sex Work

Many researchers do not indicate if they are studying the experiences of cis-men specifically or not, but it is my educated guess that when they do not clarify, researchers likely focused on cis populations. Researchers and writers who focus their work on trans people including trans men, they tend to be more explicit about it (Hoffman, 2018; Lyons et al, 2017; Nuttbrock, 2018b; Operario, Glynn, & Nemoto, 2018). Where authors have specified, I have elected to discuss the literature about their experiences in the trans sex work portion of this chapter.

A significant portion of sex work research and writing focuses on the experiences of women and is largely connected to how sex work has been historically framed as being a feminist/women's issue (Roberts, 1992). In one study, researchers analyzed 166 publications about sex work published between 2000 and 2007 and determined that only 10% of studies focused on the experiences of men and sex work (Dennis, 2008). The lack of focus on men in research also connects to the way sex work and sex trafficking has been conflated. Conflating sex work and sex trafficking invokes a "savior," protection, and "rescue" dynamic (specifically toward women and children), which is not particularly useful and, in some ways, harmful. The

conflation also renders men in sex work invisible because the assumption is that boys and men are not trafficked and if they are/were, they would not need saving.

In general, research about men and sex work tends to focus on the experiences of gay men or men who have sex with men, which is a phenomenon that dates back to 346 BCE and continues to present day (Friedman, 2014). When I refer to men who have sex with men, I am referring to men who have either paid or unpaid sex with other men, but do not identify as gay. The experiences of men in sex work is complicated throughout history and across time, but the main takeaway is that traditionally younger men have engaged in sex for money with older men. When pairing historical contexts with contemporary language, the experiences of young men having sex with older men would probably be considered trafficking, especially in ancient times (like in Greece for example), or pedophilia. Men who served as sex slaves were seen as "valuable" because of their sex labor (Friedman, 2014), but their lack of consent and young age is what makes it questionable to declare their experiences as sex work. Furthermore, sex work for men (like women) has often been classed and it was often "lower-class" men who served in sex roles. Low class men could only seek financial gain as slave laborers or prostitution in many ancient societies (Friedman, 2014).

Social class continued to be of relevance in the history of the United States with many working-class young men engaging in sex work as a means of survival during the great depression and beyond (Friedman, 2014; Kaye, 2014). Later in U.S. history, starting from the 1950's through the 1970's many men found themselves becoming more open about their sexual identities and this awakening was directly tied to the rise of the gay liberation movement of the 60's and 70's,

> The shifts in male prostitution associated with gay liberation led to a significant reworking of the meanings associated with prostitution. Although the act represented a simple means of supplementing one's income or allowance for a previous generation of "delinquents," for the first time it became a possible means of affirming one's sexual identity. (Kaye, 2014, p.47)

Gay sex workers (presumably white) came to represent a new phase of gay liberation. One that embraced sexual pleasure and allowed themselves and others to feel empowered and bold in their sexual identities, even if through the frowned upon practice of sex work.

In contemporary times, while men who engage in sex work report starting in their twenties, many of them discuss their first 'voluntary' sexual experiences during the ages of thirteen to fifteen. Some report they were sexually abused/assaulted between the ages of five and ten (Dorais, 2005). Those findings are consistent with some of the previously mentioned historical trends related to young men experiencing sexual assault and trafficking by older people (Friedman, 2014). While some of them experienced sexual assault and were victim-survivors of pedophilia as children, they still opt-in to sex work as their labor choice when they get older (Dorais, 2005). As such, it is unclear how those experiences or trauma inform or do not inform their decision to do sex work. Young men (especially poor men) having sex with older people has been happening throughout history and across time and has undoubtedly impacted the experiences of gay men or men who have sex with men as sex workers. Finally, although their histories around sexual violence are documented in the research and writing, the polymorphous framework would guide us that they should not overshadow the reality that these men still choose sex work for themselves, and that choice should be respected.

Trans People and Sex Work

In U.S. and global contexts, transwomen have engaged in sex work for survival, for monetary reasons, and in both organized brothels and as independent workers (Nuttbrock & Hwahng, 2018). In comparison, a lower number of transmen engage in sex work and again, they do so as a means of survival (Nuttbrock & Hwahng, 2018). Black trans people and trans people of color tend to engage in sex work more frequently and for longer periods of time than white trans people (Hwahng, 2018; Nuttbrock, 2018; Nuttbrock & Hwahng, 2018).

In general, trans sex workers are especially vulnerable to violence and trauma due in large to socio-cultural and socio-structural contexts (Hoffman, 2018; Lyons et al, 2017; Nuttbrock, 2018b; Operario, Glynn, & Nemoto, 2018). For example, trans sex workers deal with all of the violence and stigma that non-trans sex workers face, but they face additional stigma and violence because of their trans identity (Lombardi, Wilchins, Priesing, & Malouf, 2001; Mogul, Ritchie, & Whitlock, 2011; Perry & Dyck, 2014). When they are viewed (or discovered) to display gender nonconforming behaviors they can often face rejection, abuse, and physical violence in their personal and sex worker lives (Landolt, Bartholomew, Saffrey, Oram, & Perlman, 2004; Marksamer, 2008), which can lead to health inequities (Lyons et al, 2017). The violence and trauma trans people experience include stigma and discrimination, psychological abuse, and physical abuse from strangers, the police, their family, and occasionally their clients (Grant, 2014; Hoffman, 2018; Nuttbrock, 2018b; Nuttbrock & Hwahng, 2018; Operario, Glynn, & Nemoto. 2018). Where and when trans sex workers have been included in research, they are rarely the focus of it and often their experiences are simply overlooked or flattened when conflated with the experiences of sexual identity groups (i.e., lesbian, gay, bisexual, etc.; Lyons et al, 2017).

Finally, trans sex workers experience both transphobia and cissexism by their clients and the police (Grant, 2014; Lyons et al, 2017). Later I will discuss the contentious relationship between sex workers and police, but I want to highlight that trans sex workers have a uniquely violent relationship with law enforcement,

> In Queens, New York, transgender women report in significant numbers that they cannot walk freely in their own neighborhoods—from their apartments, to the train—without being followed by cops, who accuse them of being out "working"—whether they are or not. (Grant, 2014, p.9)

In addition to cops, trans sex workers regularly deal with violence from clients. They are often viewed as pathogens, deceivers, and liars, and aggressors use their negative views to justify violence against them (Lyons et al, 2017; Perry & Dyck, 2014). Additionally, because sex workers have already contentious and violent relationships with police (Grant, 2014), they often have no recourse if and when they do experience violence from clients (Lyons et al, 2017). The reality of this violence on both sides is another example of why decriminalization is being called for by some advocates as necessary for the health and safety of sex workers, trans sex workers specifically (Lyons et al, 2017).

Black Women and Sex Work

Historically, Black women have been engaged in various types of sex work (Mara, 2012; Roberts, 1992), and Black women have also experienced violence and policing uniquely in both historical and contemporary contexts (Mara, 2012; McGuire, 2010; Roberts, 1992). Black women have also experienced whore-stigma in ways that other women have not that specifically inform how their bodies are policed. Further, Black women often struggle for justice from the

violence and assaults they experience whether they engage in sex work or not, in both historical and contemporary contexts (Grant; 2014; McGruder, 2010; McGuire, 2010).

Black people in general – Black women specifically – have endured centuries of being labeled as inhuman and societal pathogens, and this violence is exacerbated when including any examination or analysis of Black sexuality (McGruder, 2010; McGuire, 2010). For example, Black men are often viewed as hypersexual and sex-crazed and Black women as always being promiscuous (Battle & Barnes, 2010). Researchers regularly center assumptions that pathologize Black sexuality which reinforces policing the sexual behavior of Black people (Battle & Barnes, 2010; McGruder, 2010). People who pathologize Black sexuality rely on an over-emphasis of certain "negative" aspects of sexuality and assign them to Black experiences solely/uniquely (i.e., violence in domestic relationships, sexually transmitted diseases, teen sex, and "out-of-wedlock" child birth; Battle & Barnes, 2010). This context is important to situate the reality that society is predisposed to view Black women as deviant sexual beings. As such, Black women that engage in sex work are positioned to experience a greater degree of violence and subjugation.

Black women specifically deal with more compounded emotional, physical, and psychological stress as a result of their social identities *and* their engagement in sex work (Tatum, 2010). Acculturated stress is a term used to identify how Black women, understanding multiple hierarchy (social identity) stratification, experience stress in more violent and dynamic ways than their white counterparts (Tatum, 2010). Given this, research has shown that Black women sometimes engage in drug use and other risky behaviors to cope with such stress (Young, Boyd, & Hubbell, 2000).

Research and personal narratives have established the reality of contentious relationships with the police, and Black women are written off as being sexually deviant, anyway. All of this is relevant because it positions the issue of decriminalization, for example, uniquely as a racial justice issue. While some Black and trans sex workers have troubled decriminalization as a focus of advocacy – because of how dominance shows up for those who have multiple identities – still,

> Black women have always fought for bodily autonomy and resisted against exploitation. Instead of punishing and shaming survival strategies, we should be invested in expanding choices. Sex work decriminalization is a racial justice issue, requiring us to address the root causes of vulnerability. To do this, we need to check ourselves—by silencing our judgment, listening to their voices, holding space for their healing, supporting them on their own terms, recognizing their agency, respecting their choices, and challenging structural oppression on all fronts. (Sankofa, 2015, para. 9)

The way researchers and lawmakers approach engaging sex work is important and must include labor, class, and structural analyses because the most vulnerable of sex workers (Black queer women, cis and trans) and their experiences can be rendered invisible when we do not. Society must refrain from judgmental paternalism that reduces opportunities for growth (both personal and economic) for minoritized people in a system of dominance, but then turnaround and judge/criminalize legitimate forms of labor they chose as a means to survive a violent system of capitalism, which is connected to the larger system of oppression (white supremacist capitalist patriarchal imperialism).

In keeping with the polymorphous frame of sex work, I present all of the previous information not to vilify sex work, or decisions to engage it, but rather to highlight how people experience violence under *capitalism*/*labor*, compounded with their social identities. Trans sex

workers with police surveillance/ physical violence, men in sex work with histories of experiencing sexual assault, and Black women sex workers navigating stereotypes and physical and epistemic violence, are realities that do not diminish that some *still* choose sex work as their labor choice.

Sex Work: History, Law, and Society

"Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you." (Matthew 21:31).

The scripture above is from a story often referred to as the "Parable of the Two Sons" in Christian theology. For context, Jesus notifies Israel that due to their lack of belief (in him) and some of their disobedience to his word and wishes, tax collectors and prostitutes (who were seen as some of society's worst type of people at the time) would enter heaven before Israel. The Parable of the Two Sons challenge societal notions about sin, judgement, and grace, given that those who believed in Jesus no longer lived under the brutal and vicious law of the old testament. God's grace was to be admired because he could forgive even the tax collectors and the sex workers. I share this story for the sole purpose of situating the notion of prostitution in a historical context that date back to "biblical times." Often lauded as the "world's oldest profession" which was coined by Rudyard Kipling (Mattson, 2015), people seem to have been engaging in sex work for as long as history has been documented.

U.S. Historical Context

Prostitution was a global phenomenon long before it ever had a significant presence in the United States (Roberts, 1992). Within the context of a colonized U.S., some of the earliest records of prostitution date back to the 17th century, and the profession grew significantly during the 18th century. By the 19th century, the United States would have a sex trade that matched that

of its non-U.S. counterparts in both scope and size (Roberts, 1992). When researchers and authors do not specify the race of their people/participants of interest, I assume their attention was on white people. As such, a significant portion of historical literature seems to be about the experiences of white women and specifically upper-class prostitutes (Grant, 2013; Roberts, 1992).

In the 19th century, sex work was a significant and common part of American life in cities such as New Orleans, Chicago, New York, and California. During the Gold Rush of 1849 specifically and in Chicago from 1870-1930, prostitution grew economically and culturally and gave rise to the early iterations of brothels and parlors that swept North America (Grant, 2013; Mara, 2012; Roberts, 1992).

Brothels (or bordellos) were designated places that individuals (mostly men) could patron the sexual services from workers (usually women; Collins, 2004). In addition to brothels, historical accounts situate sex-work in the United States in tandem with the implementation and rise of red-light districts/districting. A red-light district was the location within a city where sex is contained and/or encouraged (Grant, 2013). These districts – which sometimes included brothels – originated as a result of labor force managers needing an easy way to find their workers. For example,

> …rail workers left red lanterns outside the doors and windows of the houses where they met prostitutes between their own work shifts. If their boss needed to find them, he could look for the light. (Grant, 2013, para. 11)

Seeking sex through sex workers was commonplace early in U.S. history. Though often attributed to Europe and Asia, red-light districts are an American relic which demonstrate just

how normal sex work had been in the United States, despite how "othered" it has come to be in contemporary contexts (Grant, 2013).

Early laws. While engaging in the sex trade was not universally legal, it was also not universally illegal in the United States' early history, even prior to and after the establishment of red-light districts (Grant, 2013). Abatement laws were established in the early 1900's which allowed virtually any one to lodge a complaint against any place where prostitution was happening (Laskow, 2017). Women engaged in sex work were still targeted by the police as part of a larger disdain for sex work related to "moral" (Christian) judgements and when that did not suffice, societal attitudes changed to sex work as social pathology and deviance (Roberts, 1992, Weizter, 2010a).

Historical records also indicate that where laws against prostitution existed, they tended to be leftover/carry-over from English common laws that made certain actions - though they were not sex, specifically - such as night-walking and vagrancy illegal (Beaumont, 2015; Woodbridge, 2001). These types of law signaled an early iteration of what would be generations of violence and contentious relationships with police and the jury of public opinion (Grant, 2013; Grant, 2014).

Night-walking and vagrancy laws also served to reproduce oppressions for not only women generally, but also people of color, LGBT individuals, and working-class/poor people (Grant, 2013; Roberts, 1992). For example, gay men were often charged with violating a law that "declared engaging in oral or anal intercourse, for compensation *or for free*, to be a 'crime against nature' " (Grant, 2013 emphasis mine p. 6). People with marginalized identities were specifically targeted through these early laws. For example, streetwalking in the early years of policing sex work was classist and racist and indicative of the prejudice of western institutions

since “streetwalkers are the most likely of all whores to be working class and women of color” (Roberts, 1992; p. 296). Also, Black women were further disproportionately jailed and there were severe implications to their home and family life as result of their being targeted (Mara, 2012; Roberts, 1992). This context connects a history of classism within sex work and how class informed who was and was not policed, and for what reasons. Further, this context situates just how ordinary sex work has always been in U.S. society, though the contemporary context has revealed a violent disdain for sex work and sex workers.

Contemporary Context

“Sex work” as a term did not enter the discourse until 1979 by Carol Leigh who is a writer and sex work activist (Grant, 2014). The 1970’s ushered in a new wave of sex work by not only articulating the nuances of the industry but also a major shift that focused on decriminalization as an overall goal of advocacy and activism (Grant, 2014; Leigh, 2004; Roberts, 1992). During that time, sex workers established organizations across the United States to advocate for their needs and concerns. Organizations included: COYOTE (Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics), PUMA (Prostitutes Union of Massachusetts), PROWL (Professional Resource Organization for Women’s Liberties), and the Kansas City Kitties (Grant, 2014).

In the decades since the 70’s, much of sex work conversation and advocacy has been shifted to nuancing the differences between criminalization, legalization, and some hybrid models as it pertains to sex work, with most sex workers advocating for decriminalization (Baratosy & Wednt, 2017; Grant, 2014; Leigh, 2004). In the next section I will discuss how contemporary discourse around sex work has been marred by the war on sex trafficking and conflation with sex work, and how sex workers navigate this difficult terrain.

Sex Work: Politics and Pathology

> *[The] happiness or unhappiness of sex workers is touted as a reason the profession should be abolished, while the happiness of other workers is considered beside the point. As I used to snark when waitressing in New Orleans, a town full of strip clubs and the women who work in them, no one ever wanted to save me from the restaurant industry.* -Sarah Jaffe (2013), Labor Journalist

The politics and pathology of sex work are inextricably tied and come from complex histories, many of which are rooted in religious dogma (see: Sanger, 1937). Prostitution was often referenced in the Bible as parable-fodder for purely demonstrative purposes. However, those references were always value-laden in a way that condemned and pathologized sex work (and often sex/sexuality more generally).

For the most part, the current political landscape has abandoned the "moral dilemma" of sex work as being inherently wrong in a religious or value-laden sense. Instead the struggle for voice in the sex work discourse hinges on two areas: conflation/de-conflation with sex trafficking and the matter of "protection" and "rescue" of sex workers (AgustiÌn, 2007; Grant, 2014; Showden & Majic, 2014). I will discuss how sex trafficking, protection, and rescue inform he politics of sex work, then I will discuss how and why sex workers are pathologized in U.S. society and discourse.

The Shift to Trafficking

The moral argument against sex work is weak, as such the discourse against sex work has shifted to conflating sex work and sex trafficking. Many complications manifest for sex workers as a result of how sex work and trafficking are conflated. These complications are far reaching

and have many implications, and one of them is how we discuss choice (i.e., sex workers as having agency versus being victims) and happiness (i.e., if desire/joy should be a requisite to opt-in or opt-out of the work; Agustiìn, 2007; Grant, 2014; Jaffe, 2013; Showden & Majic, 2014). As such, sex work (framed as sex trafficking) materializes as a crisis issue that reduces much of the conversation to a problematic binary,

> …with increased globalization, "trafficking in women" has become the metonymic frame for sex work (and prostitution in particular) in both political discourse and policy practice. As a result, the current politics reflect and reproduce the long-standing, persistent, "agent/victim" debate about prostitution (and sex work in general). In the standard form of this debate, agents choose (freely) and victims have no choice. (Showden & Majic 2014 p. xiv)

Beyond the intrinsically political and problematic nature of the (agent/victim) binary, supporters and detractors of sex work further politicize the debate when incorporating issues and politics around happiness. To be clear, the politics of happiness is both a problem *within* the discourse around support for sex workers as well as *between* opposing sides of sex work support.

From within the support discourse, there is constant struggle about framing sex work as *only* empowering and a desire to discuss it openly as *only*/mostly good. Unlike other labor forms, society disallows sex workers to live in a complex space (like everyone under capitalism) to both choose sex work as their labor choice while also voicing complaints about the work and labor in general (Berg, 2014; Grant, 2014). Detractors of sex work often use this politic of desire or lack of joy around work as reason why it should be abolished, why it should go away, and why again, these workers are victims – and in the view of many – being trafficked.

When detractors engage in framing sex work as problematic because sex workers do not engage it joyfully, it serves as a form of erasure of broader labor issues and precludes important class analyses that would implicate capitalism in meaningful and intentional ways (Berg, 2014). Further, choice and happiness as a measure of if sex work should exist or not is an example of another monolithic view, where the polymorphous frame might be more useful to hold these multiple competing truths.

Protection and Rescue

As for the issue of protection and rescue, sex workers find themselves at the mercy of paternalists in the form of legislators and policy-makers as well as some sects of feminism and academics in the struggle. Two premises inform how detractors' and agitators' faux-concern materializes. The first premise is based on the previous conflation that sex work and sex trafficking are one in the same. The second premise is the notion that sex work is not, and should not, be considered work. Both premises come together to fuel a savior-complex that positions sex workers as needing to be rescued because the assumption is that no person would ever choose that type of non-work (AgustiÌn, 2007; Grant; 2014). Further, an obvious indication that dominance is present and enacted is when paternalism is also present. Consenting adults should be able to engage in any way they choose around sex and sex work. Framing sex workers as needing saving presumes that lawmakers and legislators know better than sex workers themselves. However, "saviors" are not only made up of old white men as some might suspect. On the contrary, saviors also include self-identified feminists (including some former sex-workers), and Christian groups who see all sex workers as helpless, victims, and at the mercy of trafficking and patriarchy (AgustiÌn, 2007; Outshoorn, 2005). Saviors often view sex work from

the previously discussed oppression paradigm which is problematic and again unnecessarily essentialist.

Pathology

Pathology lenses promulgate a view of sex work as the most bleak and degenerative way of being because they often portray sex workers as mentally ill, unable to hold steady/respectable employment, and position their desire to engage in the work as intrinsically abnormal (Burns, Long, & Schept, 2012). The attack on sex work as a legitimate form of labor is often fueled by how it is pathologized in society. For the most part, sex work stigma seems to be achieved in two different ways: through whore stigma and through framing sex workers as precipitators of health crises (Burnes, Long, & Schept, 2012; Grant, 2014; Nova, 2016).

Whore-stigma. Much of the advocacy against sex work, particularly in the feminist discourse, finds its footing through the notion that for a woman to be sexualized, it is inherently degrading, inherently problematic, and thoroughly opposite of women's liberation and empowerment,

> For opponents of sexualization, the danger is not only that a woman will be reduced to a sexual being for the enjoyment of others, but that if a woman is sexualized, it obliterates her as a real woman — that is, it is a violence that renders her a lesser woman, a whore. At the root of the opposition to sexualization is the essential belief that for a woman to be thought of as a whore is so profoundly damaging that it constitutes a challenge to one's real womanhood. (Grant, 2014, p. 84)

In this way, the idea of real womanhood and the purity that comes along with it, often projected through the image and archetype of a middle-of-the-road (white) woman, being a whore is the worst thing one could be (Grant, 2014, McGuire, 2010).

Historically whore-stigma has affected the lives of women differently depending on what other social identities they hold. For example, during the Jim Crow south and throughout the civil rights movement when Black women were raped or endured other types of sexual assault by white men, they were often blamed for it, in many cases being named/cited as prostitutes or whores (McGuire, 2010). Lawyers would often try to discredit Black women citing sexual promiscuity; and law enforcement would often use promiscuity as an excuse when deciding not to investigate these crimes (McGuire, 2010). As such, their being *both* Black and women informed the reality that being viewed as a whore is uniquely violent. Furthermore, whore-stigma points to a larger issue of violence against those perceived to be whores and/or sex workers as something *deserved* and *normal*. Violence against sex workers continues to be a cause of concern within the sex work discourse and through the realities of sex workers (Grant, 2014).

Health pathology. The vast majority of empirical research and historical accounts about sex work seem to focus on issues related and pertaining to health crises through sex workers' health issues, or proliferation of crises in society (Burns, Long, & Schept, 2012; Laskow, 2017; Nova, 2016; Roberts, Bergström, & La Rooy, 2007). Detractors of sex work weaponize narratives about sex workers as precipitators of disease in direct and indirect ways. These narratives are used as a means to eliminate sex work and the decriminalization effort, specifically (Majic, 2014). Sex work as pathology is reinforced primarily through empirical research/statistics and sex workers are often viewed as vectors of illness (Grant, 2014; Laskow, 2017; Majic, 2014; Nova, 2016). Health-related scholars (e.g., psychology/psychiatry) often explore and study sex work from mental illness models, stress models, maladaptive behavior, and deviant behavior (Burns, Long, & Schept, 2012; Maddux, Gosselin, & Winstead, 2008). Sex

workers experience violence, trauma, and health-related terror by medical professionals, hospitals, and clinics (Burns, Long, & Schept, 2012; Nova, 2016), and they are very much aware how society views them outside of the walls of the places they sometimes attempt to seek services. Former sex worker Cyd Nova (2016) offers,

> The transaction [sex for money] is assumed to be dangerous from the beginning, leaving us in constant jeopardy of being accused of being a vector of disease, with the only salvation laying in the arms of being a "good whore." The laws that target sex workers for HIV go beyond incarcerating individuals. They reinforce a story that we are dangerous, need to be managed, medicated, legislated, and our bodies rendered safe to the so-called general public. (p. 200)

Deviant-framing, pathologizing, and deficit paradigms create a contentious and adversarial relationship between sex workers, governments, and lawmakers (Burns et al., 2012). Pathology lenses give those entities ammunition to posit that sex work should be illegal because it is a detriment to society and allows these entities to exact extremely violent action against sex workers,

> Sex workers are managed as dangers to society, as vectors of disease. When HIV-positive sex workers have sex with or without condoms, with or without a suppressed viral load, they are prosecuted as sexual criminals and imprisoned as felons in the United States and Canada. When HIV rates went up in Athens, Greece, those who were perceived as drug users and/or sex workers were rounded up and forcibly tested, with images of their faces displayed in the media. (Nova, 2016, p.199)

Pathological attitudes about sex work go beyond simple ideology and speak to a larger issue of epistemic violence and epistemic injustice as it pertains to sex work. Messages and

misinformation reveal that the *way* knowledge and information is produced about sex work and sex workers is critical (and not tangential) to the movement. As such, society must rethink "not just *what* we know about sex work and sex workers, but *how we know* it" (Showden & Majic, 2014 p. xxv). Through this process of knowledge production, activists and scholars may have an opportunity to disrupt and shift the tide of sex work pathology and advance the larger movement for sex work acceptance and decriminalization. Further the notion of knowledge production about sex workers is inextricably tied to the methodology and epistemology outlined in Chapter 3. I have designed this study to deliberately infuse the voices of sex workers and hopefully have them amplified to reframe *what* we know about sex workers and have the genesis of that knowing come *from* sex workers themselves.

Sex Work: Colleges, Universities, and Higher Education

> *Mostly students doing sex work don't talk about it, because if it comes out, it could affect your future and job prospects. Since I started escorting, I've heard that a former roommate exchanged sex with her landlord to cover the rent, and another woman I know was a part-time sex worker to earn enough to travel home to visit her family. Sex work among students is much more common than people think, and is likely to increase as long as fees, rent, and the cost of living is so high.* -Claire, Second-year studying History and Philosophy in London.[1]

Literature about sex work *and* students specifically in higher education settings is quite limited. Further, when college students are the focus of sex work research, they are often

[1] As cited in McIntyre (2015).

students in England and Scotland (Cusick, Roberts & Paton, 2009; Roberts, Bergström & La Rooy, 2007; Roberts, Sanders, Myers & Smith, 2010; Sagar et al, 2015; Sagar et al, 2016) and certain countries in Africa (Tsitsi, 2010). However anecdotal evidence and research both suggest that college students in the United States do engage in sex work (Bien-Aime, 2017; Haeger & Deil-Amen, 2010).

Despite a dearth in empirical/peer-reviewed literature on this topic, some key takeaways are useful to this project, and they provide important framing toward developing a study that seeks to explore the experience of college students engaged in sex work. Key takeaways include: students' potential motivations for engaging sex work, considerations for higher education policy and discourse regarding students and sex work (including student perception), and the debate about how to frame sex work in research, similar to public and feminist discourse/debate (e.g., the problem vs empower - agent vs victim binaries; Cusick, Roberts, & Paton, 2009; Long, Mollen, & Smith, 2011; Sagar et al, 2016; Sagar et al, 2015; Weitzer, 2010b).

Motivations & Experiences

The clear majority of literature on college students and sex work center student motivations in their inquiries, which in virtually all cases point to monetary reasons (Haeger & Deil-Amen, 2010; Roberts, Bergström & La Rooy, 2007; Sagar et al, 2016; Tsitsi, 2010). Students cite the ratio of time spent working to income as a positive aspect for them and something they would not be able to achieve through other types of work or labor forms (Haeger & Deil-Amen, 2010; Sagar et al, 2016). Students need and have a desire to make money, and researchers also spend considerable time exploring why the economic landscape continues to make higher education more expensive for students (Sanders & Hardy, 2015). Some researchers tend to operate from deficit and "savior" lenses (see Roberts, Bergström & La Rooy, 2007), and

other researchers have utilized economic lenses to explore connections between the changing global market, how sex has been desensitized commercially, and student willingness to engage in the sexual marketplace (see Sanders & Hardy, 2015).

Students engage in sex work – or transactional sex as some of the literature names it – for more than monetary reasons (Sagar et al, 2016; Tsitsi, 2010). Further, some studies trouble the financial hardship lens to offer that, students from different socio-economic backgrounds/classes engage in sex work for different reasons including those who may be economically stable (Tsitsi, 2010). Students sometimes engage in sex work to achieve and maintain a particular social status (including material gain) in their educational settings and among peer groups (Tsitsi, 2010). Finally, students also engage in sex work because of job flexibility, because they enjoy the sex itself, and in some instances out of curiosity (Sagar et al, 2016).

In nearly all cases, students cite the most difficult part of engaging sex work is the pressure to keep their work secret as a result of the negative views of sex work and potential backlash they might receive (Haeger & Deil-Amen, 2010; Sagar et al, 2016). Furthermore, balancing that pressure and stress can sometimes have negative impacts on their mental and physical health (Roberts, Bergström & La Rooy, 2007), but is likely also due to navigating their roles as students and sex workers and trying to survive economically, all together. Finally, some students do not engage in sexual activities (have sex for money) but still are considered to engage in ‘transactional sex’ (romantic time and space) for money and other material items (Tsitsi, 2010).

Higher Education Policy and Discourse

Few researchers explore the discourse about sex work among college students in higher education or implications for policy and practice for supporting students who engage in sex

work. The majority of current research is situated in non-U.S. contexts, but they offer some compelling considerations for students engaging sex work more broadly, including student perceptions of sex work and university policies around sex work.

Student perceptions. Inquiries into student perceptions about sex work included: gauging the degree to which they knew of peers who engage in sex work (Roberts, Sanders, Myers, & Smith, 2010), their attitudes about sex work/sex workers, and if they would themselves ever opt-in to doing the work (Long, Mollen, & Smith, 2011; Sagar et al, 2016;). In some non-U.S. contexts, institutions place restrictions on what researchers can and cannot ask and as such, some researchers have maneuvered around the barriers to ask students about sex work in secondary-source ways (i.e., do you know any sex workers?, how prevalent do you think it is?, why do you think students engage?; Roberts, Bergström & La Rooy, 2007; Roberts, Sanders, Myers, & Smith, 2010). Given the reality of study bounds, researchers do indicate that they suspect that some students in their study were telling their own stories and as such they probably have sex worker primary data as part of their larger effort (Roberts, Bergström & La Rooy, 2007; Roberts, Sanders, Myers, & Smith, 2010).

Students generally believe that higher education is too expensive and is the primary reason why students elect to enter sex work (Roberts, Sanders, Myers, & Smith, 2010; Sagar et al, 2016), although evidence has shown that rising costs of education is not the only reason students engage sex work (Sagar et al, 2016). A significant number of students admitted they either had or would be open to engaging sex work if they needed to (Roberts, Sanders, Myers, & Smith, 2010; Sagar et al, 2016), and many believe that their higher education institutions do not go far enough to support students sex workers. Students indicate that financial support, career support, research, and health promotion, would all be useful in creating contexts that allow

student sex workers to thrive while pursuing their studies (Roberts, Sanders, Myers, & Smith, 2010).

Students' (non-sex workers) perceptions of sex workers vary greatly and students cite that while they understand why someone might engage in sex work, they find it generally unacceptable (Long, Mollen, & Smith, 2011; Roberts, Sanders, Myers, & Smith, 2010), they tended to operate from pathological and deficit lenses, and one study found a positive correlation between hostility toward women in general, and negative, stereotypical views of sex workers (Long, Mollen & Smith, 2012). However, the reverse was also correlated, if students knew a sex worker personally, they tended to have less stereotypical and more understanding views (Long, Mollen, & Smith, 2012). Finally, some students who labor as sex workers sometimes held negative views of other sex workers and they reconcile their dissonance by distancing themselves from "stereotypical" women in sex work. They cited that while stereotypes were true of other women, they were not true for them (Haeger & Deil-Amen, 2010).

Institutional contexts. In addition to student perceptions, staff, institutional policies, and institutional practices perpetuate negative views toward sex workers (Cusick, Roberts & Paton, 2009; Sagar et al, 2015). In some instances, staff and institutions – through their policy implementation – show that while they did not care about student realities as sex workers, they did worry that student sex worker realities would bring shame or disgrace to the institution (Sagar et al, 2015). In other cases (particularly where and when commercial sex activities might be legal), institutional policies still create contexts that promulgated negative views about buying or selling of sex or sexual activities of any kind. Analysis of policy documents at 236 institutions in England and Scotland revealed,

Although no institution had a policy on staff/student involvement in commercial sex, all

> of these responses implied that the institution concerned viewed such involvement with 'taken for granted' disapproval. It is also clear from the dominance of discussion about disciplinary procedures and behaviour bringing institutions into disrepute that staff/student participation in commercial sex is widely perceived as some kind of institutional threat. (Cusick, Roberts & Paton, 2009 p.191)

The jarring disconnection between having no policy on staff/student involvement in commercial sex while simultaneously situating involvement in sex work as problematic – and cause for disciplinary action – seems like an espoused policy or practice. Examples of these "non-policies" by institutions related to sex work included,

> Any member of staff engaged in an act of sexual impropriety or criminality, whether or not conducted at their place of work or during working hours, shall be considered to have engaged in an act of gross misconduct and shall be subject to the University's disciplinary procedures. (HEI, England).

> The University has no policies that explicitly deal with sex work but does have an expectation that staff and students will do nothing that may jeopardise the University's reputation or position. (HEI, England) (Cusick, Roberts, & Paton, 2009 p.191)

While the researchers provided these examples, they also indicated that none of the institutions gave information on why the policies were needed or relevant. Sex workers seemed to be viewed as institutional threats because in society they are generally perceived negatively. Furthermore, any mention of sex work by any members of the institutions' community was met with relatively strong language in policy documents that situated sex work as problematic and as a form of misconduct (Cusick et al, 2009).

Despite what seems to be a negative context and discourse about sex work, some staff at higher education institutions recognize that support is needed for student sex workers (Sager et al., 2015). Early recommendations include better training on the details that give nuance to sex work law, better training on referrals/general support services (Sager et al, 2015), fostering supportive and non-judgmental environments that help student sex workers cope with the stress of the work and negative stereotypes (Haeger & Deil-Amen, 2010), and limiting institutional inquiries into a students' status as a sex worker, viewing it as an aspect of private life to be covered under anti-harassment and bullying policies (Cusick, Roberts & Paton, 2009).

Chapter Summary

Through this chapter I covered literature that focuses on a few key points. First, sex work and sex workers have a long and complicated history within U.S. and global society and discourse. The core debate finds its footing in moral judgements about sex work because of the work itself and the belief that sex workers are a health risk/liability in society. Despite the debate, sex work and sex workers do not show signs of stopping, but instead create new ways and contexts to exist and resist. Contemporarily, the sex work debate is kept in constant chaos because of conflation with sex trafficking, and the lack of intentional labor and class analyses that would position it as a legitimate form of labor. Given that it is and should be considered labor, many sex workers advocate for the decriminalization of all sex work, positioning it as a racial justice issue.

Empirical and anecdotal evidence reveal that college students are engaging in sex work around the world for a number of different reasons, namely financial/monetary. Students engaged in sex work balance a great deal of stress managing the work, their student realities, and most of all because of stereotypes and stigma involved in being a sex worker. Limited studies

exist about students in U.S. contexts, and little (or unclear) literature on the experience of LGBT students, Black students, and other students of color in the work. Many research studies operate from deficit and seemingly sex-negative lenses, and none of them explore sex work from a learning or asset-based perspective.

A Letter from Kemi

To the Women's Student Center,

You can do more. We need to expand the narrative of sex workers beyond trauma and pain. My sex work story isn't about me solely being a victim to patriarchy or capitalism, at least no more than the person losing their health in a coal mine. My story is of trying to get into grad school by any means. The only conversations surrounding sex work are ones of drugs, violence, and death

Please host more discussions to expand the conversation so students do not have to deal with stigma. If you want to reduce the need for sex work (or work to avoid poverty) here are some suggestions. I would love if we had a food pantry, emergency funding, or housing resources for students, but we don't or if we do, we have them in very limited supply. You often brag about me to incoming students, but you don't even know me, not in my entirety.

Sex work is a part of my story that deserves to be told.

-Kemi

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

In the following chapter I discuss my research design. First, I will describe the theoretical framework that informed the study context and from which all other research design choices flowed. I will then discuss my methodology/methodological decisions, how I collected data, and my data analysis process. I conclude this chapter by discussing data authenticity, explore my positionality as a researcher, and share concluding thoughts.

Theoretical Framework

Within the sex work community – a population that I would identify as being within the margins of the margins – it was important to me to center the experiences of Black people, LGBTQ people, people of color specifically. In addition to *who* I centered in my inquiry, I also believe *how* they were centered was important. Given that story was central to this study – specifically stories of those with multiple minoritized identities – I selected intersectionality to guide my research design. In the following sections, I explain how I synthesized the epistemological assumption of the theory, then I describe intersectionality, the components and various parts that informed my design choices.

Epistemological Assumptions

Intersectionality theory includes assumptions that guide how I have come to think about knowledge, what constitutes data, and where it comes from. Through an analysis and synthesis of the theory, I argue two main points inform epistemology in this study. First, knowledge is produced and legitimized from the experiences and stories of individuals resisting from the margins; in other words, their experiences under and through dominance are part of their knowing. Intersectionality theory reinforces the importance of honoring and legitimizing lived

experiences as a way to interrogate and deconstruct oppression (Crenshaw, 1991; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; hooks, 2015), and that storytelling is a method to get at these realities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Secondly, intersectionality suggests that knowledge *should* be used (in actionable ways) and that knowledge *should* be used (toward the material benefit of the people who resist). In this way, knowledge is produced from existing and living through dominance at the margins, and knowledge must invoke action and possess instrumentality. Critical scholars posit that marginalized voices and experiences, especially at the "intersections," must be brought to center to help deconstruct issues related to power and oppression, and to disrupt dominant single issue narratives (Crenshaw, 1991). However, intersectionality theory also offers an important reframe of the margins that go beyond deficit-thinking.

I position these two aspects as illustrations of the margins as a place of radical resistance and radical openness (hooks, 1999, hooks, 2000) and as a way to further frame this inquiry from an asset-based perspective that can hold competing but legitimate truths about the realities and circumstances of sex workers (Weitzer, 2010b).

Intersectionality

Concepts related to what is now known as intersectionality theory have been discussed as early as the 1850's (McKissack & McKissack, 1994). An example of this was when Sojourner Truth spoke at the Women's Convention in 1851 sharing her lived experiences being a Black woman. However, intersectionality did not receive its explicit terminology until 1989 by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw. In the years since, Patricia Hill Collins, bell hooks, and other feminist and womanist scholars have furthered the contemporary understanding of intersectionality in important, complex, and nuanced ways. Intersectionality includes a

discussion of multiple dimensionality, including structural, representational, and political intersectionality.

Multiple dimensionality. Intersectionality theory suggests that most legal and sociological frameworks engage in single-issue analysis which is problematic because in actuality, issues of dominance operate in concert with one another. When keeping intersectionality theory in mind, scholars must pay attention to the development of social identity and attempt to understand the interconnected systems of oppressions related to identity (Crenshaw, 1991). Crenshaw's piece is theoretically rich and appropriate for this study because she introduces intersectionality – specifically – within the context of violence against women. She discusses intersectionality in three ways:

***Structural intersectionality*.** In this case intersectionality is examined through observed differences of issues like violence, access to resources and services, and reform through comparison of the experiences between women with differing social identities. An example of structural intersectionality would be how immigrant women navigate experiences with domestic violence differently than non-immigrant women. For immigrant women, a structural issue of documentation and citizenship is involved (Crenshaw, 1991), an experience that would be different for someone *with* citizenship in the United States.

***Political intersectionality*.** Interrogating the politics of intersectionality uncovers the danger in the aforementioned isolated analysis of one-dimensional aspects of identity or oppression. As such, scholars suggest that single factor analysis further marginalizes populations at the intersections (Crenshaw, 1991), a reality especially true for sex workers as was discussed in the politics and pathology sections. Crenshaw (1991) gives several examples of political intersectionality including the erasure of black feminist politics in racial justice and gender

justice movements respectively. Another example highlighted centers on the complex experience of black women who "expose" gender violence in the black community as being perceived as traitors to community and how they must navigate that highly complex space of dominance and oppression (Crenshaw, 1991).

***Representational intersectionality*.** This articulation of intersectionality aims to question the cultural implications of representation for populations at the intersections. These representations, often stereotypical and inadequate, result in further denigration of said populations. Crenshaw (1997) illustrates this point regarding the case of the Central Park 5. She critiqued white feminism for ignoring the way race informed public opinion on the case as well as the lack of consequences for black men who commit rape. Conversely, individuals who were only concerned with the racial overtones of that case ignored the very serious issue of sexual violence.

Intersectionality and the margins. Intersectionality scholars offer that academics, activists, and practitioners must resist the urge to understand the margins as *only* a place of deprivation; to do so mischaracterizes individuals under dominance and their use of the margins as a potential place of empowerment and critical resistance (hooks, 2015). Reframing the margins is a factor that is important to consider when researchers think about self-determination, and struggle for liberation - both of which are salient to sex worker realities (Grant, 2014). For example, Black women often experience racism that is sexualized and sexism that is racialized which is indicative of oppression at the intersections, and Black women in these margins find community in combating and resisting the aforementioned experiences through their activist work, community organizing, and organizing on social media (Williams, 2015).

Polymorphous Paradigm

In addition to intersectionality as my theoretical framework, Weizter's (2010b) polymorphous paradigm was instrumental to my process and it specifically framed how I wanted to approach collaborator stories. The polymorphous paradigm is not a theory in the traditional sense. It does not have tenets, or specific components but instead operates as a rejection of – and alternative to – the oppression paradigm (Weizter, 2010b). The polymorphous paradigm invites scholars, researchers, and policy makers to engage the topic of sex work beyond one-dimensional conceptualizations that are rooted *only* in violence, despair, and bore of out of the direst of circumstances. Further the polymorphous paradigm,

> holds that there is a broad constellation of work arrangements, power relations, and personal experiences among participants in sexual commerce. Polymorphism is sensitive to complexities and to the structural conditions shaping the uneven distribution of workers' agency and subordination. Victimization, exploitation, choice, job satisfaction, self-esteem, and other factors differ between types of sex work, geographical locations, and other structural conditions. Commercial sexual exchange and erotic entertainment are not homogeneous phenomena. (Weitzer, 2011; p. 1338)

To be clear, the framing of the paradigm does not mean that I am precluded from having an examination or analysis of sex work that explores or seeks to understand potentially negative aspects. I perceive this paradigm to be a tool to hold multiple truths that do not reduce or obscure the truth's complexity or paternalize collaborator experiences or choices.

Within the context of this study and the data analysis process I worked to identify aspects of collaborator narratives where they speak to difficult experiences engaging sex work and work to understand *why* those experiences were difficult. I maintained an understanding that sex

workers - particularly those with minoritized racial and sexual identities - could have those experiences, still choose sex work, *and* not situate the difficult or negative experiences as collaborator character flaws or violence that is unique to sex work; but instead indicative of a larger system of power and dominance (white supremacist capitalist patriarchy imperialism). Throughout the analysis process where a narrative or story highlighted what could be perceived as a negative aspect of sex work, I sought to name those aspects within the context of that particular collaborator and to avoid situating the indication within an oppression paradigm articulation, which is key to polymorphism ideology.

Synthesizing Epistemology

Intersectionality and the polymorphous paradigm highlight the importance of attending to the experiences of oppression as well as realities of power at the intersections (Collins, 1990; Weizter, 2011). Power (imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy) is always operating at the intersections and the impact of that power is multiplicative (hooks, 2000). For example, all sex workers experience stigma associated with their sex work. However, a Black trans woman would have very different experiences and consequences to her sex worker reality than a cis white woman. In this way, the way a Black trans woman experiences violence is compounded by interlocking systems of dominance based on her social identities and her social location. Researchers seeking to incorporate both intersectionality and the polymorphous paradigm must attend to how social identity informs how an individual experiences power and dominance. Sex workers are different from queer sex workers, who are different from queer sex workers of color, who are different from queer Black sex workers.

The Praxis of Knowledge & Knowing

Synthesis of components related intersectionality around experiences of power and

dominance connects with Weitzer's (2010b) discussion of the polymorphous paradigm within the sex work conversation. Scholars and researchers must acknowledge that while exploitation *can* exist within sex work, there must be consideration for variation across, time, place, and identity that hold the full constellation of sex workers' experiences (Weitzer 2010b). In other words, identity and social location matter and inform experiences of sex workers, particularly when discussing dominance. Further how and why sex workers decide that sex work is the/a choice for them is important to interrogate *in tandem* with their social identities and the realties thereof.

Central to intersectionality is engaging in deliberate action toward liberation (Collins, 2002; Collins, 1990), that is, scholars and practitioners must *do* something with the information they obtain,

> Intersectionality alone cannot bring invisible bodies into view. Mere words won't change the way that some people – the less-visible members of political constituencies – must continue to wait for leaders, decision-makers and others to see their struggles. In the context of addressing the racial disparities that still plague our nation, activists and stakeholders must raise awareness about the intersectional dimensions of racial injustice that must be addressed to enhance the lives of all youths of color. (Crenshaw, 2015 para. 12)

This dissertation study is not tangential to this aim, but in fact, material to it. For example, because of my knowing how dominance shows up within the context of sex work, particularly for Black people (women, and LGBT folks specifically), I have a responsibility to center those epistemic realities as valued, legitimate, and *enough* as they are. Further, I imagine the possibilities to implement the praxis of action through publication, writing, board service,

organizing, and mobilizing will materialize on the other side of the dissertation process once the knowledge has been documented and reported.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative research is a powerful tool for scholarly exploration and narrative research designs are shaped and guided by the assumptions, goals, and aims of the researcher. Clandinin, Cave, and Berendonk (2017) help demystify narrative inquiry within the larger discourse of narrative research by offering that some researchers engage written and spoken texts as items separate and apart from the people, place and space they occupy. Alternatively, narrative inquiry – and narrative inquirers – analyze and study texts in relationship to time, place, and the contexts of the stories and their storytellers (Clandinin, Cave, & Berendock, 2017). Further, the focus of narrative inquiry is "not only on the individuals' experience but also on the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experience are constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted" (Clandinin & Rosiek 2007, p. 91).

Narrative research is a good form of inquiry for any undertaking that is concerned with capturing detailed stories or life experiences of a single person, or a small number of people (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990). Narrative inquiry, first named by Connelly and Clandinin (1990) is grounded in educational philosophy and is not only useful for educational research but also as a curricular and pedagogical strategy (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990; Kim, 2016). Within narrative inquiry, different genres assist a researcher in making research design choices. Attention to genre is important because it makes narrative inquiry distinct from other qualitative research, and it will better guide the researcher toward what types of narrative data they should collect (Kim, 2016). Three major areas (autobiographical, arts-based, and biographical) each contain multiple genres. Autobiographical narrative inquiry which includes autobiography and autoethnography,

arts-based narrative inquiry which includes literary-based and visual-based forms (a total of ten sub-forms), and biographical narrative inquiry which includes four sub-forms.

For the purposes of this inquiry I chose to combine a biographical approach (life-story) with an arts-based approach (creative nonfiction in the reporting form), sometimes referred to as *genre blurring.* Genre blurring pushes researchers to consider all factors of the research to create the best design for the study (Kim, 2016). Factors to consider include research purpose, participants, and kind of stories the researcher wants to collect, further:

> You may wish to blur narrative research genres, integrating multiple forms into your narrative inquiry. As you see, writing stories, and by this I mean, writing *compelling* stories that will affect the reader (so that your research makes a difference) requires your imagination, empathy, passion and compassion. (Kim, 2016 p. 151)

A certain type of narrative form should not be weighed in isolation in ways that reduce stories (Kim, 2016). In this way, genre blurring provided a way for me to move closer to the heart of collaborator experiences that allowed me to write more compelling stories that might have the material benefits as outlined in outcomes of the theoretical framework. Finally, given that my theoretical framework is critical in nature and guided the study design and analysis, I situate this inquiry as a critical genre-blurred narrative inquiry.

Data Collection

To keep congruence between my theoretical framework, epistemological assumptions, and the imperative to deliberately center the voices and stories of sex workers, I collected data in two ways. First, I conducted narrative interviews, designed with the biographical genre in mind (Kim, 2016). Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for the purposes of analysis. Second, I collected arts-based data generated by the collaborators through artifact elicitation

(Douglas, Jordan, Lande, & Bumbaco, 2015); one letter they wrote to their past self just before they engaged in sex work for the first time and the second letter, they wrote to someone or some entity related to their college or university. Each of these methods flow from articulations of biographical and arts-based narrative inquiry:

> In arts-based narrative inquiry, the arts accompany narratives to convey the meaning of the stories told and retold. Hence, the ways of creating art are incorporated into the whole process of conducting narrative inquiry, including the ways of thinking, collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and producing a project. (Kim, 2016, p. 138)

In this way, each of the data collection methods further enhanced, enriched, contextualized, and breathed "life" into the stories shared.

Collaborator Recruitment

To ensure that student sex worker voices were deliberately centered, I abandoned the language of participant and instead used the term collaborator. Within narrative inquiry if researchers hope to collect the most robust narrative data possible, "then we must invite them into our work as *collaborators*, sharing control with them, so that together we try to understand what their stories are about" (Mishler as cited in Kim, 2016 p. 249 emphasis mine). To this end, reframing participant roles as collaborators served as a symbolic and material practice toward keeping myself accountable to centering their voices and their role in this research.

To recruit collaborators, I engaged in an online/digital recruitment campaign. I sent a flyer via email through my personal contacts and networks, departmental listservs, and other mailing lists. Given that sex work is a sensitive subject I wanted to ensure I had the best opportunity to secure collaborators in my study.

Students were instructed to follow a link to my personal website if they were interested in collaborating with me. On that site, they were able to read information about the study, the process, and incentive. They also had the opportunity to read my positionality statement related to the study, my biography, and other blogs and writings that I produced. I included all of the information as a way to begin to build trust. For many sex workers confidentiality and discretion are of the utmost importance, to this end, I wanted to deliberately reveal myself in the most dynamic and authentic way possible. I hoped the information would help them decide if they wanted to work with me on this endeavor. After reviewing the information on my website, they were forwarded to a Qualtrics form where they submitted a pseudonym and contact number. As a follow-up to their completing the interest form, I contacted them about what it means to be a collaborator in the study which involved providing iterative feedback during the analysis process in addition to the data collection process. I also explained why I used the term collaborator instead of participant as a way to demystify the process and as a means to build trust. I contacted each person a maximum of two times and scheduled a total of seven participants during December 2018. Once participants were scheduled, their information was destroyed in Qualtrics.

As for collaborator criteria, any person who was currently enrolled (or within two years post-graduation) from an accredited college or university and identified as having engaged in any form of sex work (escorting, phone-sex, exotic dancing, camming, adult film etc.), at some point during their time (concurrently) as a college student, were eligible to participate. I noted in my call that the experiences of Black students, LGBTQ students, and students of color of were of particular interest to my inquiry. While I intentionally recruited college student sex workers with minoritized racial, sexual, and gender identities, including trans people, I did not have any trans collaborators choose to participate. Collaborator demographic information can be found in Table

1, additionally, collaborator institutional information can be found in Table 2. My decision to separate collaborator demographics from their institution is to further protect their identities. Some of their social identities, along with stories shared in Chapter 4 are highly detailed, therefore it better protects collaborators to not indicate which region their institution was located in or the institutional type they attended.

Table 1

Collaborator Demographic Information

Name	Race	Sexual Identity	Gender	SES	Other Salient Identities	Sex Work	Age*
Maliah	Black	Heterosexual	Female	Middle Class	Feminist	Dancer	20
Gui	Asian American	Gay	Cis-man	Middle Class	Feminist Agnostic	Sex Worker	18
Kathleen	White	Bisexual	Female	Middle Class	Intersectional Feminist	Escort	21
Tianna	Black	Bisexual Pansexual	Female	Poor / Working Class	-	Sex Worker	22
Maria	Bi-racial Latina	Heterosexual	Female	Middle Class	Womanist Activist	Dancer	19
Stokely	Black	Queer	Cis-woman	Poor	Muslim Femme Hoodoo Practitioner	Escort	19
Kemi	Nigerian-American	Bisexual	Cis-woman	Poor	Black Feminist Fat Bodied	Sex Worker	21

*****_age at the time of their introduction to sex work_

Table 2

Collaborator Institution Information

Institutions		
Large Public Institution in the Southeast U.S. Small Liberal-Arts Institution in the Southeast U.S.	Mid-Size Public Institution in the Midwest U.S. Small Liberal-Arts in the Midwest U. S. Mid-Size Public Institution on the East Coast U.S.	Mid-Size Public Institution in the Southwest U.S. Large-Size Public Institution in the Southwest U.S.

Narrative Interview

A significant portion of my data collection process included narrative interviews. My decision to do this was to assure alignment between my genre choices and method, and narrative interviews aligned with the biographical genre (Kim, 2016). To ensure I received the most robust stories, I set a context whereby my collaborators could think about and share their experiences through narrative lenses, and then engage a conversation with me to enrich the stories they share. In the following section I discuss narrative thinking, narrative interview phases and artifact elicitation as part of my data collection process.

Narrative thinking context. To begin, Kim (2016) urges scholars to create a context in the interview whereby collaborators engage in narrative thinking to enhance the narratives/stories and to ensure the data collection process elicits more robust data. Narrative thinking is comprised of three components: the narrative schema, the storyteller's prior knowledge and experience, and a diverse array of cognitive strategies (Kim, 2016; Robinson & Hawpe, 1986). To successfully create an interview context where a collaborator can engage in narrative thinking, the researcher must refrain from viewing protocols as robotic and prescriptive

processes where questions are simply inducements for response as opposed to viewing them as a form of full and coherent story and speech (Kim, 2016).

The most important feature of narrative interviews is that they must be designed in a way to allow collaborators to "speak in their own voices, to express themselves freely, deciding where to start their story, as well as the flow of topics" (Kim, 2016, p.165); doing so allows them to create their own narrative schema (Kim, 2016). Simply put, the *stance* of the researcher is *more* important than the form and content of any given question in research protocol (Kim, 2016); the stance being that I as the interviewer engaged collaborators as an attentive listener, and they were narrators telling full stories prompted with narrative thinking.

The best way to illustrate narrative thinking was to explain the components, then I gave an example of a written story as often told or recited in research interviews, and then I gave another example of a more robust story told with narrative thinking. I helped situate the collaborators' understanding of narrative thinking by explaining what it was at the beginning of the interview, provided the examples, and had them reflect back their understanding to me, as they began to tell their stories in meaningful, intentional and holistic ways. I also encouraged them to ask questions as we went through our conversation and as they recounted their stories.

The interview. During the interview, I engaged two distinct phases to elicit the strongest data: the narration phase and the conversation phase (Kim, 2016). For the narration phase I allowed collaborators to talk and recite their stories for as long as they wanted to and felt comfortable – about an hour – and we used the remaining time in the conversation phase. We repeated that process twice for an approximate four hours of interview time per collaborator.

Narration phase. During the narration phase I provided grand-tour questions to the collaborator and then listened attentively and carefully – without interruption – giving attention

to “sequence, coherence, continuity, meaningfulness and transformation” (p. 169) in the collaborators’ story (Kim, 2016). Examples of grand tour questions included:

Interview 1 Narration Phase

> I want you to take a moment and reflect on your time engaging sex work. Specifically, I want you to put yourself back to just before you decided to engage sex work. And tell me:
>
> - What were the circumstances that made you consider sex work?
> - How long did you consider before making your decision?
> - How did you make the decision to do it and what was your introduction like?

Interview 2 Narration Phase

> I want you to take a moment and reflect on your time as being both a sex worker and a college student and tell me:
>
> - What that experience is/was like and how have you navigated the experience?
> - Talk to me about how you handle your sex worker identity versus your student identity? Do you view them separately? Are they blended?
> - What has been the most challenging parts of being both a sex worker and a student?
> - How do you think your experience as a sex worker differs from that of other sex workers?

During that process, I grounded my listening through a “narrative competence of listening” whereby I made keen observations of the way a collaborator spoke, their body language, emotional expressions, feelings, and pauses (Kim, 2016). It is “through our narrative competence of listening, we try to sense, feel, see, hear, and even vicariously experience our narrators’ mental, intellectual, cognitive, and emotional engagement with the telling of his or her own life story” (Kim, 2016, p.168).

Conversation phase. Once the collaborator shared their stories, through their own construction and guiding choices, I switched to the conversation phase of the interview. This phase included engaging in semi-structured, in-depth questioning and exchange as a way to elicit clarifications on the issues and stories presented in the first narration (Kim, 2016). It was during

that phase that the interview was no longer a "unilaterally guided means of excavating information" (Kim, 2016, p. 169) rather, as researcher and collaborator we engaged in active co-construction as opposed to my being a passive recorder and collector of the data (Gemignani, 2014; Kim, 2016).

Artifact elicitation. I used artifact elicitation to enrich the data collected through collaborator stories and fulfilling data collection of a creative nature connected to the arts-based genre. Further, artifacts, or tactile data, contextualized the stories of student sex workers. My decision was informed by the notion of "blurring genres" to ensure that the research design, and in this instance data collection, were in alignment with the types of stories I wanted to collect and tell (Kim, 2016).

Collaborators were asked to create two artifacts: they wrote a letter to their past-self prior to engaging sex work and a letter to a person or entity connected or related to their student reality. Artifact elicitation has been situated in some qualitative methodology and research literature as a means to contextualize interview responses in a way that helps a researcher negotiate meanings related to the responses and to the artifact itself (Douglas, Jordan, Lande, & Bumbaco, 2015; Kim, 2016). Further, artifacts can be used to help collaborators articulate and deepen memories of incidents, and to help researchers gain a better understanding of their experience and knowledges (Douglas, Jordan, Lande, & Bumbaco, 2015; Kim, 2016). Artifacts can include a number of different mediums including video diaries, photographs, maps, drawings, writings, diagrams, and television programs (Douglas, Jordan, Lande, & Bumbaco, 2015; Hartel, 2014; Kim, 2016).

Letters. The first letter they wrote was to their past selves. Collaborators were asked to think back to right before the moment they began engaging in sex work and write a letter to their

younger-self explaining what they can expect in the coming experiences. The prompt for that letter was,

Artifact Elicitation 1

> Please think back about the day before your very first day engaging sex work. And respond to this prompt:
>
> "*If you could write a letter or an email to your former self just before you started sex work what would you say? What advice or cautions would you offer? What would you want that younger self to know?"*

The second letter was addressed to anyone of their choosing at their institution, or they were able select the institution as a whole. In this letter they articulated anything and everything they wanted that person or institution to know about their experience engaging in sex work, while being a student. The prompt for the second letter was,

Artifact Elicitation 2
Please think back to your time engaging sex work while also negotiating your student reality and respond to this prompt:

> "*If you could write a letter or an email to your university president, board of trustees, the entire campus community, or some other person or entity of your choosing; What would you say to them about your experience? What would you want to say to them about sex workers? Write to them and tell them whatever is on your heart and whatever you would want them to know.*

I encouraged collaborators to highlight their experiences and how they were helped (as it applied), how they were harmed (as it applied), what they need(ed), if anything, from the person or entity. And finally, what their greatest hopes were for other student sex workers.

Data Analysis

I completed my data analysis through a process known as The Listening Guide (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 2015; Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, & Bertsch, 2006; Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1995; Tolman, 2002; Way, 1998), to analyze the interviews.

The Listening Guide (LG) is a feminist, qualitative, relational, and voice-centered analysis process that is used primarily to analyze interview transcripts (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 2015). This process is feminist in nature and was developed in the 1980's because of the way women's voices were heard – or not heard – within the context of research and writing (Gilligan et al., 2003), and as such an (over)emphasis on story was made central to the process. One of the major assumptions to this form of analysis is the inextricable tie between researchers and collaborators in the co-construction of knowledge (Petrovic, Lordly, Brigham, & Delaney, 2015; Woodcock, 2016).

The LG requires an intentional centering of collaborator voices as an imperative to the research project, with a particular emphasis on voices that may be otherwise marginalized in society (Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1995; Woodcock, 2005; Woodcock, 2016); which is a great fit for the theoretical framework I have outlined. A total of four phases or steps comprise this analysis process and they are: listening for the plot, listening for the 'I', listening for contrapuntal voices, and the final step is composing an analysis. Each of these phases are completed multiple times at the discretion of the researcher and include listening to the audio of the interviews in tandem with reading and marking transcripts.

Listening for the plot. The main purpose of the first listening is to develop a road map of themes emerging from the stories (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). The researcher is to gain a better understanding of the main themes, trends, and overall scope of the story, so that they may understand the "plot" of what is happening. The researcher should listen for,

> …who is present, is anyone missing, what are the major and minor themes, are there emotional hotspots, salient images or metaphors, what stories are told, are there gaps or

> ruptures in the narrative, and also what is the researcher's response to being on this landscape with this person? (Gilligan and Eddy 2017, p. 78)

Finally, the researcher must attend to *specific* and *descriptive* details, to use the collaborators' words, and to refrain from any analysis or interpretation, yet (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017). A small example passage from collaborator Kemi is below, with demarcation of how I listened and understood the plot of one of her stories,

> So, after it was done he[2] said, "Thank you, I enjoyed myself.". And I[1] said, "Okay bye, it was really sweet. **[**You're such a sweetheart.**]**" I was really nice to him and waited in the car with him while he paypal'd me the rest of the money[B]. I got out of the car, went upstairs, and immediately called my homegirl[3], **[**I was geeking[A]. I was laughing, cracking up because something about it was so exciting[A].**]** I was so proud[A] of myself. I was so proud[A] of myself. I wanted money[B], I needed money[B] and I got money[B], and I used sex to get money[B]. So, I was so happy[A] I used sex to get money[B].

The passage above highlights three example aspects that I attended to during listening for the plot including who is present, emotional hotspots, and major/minor themes. In this passage I noted there were three people part of the story/plot: Kemi (hyperscript 1), her best friend (hyperscript 2), and her client (hyperscript 3). The interaction of these folks with Kemi revealed her state of mind and how she navigated this experience. Presenting different versions/faces of herself: service provider to the client as his confidant, and then friend to her best friend who serves as *her* confidant in these separate moments.

As for major and minor themes the major theme is about a self-actualizing moment where Kemi proves to herself that she is able to survive, and she is proud of that. Her survival in this case related to money, which operates as a minor theme. Though money is repeated several

times, it is a minor theme because while it is the object of her want, need, and ultimate procurement (underlined in the passage), the repetitiveness is related to her excitement about *her* being able to achieve something. Something that had eluded her and put her in a position that felt dangerous. This passage opens up by her revelation of how "sweet" her client was, and it illuminated a level of relief, given how bad the meeting could have gone. I identified two emotional hotspots for this part of the story which informed consequent listenings, those hot spots are contained within brackets above.

Listening for the 'I'. This listening is for the sole purpose of attending to the first-person voice to interrogate how collaborators talk about themselves in a particular sociological or psychological context (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017). This listening involved taking notes every time a collaborator used 'I' in a phrase or statement and writing them in stanzas to construct 'I' poems. Gilligan and Eddy (2017) instruct two rules for this process which are "(1) highlight every I phrase within a given passage, (2) record these phrases in order of their appearance in the passage" (p.78). This exercise in the analysis process is two-fold in that it provides a structured, systematic, and methodological way to listen to collaborators' first-person voice with associated patterns and themes, and secondly it allows the researcher opportunities to witness and hear how collaborators speak about themselves in relation to others (Woodcock, 2016). Below is the "I" poem that I constructed through the second listening for Kemi's story,

I said
I was (really nice to him)
I got (out of the car)
I was (geeking)
I was (laughing)
I was (so proud)
I was (so proud)
I wanted (money)
I needed (money)
I got (money)

I used (sex)
I was (so happy)
I used (sex to get money)

In the example of the poem above, the initial theme that jumps out is that Kemi speaks about herself in relation to the past, which should not be surprising because she is telling a story. I then controlled for tense to look deeper. For me this poem is more about how Kemi experienced joy and fulfillment as a result of her being able to use herself to get something that she wanted and needed. The story is not only about getting the money but what she *feels* as a result of her being able to get it by and for herself. She sees herself in control and as having agency over her circumstances in this moment.

Listening for contrapuntal voices. The final listening phase requires that the researcher listen for what points are being made as well as their counterpoints. This listening is not about attending to themes or content but instead the researcher must listen for "different voices and their interplay, or harmonies or dissonances within the psyche, tensions with parts of itself" (Gilligan & Eddy 2017, p.79). This phase requires nuance when completing the analysis because the quality, musicality, what is being said, what is being said differently at different times, what is not being said, and what is being silenced are all important to attend to, specifically while attending to the research question or purpose (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017). Researchers are encouraged to be descriptive and specific in their note-taking, examples cited included describing an "angry" voice that was raw, loud, and unpolished. Another example was described as a vulnerable voice that was soft, muffled with phrases that trail off, or nervousness in the voice (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017). Taking the same passage and adding notation for contrapuntal voices I found the following in this part of Kemi's story,

So, after it was done he[2] said, “Thank you, I enjoyed myself.”. And I[1] said, [“Okay bye, it was really sweet. You're such a sweetheart.”][*a kind soft tone, really reminiscent, honest, earnest, really relieved*] I was really nice to him and waited in the car with him while he paypal'd me the rest of the money. [I got out of the car, went upstairs, and immediately called my homegirl[3], I was geeking[A]. I was laughing, cracking up because something about it was so exciting[A]. I was so proud[A] of myself. I was so proud[A] of myself.][*highly energetic, hasty, and exciting tone as if she couldn’t WAIT to get up those stairs to talk to her friend*] [I wanted money[B], I needed money[B] and I got money[B], and I used sex to get money[B]. So, I was so happy[A] I used sex to get money[B].] [*inspired tone, proud nostalgic moment, rhythmic cadence of the similar statements about wanting, needing, and getting money; as if thinking back lovingly on the moment*]

In the passage above I included a block of text, and after each statement I bracketed and italicized my notes of the third listening. Specifically, the notes reveal how I listened for contrapuntal voices and not what Kemi said but *how* she said what she said. This part of her story was a proud memory for her, bore out of circumstances that – at the time – felt hopeless. Her ending tone is in direct contrast to the initial setting up of the story – not included above – which was frustrated and bleak.

Composing an analysis. The final phase is for the researcher to compose an analysis using the evidence and data from the listenings. Each of the phases had multiple rounds of listening to ensure I became saturated in the data and as part of the process of strengthening the analysis (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017; Woodcock, 2015; Woodcock, 2010). After completing a total of 42 listenings which were 14 interviews from seven participants – who each had two interviews – I began developing themes. My analysis of the readings allowed me to recognized

patterns related to collaborator experiences specifically as they interrelated with social identity and learning and within the context of intersectionality. For example, Kemi identifies as fat and a dark(er) skinned queer woman. Part of her excitement was connected to the reality that the way she, versus skinny white women, navigate sex work is markedly different. She mentioned that she would find the rates of white sex workers and then cut hers in half so that she could find clients because her sex work was not valued the same way. So, my analysis of the plot readings in tandem with an intersectional lens (the multiplicative nature of power, dominance, and in this instance, desire) further contextualize Kemi's recounting this story in a triumphant and nostalgic tone. Her tone and story revealed how her fat, Black, queer body, was able to procure her survival; a survival she is not supposed to be able to achieve at all, let alone in that way.

To achieve composing the analysis, I used Woodcock's (2016) color-coding method, "a color-coding process helps to organize and establish visual indicators within the data. Without the colors, it may become difficult to visually distinguish themes as ongoing, layering analysis occurs." (Woodcock, 2016; p. 3).

Across each listening I focused on the interview audio and transcript that I was analyzing at any given moment, in addition to the previous listenings I conducted. For example, when a collaborator spoke about the difficulties or violence of their sex work experience, I coded that portion of each transcript red, I also made stars, asterisks, and other markings related to aspects of their narratives that I wanted to remember, circle-back to, or explore connections with another collaborators' story. These marking along with the color-coded sequences are referred to as a trail of evidence that supports the themes developed from the data (Woodcock, 2016).

After each listening the colors and markings become more complex but connections become clearer. For example, by the third listening, there can be – and in my case there often

was – overlap across color codes and the themes I recognized in the narratives. This phenomenon is illustrative of the analysis method,

> A key feature of these two listenings is to extract [two] themes of the narrative that melodiously react with one another or that are in tension with each other (Raider-Roth, 2000, p.50; as cited in Woodcock, 2016)...The crucial aspect is to look at these two themes as being in relation to one another. Referring back to color-coded themes, one may see that colors tend to overlap at particular places. This harmony of color flashes a tangible sign that those overlying colors are the badge of a contrapuntal point for analysis and exploration (Woodcock, 2010b as cited in Woodcock, 2016) (p. 6)

An example of this was in collaborator stories when they spoke about violence. There was often overlap between that color (red) and a subsequent discussion of how the violence and difficulty helped them develop a greater sense of self, how to protect/advocate for themselves, and having more confidence in their voice (blue). While both those themes will show up in findings separately, the color-coding process show those findings are in relationship with each other and I believe a confirmation of the appropriateness of the polymorphous paradigm as a framework. Given that collaborators share that sex work has difficult and violent parts, they still find that engaging sex work has pushed them to develop multiple layers of confidence and an unapologetic ethic of protection and survival.

After I completed all of the listenings I examined collaborator transcripts and organized the contents of their narratives based on the color codes – both individual and overlapping – and present in this dissertation the strongest and most recurring themes in the data. I finalized the analysis through organizing narratives by contexts related to social identity, learning, and college/university support and then focused on further refining and solidifying themes through an

examination of how the collaborator experiences were similar and different within and across those contexts.

Artifact analysis. I decided at the start of my study to avoid analysis of collaborator artifacts. I want their letters to stand out and stand alone in this research. I intend to present them (as I have throughout this dissertation) without any pretense, filtering, deconstructing, or "examination." I feel this was one of the most deliberate ways to center their voices and their experiences and to not reduce or water-down their creation of these letters by trying to analyze them, which diminishes their power. I believe that my decision also strengthens their role as true collaborators because their voices are in this dissertation unadulterated. I present them as they are, with no interference from me. I reviewed each letter and utilized them for reference to add additional context to their narrative interviews, but beyond my own reflections on the letters, I did not complete analysis on them. I want them to stand as they are.

Collaborator Role

Collaborators were integral to the entire research process but specifically data analysis. It was important to ensure that beyond the symbolic decision to abandon the language of 'participant' in favor of 'collaborator' that this process was truly a collaborative effort. Scholars and researchers seeking to embrace an ethic of collaboration must also ensure that collaborator relationships as robust as possible. Together collaborators and I determined all of the possible ways we could share control of the research process and we came up with three clear opportunities; including their voices in this research unobstructed (collaborator letters throughout the dissertation), co-authoring their creative non-fiction/memoirist accounts of their first time engaging sex work, contributing to the interview protocol (both this inquiry and future inquiries), and consensus- building about future publishing of this dissertation research.

Composing their stories. At the conclusion of their second interview I offered collaborators the opportunity to be in communication with me so that we could develop the creative non-fiction accounts of their first time engaging in sex work and also to provide feedback on the findings that I developed, if interested. At minimum, all collaborators provided feedback on the creative non-fiction account of their first-time – or a memorable time – related to their sex work. Our decision to have me draft the stories was rooted in my desire to not ask for additional labor from collaborators and because I have some experience in the creative non-fiction form.

After drafting their stories, I uploaded them onto a private password-protected website and disconnected the webpage from the website navigation or directory. Collaborators were instructed to log on with the secure login information I provided them and review the draft of their story. Next, they notified me if they were happy with their story, unhappy with their story, and what edits or revisions they wanted to make. It was important that collaborators felt that the stories accurately reflected their experiences and told – as closely as possible – in their own voice. When they had any notes or feedback I would then incorporate them and make the necessary revisions/edits. I would notify collaborators when they had been updated for their review and we repeated the process until collaborators were satisfied with the stories. Once the stories were composed to their liking, we completed the editing/revision process. Some collaborators were happy with how their stories developed upon the first writing, other collaborators worked with me on several rounds of edits and revisions. Additionally, collaborators provided me agency to make any edits or revisions related to readability, structure, and form while the content of the stories remained.

There was an associated risk for collaborators to engage in ongoing communication with me – as a result of my needing to hold on to their contact information – so they each engaged to the degree and the length of time they felt comfortable. Finally, some collaborators provided feedback on the six key findings I developed from the analysis process and the degree they believed their narratives and experiences were accurately and adequately represented. Additionally, collaborators had the opportunity to offer me questions they thought I would ask but did not ask in our interviews. I then included those questions in later protocols with collaborators I interviewed. Finally, some of their questions will also shape interview protocols for future inquiries I will conduct related to college students engaged in sex work.

Authenticity

Johnson and Rasulova (2017) explain that "the authenticity principle recognises that inquiry and understanding are a process of learning, changing, negotiating and ultimately acting" (p. 269). Five components contribute to ensuring authenticity within the context of research: fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity, and tactical authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). The fairness component is related to engaging the data in a balanced way. Specifically, researchers must make deliberate attempts to avoid marginalization and avoid reducing or eliminating data that seem contrary to the researchers' worldviews or overall aim. I achieved fairness in my study by deliberately centering these student voices no matter what, including sharing their letters throughout with no interference from me. In addition to their letters my decision to include the students as collaborators and provide them the opportunity to provide iterative feedback throughout the research process also rises to meet a fairness criterion.

Educative authenticity and ontological authenticity are similar in that the concepts are most concerned with how collaborator constructions are enhanced (in relation to) and informed by their participation in the research inquiry (ontological authenticity), as well as a better understanding of how others view the world (educative authenticity; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). In other words, these two dimensions assert that through the process of engaging research we must attend to how collaborators' conscientious experience of the world changes and develops and how those constructions change as they engage, interact, and appreciate others. I attended to this portion of authenticity in the research by engaging with collaborators about the SESTA/FOSTA legislation as well as the current literature on sex workers. For example, I asked participants why *they* think there is a dearth in literature on sex workers of color, and students in U.S. contexts. We engaged in dialogue about their views and mine, and I asked at the end of the research process if their views had been changed or informed by our engaging on those topics.

Catalytic authenticity refers to how engaging with the research process facilitates collaborator behavior and stimulates them to act. Finally, tactical authenticity refers to the extent to which collaborators are empowered to act and the degree that researchers specifically provide support and context for that action, should it be desired by collaborators. (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Schwandt, 1997). I worked to ensure catalytic and tactical authenticity by asking collaborators their hopes for themselves. We also engaged about how participating in the research affected them personally; and each of them spoke about how they felt affirmed and inspired them to act. For example, Maliah stated,

> I really feel like this [sex worker advocacy] is something that I really would be interested in doing after this. I just did a radio interview with my friend who works at the radio station for Redacted University and she used to dance with me. We did a little interview

> and it was great. Before that I also worked on a project this summer kind of similar to this, just telling my story about dancing.

Finally, I included a question about the experience of the research process and how it informed collaborator thinking, which connects across all components of authenticity criteria. For example, Maliah offered,

> It feels good that there are people who just want to listen and want to know. What I realized is a lot of people talk that don't know, they don't even try to know, to ask questions. They don't try to learn and I don't think they care. They're just like, "it's wrong. What's wrong is wrong," you know what I'm saying? But you have people like yourself who want to know what I'm saying and where I'm coming from. And that just feels good.

As I reflect on the previous information, I believe that I met authenticity criteria in this study and in this data. I deliberately captured a genuine understanding of collaborator experiences, and how those experiences were informed and changed because of this inquiry.

Researcher Positionality

Khadeega Al-Zoubei (2011) made a compelling case for why researchers should examine their own worldviews and experiences within the context of knowledge and knowing. She offered,

> As researchers we need to maintain an informed reflexive consciousness to contextualise our own subjectivity in data interpretation and representation of experiences in the research process. Self-reflexivity promotes the reconciliation of personal motivations for conducting research and the extent of accountability owed to the population studied. Since no research, using any mode of inquiry, has no point of view and since

> research is not a value-free exercise, the challenge is not to eliminate but to document the effects of personas that influence our behaviour and positionality. (p. 1)

To this end, reflecting on and articulating my positionality is critical to this qualitative study as it informed my interpretation of the data and design choices that I made to guide the inquiry. First and foremost, I recognize my own privileged identities including that I am a cis-man and 'traditionally' educated. I also identify as Black, queer, generationally poor, and fat-bodied. Each of these identities have histories and legacies of experiencing violence through the system of dominance that plagues society, as such, they position me to attend acutely to dynamics of power. I operate from a Black feminist and womanist frame and nearly all of my research and conceptual writing is undergirded by a/the Black feminist tradition. While it is important for me to name and claim this part of my positionality, it is also important that I name and recognize how Black men are often applauded and propelled forward in our scholarly and community work for simply calling ourselves Black feminists, even if our work is out of step, out of line, or barely rising to manifest the actual praxis of Black feminist and womanist ideologies.

In addition, I believe that it is also vital to reflect on how and why I come to this work. Given that I have not worked as a sex worker, it is critical that I as well as readers understand my intentions and motivations. In the Fall of 2016, I had just left my Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion course after having had a robust discussion about the complexities of race and specifically all the ways I felt that Critical Race Theory, (while powerful and groundbreaking in the literature on race), had really come to fail Black people. By fail, I refer to its lack of nuance about the complexities of the Black experience and all the ways white supremacy implicates uniquely negative experiences on people from the Black diaspora. During this same time, I was having some deep philosophical reflections about who I was as a researcher and what I hoped to do with

my energy, with my time, and with my work. One night later that week I was having a discussion with a classmate about potential dissertation topics and what I wanted to study. I had no clue. So, she asked me, *"What matters to you most right now?"*

I began reflecting on two pieces of scholarship by bell hooks that had been sitting with me about this notion of the "margins," one was titled *Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness* (hooks, 1989) and the other was titled *Marginality as a Site of Resistance* (hooks, 1990). Both pieces had been weighing on me in some dynamic ways. In one sense, I felt empowered by hooks' notion that the margins serve as a place for resistance, specifically the idea that, being in that space was ground zero for the "production of counter hegemonic discourse" (p.341) both in word and deed. On the other hand, I could not help but think about some of my privileged identities and wonder, who, is in the 'margins of the margins'. Who is in the shadows? Who are higher education/student affairs folks *not* talking about? After some silence. I finally responded to my classmate's question: "*Sex work. College students and sex work*."

As a developing critical scholar, I could not think of a better group of people to spend my time meditating on, I could not think about a better group of people to humbly offer my scholastic efforts and intellectual energy. This topic, this issue, is marred by some of the worst parts of the system of dominance, respectability politics, Christian dogma, economic terror and some of the most marginalized are affected by the laws, policies and discourse of the work. Black people, women, Trans folk, and gender non-conforming folks. I was excited at the possibilities and from that moment began contemplating how this project would manifest, how could I do it justice, and how I could avoid paternalism and savior-ism in my approach. As a Black, queer, fat-bodied, generationally poor person, my connection to this work is predicated on the notion that I know what oppression *feels* like, I know what it *does*. I understand the tremors

of its terrors and the aftershock of its violent consequences. I do not understand it in a sex worker context, but I understand what *it* is. I know what it means to be terrorized and victimized by the system of dominance.

It is with all of this in mind that I moved forward thoughtfully but boldly, committed to doing this justice work and unapologetically centering the experiences of sex workers and more importantly their voices in all aspects of the inquiry and writing of this dissertation. I hope that whatever comes of this work, and the time I and my collaborators sacrifice for it, that it will elicit something useful. That their voices will be used as tools toward the efforts to dismantle one of the many ways dominance plagues our lives and existence. Even now I continue to ask myself "What is the deliverable? What is the outcome? What would you have higher education and student affairs educators and practitioners *do*? What would you have the world *do?*" And the only response I have at the moment is: Better. I want us to do better.

Conclusion

My intent with this research design was to center the stories of students engaged in sex work, to collect those stories with art – and the art of storytelling in mind – to analyze those stories with attention to power and identity, and to share those stories in artful and impactful ways. I want to center the power of narratives in hopes that we may shift the tide how stories move and operate in our world. Of narrative inquiry Bruce (2008) articulates:

> It affirms the whole of the human person including the heart, body, mind, and spirit. It engages multiple and complex perspectives while respecting differences and remaining open to patterns of meaning in the complex. This kind of care for others, mutuality, affirmation, and respect for diversity resonate in the spiritual depths of the human person where one experiences the riches of life and the connection to ultimate reality (p. 335).

This design allowed for depth in the stories and to allowed collaborator experiences to be presented in ways that did not reduce their experiences or stories, a way that showed care for collaborators and affirmed them in holistically. My goal was to tell *good* stories and as Kim (2016) named, compelling stories, ones that make a difference in the lives of students engaged in sex work. In the following chapter I will share collaborator stories and my findings from this inquiry.

A Letter from Gui

To the student body at large,

It has come to my attention that many of us do not know of the existence of sex workers on our campus. Sex workers on our campus deserved to be treated as human beings with full autonomy, and respect. There are several things I think our campus can do for these students, like me, that might be of interest to everyone.

Things such as 24-hour testing, free testing, sexual health screenings on campus, increased access to birth control, contraceptives and sexual health education. It would also be helpful to institute a financial aid emergency loan program and a campus food bank at our school for people who may feel inclined to do sex work because of short term financial troubles.

As you see, if we can provide services to address this particular underserved population, then the rest of the campus can benefit from it. It is with all of this in mind I urge you and bring this up for your consideration.

-Gui

CHAPTER 4: STORIES & FINDINGS

I broke the following chapter into two parts. The first part includes individual stories written in a creative non-fiction form that illuminate the experiences of the collaborators in this study. These stories reveal in a visceral, unadulterated, way how collaborators experienced either their first encounter with sex work or a memorable encounter doing sex work while they were also students. I present these stories in this way to honor their voices free from academic jargon, APA, research reporting rules and standards, and without censorship. My decision to do this is grounded in my desire to convey the gravity of their experiences, the meaning-making and world-making they engaged in through their work. The creative non-fiction stories also connect back to the arts-based aspect of the genre-blurred narrative inquiry I discussed in chapter three. Collaborators worked with me on creating these stories and provided iterative feedback until we were able to complete them to their liking.

The second portion of this chapter more closely aligns with a traditional findings chapter where, through my analysis process, I constructed six key findings that cut across their narratives, their stories and their experiences.

PART 1: The Immortal Spirit of Wild Women – Collaborator Stories

Maliah: In the Mirror

I remember thinking how fascinating it was to look in the mirror and see myself and wonder about the woman I was becoming. To see her staring back. Knowing who I was, where I come from, and how I was brought up. From a well-known family, a family who's huge on…image. An image that didn't necessarily match, at least not privately. At least not all the time. At least not anymore.

thump thump A dull knock at the door. I knew that knock.

"Hey Baby, do you need the car today?"

"Yes sir, I need it a little earlier than normal too. I have some things to do before I get with my girls."

"Ok. I'll be back soon."

"Don't be late Dad!"

He shuffled away without responding. There was something poetic about meditating on my family's image while looking at my own image in the reflection of a mirror. I couldn't believe I was gonna do it, but I was broke as fuck, and school was starting in a couple of months. I wasn't the girl that people would expect to strip, but there I was – less than 24 hours before I would for the first time. If I hadn't spent all of my scholarship money, maybe I would have been doing something else that summer. Or maybe my dancer reality was inevitable, I mean… I *had* always joked about becoming a stripper.

The next few hours were the slowest of my life as I prepared myself to make my debut at the club. It was called Lavender. I still can't believe I had to fill out an application. Who "applies" to be a dancer?

I finally heard my Dad dragging his feet across the porch, so I went to help him and opened the door. He was carrying things in from the store. I closed the door behind him; he hurriedly dropped the keys in my hand, gave me a kiss, and I headed out the door. As I walked out, he asked deliberately

"What time will you be home?"

"I don't know Dad…Don't wait up." I cooed nonchalantly.

He peeked out the window as I walked to the car. I think he confusedly noticed my mostly empty high school cheerleading duffle bag that I had taken along with me (I graduated from high school two years ago). I only had a pair of stilettos in the bag – Mom's to be exact – but I didn't think she would notice that they were gone. And she never did. In the car I started the ignition and tried to leave quickly before he got it in his mind to come out or try and flag me down and ask more questions.

♦

My first stop was the plasma center in town. I had to make a few dollars to buy an outfit or two to dance in. That's what the house Mom, Donna, told me to bring. I had to laugh. Not only was I going to a club to dance that night, but I didn't even have money to buy an outfit to wear.

"Wow", I said it out loud to myself just to believe it.

Roughly two hours and $50 worth of my plasma gone later, I made my way to a small shop very near Lavender to buy some items. I kept rubbing my arm where the bandage was. All I could think was, I hope I can take this shit off by eight o'clock. When I walked in the little boutique, it was the type of place you would imagine coeds might go to get their bathing suit for spring break in South Beach. Something really 'Becky' about the whole situation. It was a little stuffy, probably because it was sweltering that day.

The salesperson in the boutique had soothing eyes and there was no one else in the store and I remember feeling nervous, like someone would see me there. She asked me if I was looking for anything in particular and I told her

> "Your cheap shit."

She laughed.

> "I'm dancing at Lavender tonight it's my first night working there."
>
> "Oh, ok honey. Don't be nervous. You're going to do so good. Just be confident, you're going to be great and I'll give you a discount so you can get what you need."

I appreciated that lady for a lot of reasons, mostly for saving me some money. I got my things and headed to my bestie's house. She was the only one who knew what was going on. When I got there, she was sure not to ask a whole lot of questions. She offered me some food, which I accepted, and then I took a nap.

♦

About an hour before I needed to be at the club I woke up, did my makeup, said a prayer, hugged my bestie, and hit the door. I got there early, around 7:30, and I will never forget that because I'm never early. For anything. I remembered thinking how cool I thought the club was when I arrived but looking back it was honestly just dusty as fuck, even though I didn't think so then. I was excited and nervous at the same time. My stomach was in knots flipping all over the place, my body would do the same in a few hours.

The host took me to the back of the house, they had been expecting me. She took me straight to the House Mom. For the next several minutes Donna ran down all the rules of the club, and I was

so lost. I kept wondering when the lessons would start: How to Dance 101, Building Clientele 280, Advanced Pole Acrobatics 500. The only pieces of information I remembered were: where to sit and be dressed and on the floor by eight.

"Ok, what outfit do I put on first? How many outfit changes do I do?"

Donna just smiled and walked away. There weren't any lockers or a place to put your things. There were just these long wooden tables. Some of the girls had storage bins to hold all of their stuff, but all I had was my cheer bag. I was not prepared at all. Jesus. I sat at one of the tables and got dressed. I put on my mom's heels and headed to the floor.

When I went out I didn't know what to do so I sat by another dancer, Katrina. I said hi, and squeaked out,

"This is my first day, I'm Maliah."

"Hi Maliah! I'm Katrina and I'm 19, how old are you?"

"I'm 20."

"Ok Maliah, you seem nervous."

All I could do was nod.

"I get it. But the best piece of advice I ever got and I'm gonna give to you is just be yourself! You'll make money, it'll come to you. The most important thing is to just be yourself."

"Ok"

I said with an anxious smile.

"You see that guy over there?"

Katrina nodded to a guy across the room. He had on a suit like he came to the club straight from the office.

"Go talk to him, he's nice."

I went over to sit with the man. He didn't smile when I walked up but I felt my anxiety start to subside a little, something about his energy seemed like he might be ok. He asked me my name and we exchanged pleasantries for about 30 minutes.

"It's my first time, I'm really nervous." I finally admitted.

He was so cool about it and took me to VIP so that my first dance could be in private. He was so nice to me. I'll never forget him. I remembered thinking how easy the money was, he wasn't a creep. "I could really get used to this. This isn't like the *Player's Club* at all!" I thought to myself.

A few minutes after I came back to the floor, I got a tap on the shoulder. It was Donna.

"You ready to dance baby?"

I nodded and followed her to the back. They were putting me on stage with a girl name Kelly. She was weird. While we waited to go on, she told me she was a naturalist, and while she explained what it meant, the only thing I really got from it was that she didn't wear deodorant, which was obvious. I stood way to close to her.

They finally announced us, and we came out on stage. I didn't know what to do so I just pretended I was with my girls and danced how I normally would have danced. I'll always

remember glancing at myself in the mirrors on the wall. “Wow. I’m really a dancer.” I kept saying it over and over in my head. “Wow. I’m really a dancer.”

Before I knew it, my first dance was over. I started collecting my money, it was about $150 and suddenly all these people start running up to me

> “When you get down come dance for me!” “I want to take you to VIP!” “Aye, let me holler at you!”

All these random guys trying to get my attention. I was lowkey feeling myself.

When I walked to the back of the house everyone was applauding me. Katrina came up to me, running, to give me a hug

> “You’re going to do so good here! Were you nervous?!”
>
> “I was nervous as hell!”
>
> “What?! You can’t tell, I could not tell. When you get onstage you look like you are a pro at this.”

I held onto that moment. It would keep me going that night, and several nights to come. The owner of the club was also backstage, he just nodded at me and said

> “Welcome.”

For the first time I felt like I would be ok. I started to feel a confidence I hadn’t felt before.

♦

By the end of the night I was tired. I put back on my regular clothes. I slid off my Mom’s stilettos and inspected them. They looked the same, she wouldn’t know I had them or wore them

for my debut. I wiped them off for good measure and then pulled my hair up in the mirror. She's back, co-ed Maliah, but not quite the same as before.

Donna was the last person I spoke to that night. We made small talk, she asked about me: where I was from, how old I was, what made me decide to dance. The standard questions. She asked me if I had told anyone about my new career, and I let her know only my best friend knew.
She was my support and comfort through that experience, and she said she would be there for me and protect me for as long as I was at Lavender. We would eventually get close and she told me all about her dancer life. Like the time when her mom walked in on *her* when she was naked and dancing onstage - a personal fear of mine. Yes, Donna also had a history in the club life, so she was the best person to understand what I was experiencing. She was the best maternal figure I could ask for in that space. She was like a grandmother to me, she was 60 after all. She embraced me, in a mama bear hug and walked me to the door so she could lock up. Right before I got out of sight, she asked me:

> "So, what was it like? Tonight, what will you remember about tonight?"

I spun on my heels to see her warm chubby face, and I thought back to having one of the most self-actualizing moments of my life while being on stage. I think about all the experiences I would go on to have and the one thing that remained consistent from that night forward is what I responded to her,

> "There's no greater feeling than being naked, sweating, and having dollar bills clinging to your body."

Donna laughed with her whole body. Head back, belly-aching laughter. I laughed too.

> "And you know what else Donna…there's nothing in the whole world like seeing yourself in the mirror…really seeing yourself, you know? There's nothing in this world better than that."

Kathleen: Three's Company

Waiting for his reply to my text felt like an eternity but when he did the vibration almost made me jump out of my seat.

buzz buzz

Harvey: Are you close?

Kathleen: I think so, I can't find it.

A couple. I really jumped in head first into that world, that work. I wondered what they'd be like…the couple.

buzz buzz

Harvey: Call me.

Well, here we go. I dialed his number and during the time it took him to pick up my call, 9000 thoughts went through my head. The time felt like an eternity. I was incredibly nervous but thankfully when he answered – I don't know what it was – I was relieved because he was so normal sounding, and calm, and confident. I was happy that he didn't give off creep vibes, I was thrilled actually. He gave me instructions on where to park, so I could have dinner with he and his partner, Jessica. I was glad she was there, it felt safer with another woman present, I could pretend that we were all just friends hanging out.

He was probably in his 40's, she was in her 30's. I wondered how we looked together…how we appeared to other people as we sat in that larger than life booth at the restaurant. I tried to seem mature, even though the vodka and cranberry I ordered was likely a dead giveaway, real undergrad. But despite my curly hair and cherub like face, I wasn't carded by the waiter and I ordered the most delicious Mediterranean plate for dinner.

Over the course of enjoying our meal, the conversation immediately turned to what we were doing on the website where we met, how we got into it, and what we were hoping to get out of it. I think they were the first polyamorous couple I had ever personally met, and it didn't take long for the subject of sex to come up. It got real intimate. Real fast. I was thankful for the vodka and cranberry at that point. I noticed that Harvey talked a fuck ton, which isn't surprising because he thinks he's pretty great. Fabulous. Jessica didn't really say anything at all, very quiet. She and I would ultimately never really hit it off or have chemistry, but I did continue seeing them for several months after our inaugural meeting.

At the end of dinner Harvey invited me to a club with them, a swingers club. I eagerly accepted the invitation because somehow in my head I imagined, actual swings. Like a type of circus themed club where people swung at the bar and drank. Who *wouldn't* want to go to a club like that? I followed them in my car to the place.

..

Have you ever experienced a place that smelled dark? Dark has a smell and it smelled that way at the club. It also smelled like food. Chocolate. Powdered Sugar. Sweet smells. The walls were a dark red and floor-to-ceiling black silk curtains hung all over the place. The main room was

called GenPop and there was a dessert bar, folks eating, drinking, a few dance floors and a few poles. Deeper inside there was a nude room. Creep central. Boners everywhere. We made our way back to VIP and along the way there were the most beautiful women, glamazons in leather corsets who worked for the club. VIP was a lot fancier than GenPop, they had glamazons after all; and there were private bedrooms and larger than life leather couches. GenPop, VIP, it didn't really matter, you couldn't get into this place unless you were a member. It was exclusive.

We stopped at the bar to get more drinks and continue to chat, I could feel my guard continue to come down. The music, the people; the atmosphere was intoxicating. It was in that moment that I realized I was truly having a good time. I was relaxed. After a while Harvey grabbed my hand and led me toward a private bedroom. I grabbed Jessica's hand and the three of us walked together. We spent several hours together. Some of the best I would come to spend.

..

In the parking lot Harvey handed me a wad of cash, later I would realize it wasn't nearly enough but at the time I was glad to have it. Jessica waited in the car while we handled the business of our meeting. Then I waited for valet to bring me my car. I had about a two-hour drive ahead of me to get home. I turned on the radio and listened to some music as I replayed the events in my head. Rihanna's "*Work"* played – how appropriate – and I was donning an undeniable post-orgasm glow. The Harvey & Jessica glow. It would be one of the few I would ever have as a sex worker.

buzz buzz

Harvey: We really like you, we'd love to see you again. Are you free in a few weeks?

Kathleen: Sure thing.

That buzz… that notification from Harvey – always bursting through my phone and killing the silence, interrupting my thoughts – would come to be the green light to many adventures. My experiences with them were almost always adventures. I would go on to attend swinger parties and Halloween hotel parties. I would eventually walk through a club naked and unashamed. I would have all eyes on me. I would learn to dance on a pole and win a wet t-shirt contest. I would make lots of money and mostly be ok doing it.

Sadly, not all of my experiences would rise to the glamor and fun of Harvey and Jessica. In fact, that was rarely what it was like. It was like letting a man pound me in the woods for 30 minutes before his shift at the haunted house. It was like meeting another man on his lunch break and fucking in my car until he gets too paranoid, throws money at me and runs out of the car; his pants barely on. It would be times that I did things I didn't want to and get stiffed on payment. It only happened once, and I never let it happen again, but it happened. It was like losing loved ones and only knowing strained personal intimate relationships ever again.

All of it I carried. All of it. And it all matters. I would experience each and every one of those things and still get up for class in the morning. It's wasn't always easy, but it was always an experience. And what is life if not for experiences? The easy and good stuff; the messy and hard stuff. And in between writing papers, cramming for tests, and making money, I wondered, and I hoped. I hoped that through my sex work that I could still learn, still grow, and still love. But most of all I wondered if I could ever *be* loved…be really loved.

I still wonder.

Gui: My Totally Unplanned, Incredibly Unorganized, Entirely Episodic, Life as a Sex Worker

"*Call up, ring once, hang up the phone*
To let me know you made it home
Don't want nothing to be wrong with part-time lover…"

Stevie Wonder was on to something with this song. I honestly thought that three times would have been the charm for me. But here I am on time number four, hustling for quick cash. I have a complicated relationship with sex work. Let me count the ways:

1

The very first time I was a freshman and my private student loan was late. My scholarship was late, and financial aid was threatening to put a hold on my account. I absolutely could not afford the hold I needed to register for classes. If I didn't register, I would have had to wait until the following year for one of the classes because it filled up so quickly, effectively holding me up for an entire year. I also didn't have books for class. That year was a mess, honestly. I confided in a guy about all my troubles, we met on a gay meetup app. He not so casually offered to give me the money if I blew him a couple times.

Quickest money I ever made. Crisis averted.

2

Familial issues are always hard when you're the oldest child. I was born to a multi-ethnic Asian family, in that context the eldest has a lot of responsibility. Maybe more than I care to have at times, but Mom wants me to come home, Grandma isn't doing well. Although going home would hold up my studies, I agreed. I told her not to send the money through paypal, *I told her*

twice. Paypal takes at least a day to process and it's the weekend. My bank doesn't process on the weekend. I needed to be on the train yesterday.

On the suggestion of some friends, back to gay meetup I went. It's funny, they – my friends – somehow think what they do and what I do is different. It isn't. The only difference is I get cold hard cash, they get material things. But ultimately a transaction is a transaction. A guy offered to give me the $69 for a ticket so I can get home in exchange for my… liquid assets.

In less than an hour I was headed down the coast on a train home. I gave Mom back her money when I got there.

..

"If I'm with friends and we should meet
Just pass me by, don't even speak
Know the word's "discreet" with part-time lovers"

..

3

Another fucking parking ticket. My pass expired so the tickets had piled up. But now I had to pay them, or I was going to get a hold on my account from parking services. Again. Student loans took so long to process there, at the new university I transferred to. Between 6 and 12 weeks. I was working and busy all the time and I should have already applied for aid, but I didn't. I worked 20 to 30 hours a week, I was a caretaker, a full-time student. Who has time for that shit?

There was a guy…this one guy I could ask. He propositioned me a while ago. It reminded me of the propositions I got in high school. I lived in a state where tourism was huge, as was sex

tourism. My friends and I always dealt with shady propositions and comments from the tourists in the area. When we were waiting for our bus, hanging out in the city after school, going to the nearby corner store; proposition after proposition. I think in a lot of ways I – we – were desensitized to sex work and propositions from white men, from Europe, Australia, South America and the U.S. The "generous" propositions from the benevolently racist white men.

Ticket(s) paid.

4

This brings me to number four. My laptop died and here I am one more time. Venturing into my totally unplanned, incredibly unorganized, entirely episodic, life as a sex worker. I pulled up but before getting out of my car I check the map for the nearest hospital and nearest well-lit gas station; one is two blocks to the left, and the other two miles down the road respectively. This guy is something…he's the kind of client that likes (loves) a good stereotype. I get to go and pretend to be the "coquettish and shy but totally slutty Asian boy" for him. I mean, I have to deal with racism every day, at least in this context I get some money in the process.

I wonder what mom would think. She used to always say that if the worse should happen she would engage in some sort of sexual work if it meant that her children could be able to survive in this world. She sees it as just another job that people do. Would she choose it as her first career? No, she wouldn't. But should the need ever arise? She said she would do what it takes. We're alike that way, Mom and me.

I've been sitting in the car for a while now and I know I need to go in…class in the morning.

sigh I reason with myself…

"Ok Gui…after this song."

"And then a man called our exchange
But didn't want to leave his name
I guess two can play the game
Of part-time lovers

You and me, part-time lovers

But, she and he, part-time lovers."

Tianna: Fight Night

I remember being so sick of hearing about the fight. Mayweather and Pacquiao. It was all anyone seemed to be talking about. It was why I was on that God forsaken road-trip with some of my sorors. Despite all of that, there was a small part of me deep down inside that was glad I decided to go because I'd been really depressed. School, work, my sorority, all the other clubs and organizations. It became all too much. In fact, by the time of that trip I had lost a really good job on campus. So, I needed the trip. To get away…and more importantly to make some money.

I had packed several things, but I had no idea what I was going to wear to meet him. A huge side-effect of depression – for me – was that I had gained weight. So, I didn't even know if any of that shit was gonna fit. How am I gonna pull off looking decent?

♦

The girls and I rented an AirBnb and the best part about that particular group of girls was that we didn't feel the need to be together in groups for the entire trip. So, I didn't even need to come up with an alibi for why I would eventually dip on them later. I'm not really a "partier" so they had come to expect me to always do my own thing.

I texted Mike – the guy I met online – about the plan tonight. He was slow and sporadic to respond and so it kind of let me know he might be an older person. Older than me anyway. When he did respond he kept asking what I was wearing, and I said I wasn't sure yet. He just said he wanted me to look as sexy as possible. He told me to meet him at MGM once the fight was over. I was worried about traffic, so I left before the fight even got started.

♦

I sat in the parking lot of the MGM hotel waiting for Mike to hit me back. It was taking a while but surprisingly I wasn't losing my nerve. I gazed at myself in the mirror…my hair was cute. My face was beat, and I picked out a red lipstick. Classic hoe. As I sat waiting it was clear that Mayweather had won the fight based on the Black excellence that began to spill out of MGM. The most vivid memory I have of that night was just being at and around the hotel. It was like something out of a movie.

Black people were everywhere. A Mayweather win was like a win for all of us. Dope boys, business and music executives, doctors, lawyers; riding in Maseratis, Tesla trucks, BMWs, Benzes, Cadillacs, Porsches, Rolls Royce, and every expensive foreign car you could think of. Someone in a red Tesla was blasting UGK, and every guy had a beautiful girl in Louboutin's with tight dresses, breasts hiked high, and thigh-high hemlines. They sported every type of jewel, gold, platinum and all levels of glam and stunt were front and center on the strip. Young Black women and men living their best life in Vegas. It was so much opulence that I remember thinking I was glad I left the house and came on the trip. No matter how the night ended, no matter what happened, I felt alive again. It was like I was back and finally engaging society again; bearing witness to all of this excitement and seeing that it was Black.

Mike finally texted me and asked me to send a picture of what I was wearing. I sent a photo and also told him that I had a tighter one-shoulder number if he preferred, to which he replied, “Tight as you can get. Short as you can get. I need some arm candy.” I changed clothes and headed inside. There were more cars – cars I had never seen before – butterfly doors, people were blasting music, drinking all types of alcohol and lean. It was like the whole property was a party. Everything was a buzz. I remembered seeing Jesse Jackson as I exited the garage and knew that this night was bound to be surreal.

♦

I was nervous walking in. Mike told me to meet him at the bar and I spotted him from the back based on what he told me he was wearing. I walked up and tapped on his shoulder and said, “I’m Tianna.” When he turned around, I couldn’t believe how good he looked and I was so relieved “Thank you, God” I thought to myself. I know it sounds really weird to be like ‘thank you God for helping me with this hoeing tonight’ but I was legitimately relieved like, wow, this is not going to be that bad.

Mike said he didn’t drink but that he would buy me a few if I wanted them. I accepted his offer because I needed the drink, I needed to calm down and help manage my inhibitions. I ordered whiskey. I was obviously interested in making money that night, but I also wanted to know more about Mike and his career. I am in school after all, and if I can make some cool connections or build my network, I feel like that would be dope. A lot of men get off on that shit. Helping the poor coed…it feeds into their daddy complexes, I think.

None of my hope for conversation materialized because we didn’t have much conversation at all, although I’m sure Mike would disagree. I spent most of the time listening to him ramble about

himself and how great he thought he was and how much fun he had. He was sure to let me know how glad he was that he was rich and could afford to come to the fight at all. He also regretted not inviting me to attend the fight itself after seeing "how beautiful I was in person." Son of a bitch.

Before we could leave the bar, Mike started making plans about future trips and suggested I come travel to see him and all I kept thinking was, can we get through tonight first? I interrupted him and just said: "Let's go upstairs."

On the elevator there were 5 or 6 younger guys and it was a hilarious moment because the relationship between Mike and I was pretty clear. I mean, he's like near 50 and wearing a suit and then there's me in my black, tight, one-shoulder piece, wearing red lipstick. I saw the guys looking at each other kind of laughing, but the best part was that I was also in on the joke. So, I'm looking at them smiling and Mike is oblivious to all of it. They exited before us as we made our way to the top floor. I just smiled. They smiled back as if almost to say, "good luck."

As the elevator neared our floor, I remembered thinking, "Well this is it. Once I do this, I can never undo it. I'm making a life choice for myself. I recall thinking about how there's so much stigma around sex work and I wondered, if I do this tonight, am I going to wake up tomorrow sobbing? Am I going to feel like less of a person? Less of myself?" The elevator doors opened, and we walked toward the room.

TJ (interrupts the story): Was it a long walk from the elevator to the room?

Tianna: It always is.

♦

The next day Mike wanted me to stay and have breakfast and hangout in the MGM with him for the day, not realizing, I too, was briefly visiting Vegas. So, I reminded him

> "Remember that time when I told you I'm doing this for money because I'm in college? I'm in college... So, I have college stuff to do. If I had the freedom to just lay up with you for 24 hours, I wouldn't be in this position"
>
> "Wow you're feisty! I like you. When can I see you again?"
>
> "Text me." and I walked out the room.

As I took the long walk back to the elevator, I kept imagining like 15 officers were going to jump out and arrest me. Gotcha! This type of sex work is illegal after all. I could just picture having to tell my mom I'm in jail for hoeing. I met back up with my girls. Everyone recounted their tale of the night before. I made up a fake one of course. And we road tripped back home. It's interesting because I didn't wake up sobbing, questioning my existence or my choice. I didn't feel bad, all I felt was relieved. I felt better than I had in months and just a little freer from my depression. I felt really good because I had money. Cash. It was bill money, it was food money, it was Starbucks money. It was great.

I reclined my seat in the car and sipped my iced dirty chai and reflected on my night as we headed back to campus. I love drives like those because I love seeing the mountains and road trips provide the best opportunity to see them. They're timeless.

You know what else I think is timeless? Sex work. I have engaged in one of the world's oldest professions and that means something, it matters. After that fateful night in Vegas, and each time I had a client to meet I would always stop to look in the mirror at myself before I left. I would stand there and think about how many women in history have had the same experience as me.

Going out to make a person – or people – feel good for a few hours. To be therapist, confidant and doctor. Timeless. And honestly, what could possibly be more noble than that?

Stokely: Dear Nana, It's Me

"Have you never seen a person praying before…?"

He didn't respond. He just brushed past and went up the staircase. Fucking white people. It's like they can't comprehend life past their limited-as-fuck gaze or something. Of course, I'm sure he's seen people praying before but probably only within the confines of some boring ass Presbyterian mass that nobody cares about and never made any real difference. Well, some of us pray in staircases (while we wait for our clients). Dumbass.

> *Nana Buruku…grandmother of the Orishas, watcher of women, protector of all that is femme. I come to you as humbly as I know how. Please help make this night go easy. Make this job, easy. Protect me. Please help make everything okay, please help ensure that I get the money.*

Spirituality and spiritual work is important to me, I mean, sex work is sort of spiritual work if you think about it. Being connected to the Orishas and the ancestors is important to me, it grounds me, it grounds our people; a truth that is as old as sex work itself. The Orishas look out for us, they *look* like us, they are *our* deities.

Louis, my client, always tries to make small talk and tonight is no different. I'm not sure what would be considered less than small talk, tiny talk? Cuz he wasn't ever really talking about shit. Last time I saw him he was going on and on about how he was against affirmative action. I think he thought maybe I was one of those respectable-ass Black people. Depending on the day and

my energy I try to educate his unaware ass. But today, I just don't feel like it. I just want to sit and enjoy the ride in silence. Normally we would just do hot tub dates, and sometimes I don't even have sex with him; we just do some heavy petting and have random conversation. But tonight, he wants to go to a swingers party. He's into that shit…swingers and nudist parties. Normally I tell him no, but this time I agreed.

I'm extremely nervous. We agreed that I did not have to have sex with anyone there or have sex with him, he just wants some…touching. I'm still nervous, because even though he's not asking me to fuck these other people, he's asking me to be around them and interact with them and I don't know how comfortable I feel with that. That was why I took that moment in the staircase before leaving the dorm. In the car, Louis rambled, and I prayed to Nana.

Be with me Nana. Be with me.

About 45 minutes later we arrived to the hotel where the party was being hosted. I felt eerie about the whole situation and my stomach was in knots. We took the long walk from the parking lot to the entrance. As we came up on the room, I can hear some sort of soft rock playing. It sounded like Journey or some other 80's shit that was before my time. Louis knocked on the door.

Silence.

Louis knocked again and after a few moments a woman with jet-black hair answered the door by poking her head out, and nothing else.

“What are you doing Louis…?”

“Gretchen…I don’t know what you mean?”

“Come inside, I need to talk to you. Would you mind just waiting right here for a minute dear?” I agreed.

Louis stepped inside and there I was again, except instead of a staircase I was in a hallway. I was so confused but whatever was going on, it was making me even more anxious. I wanted to leave but where was I going to go? I was at least 45 minutes away from my dorm and if I do leave, I won’t make any money, it means I would lose money; and I cant. I can’t.

Nana Buruku. I don’t know how, but please work this out for me. Please.

I calmed myself and thought about the ancestors, the Orishas, the divinities, and all those rooting for me. They just want to see us survive, to see us do good. We are the front of the line and they are all behind us, lined up and holding us up. All they want to do is see us continue and see us do better and suffer less. They want to see us do well. That’s why I continue to develop and cultivate my relationship with the ancestors so I can continue to make asks like this, and hopefully find support in them.

Several moments later, Louis returned and said that they wouldn’t let me in because I wasn’t 21. I’m only 19. As I turned to leave Gretchen looked at me earnestly and said bye.

“I guess we could just go to a hot tub?”

“That’s cool, Louis.”

He was disappointed and I faked my disappointment; I was so fucking happy. We went to another hotel and had a hot tub date like I had done many times before with him. We had some good ass conversations that night. We showered together and hung out in the tub, I twerked on him and we just talked. I spent the next four or five hours educating him. I've made it my personal mission to help him unpack his transphobia and we also spent some time talking about the erasure of Black Muslims in conversations about islamophobia. He's starting to see how the U.S. government ain't shit. I don't think he'll do anything about it, but if I've got to spend this time with him I rather we spend it talking about what I want to talk about.

As I returned to my dorm the next morning, I kept meditating on sex work as resistance. Resistance to the law, resistance to how women are "supposed" to be in this society, and resistance to colonialism. Sex workers have always existed. We haven't always been criminalized but we've always been here. I thought about that as my night ended the way I had hoped it would. Nana and the ancestors really came through for me. In my heart, I know they are proud of me because I'm surviving in this world; a world that I'm not meant to survive in.

Dear Nana, thank you.

Kemi: A Small Jump

8:00 pm

Dear Prospective Student,

We're thrilled that you are interested in our graduate program and we look forward to your application. While we work very hard to remove any barriers to student success in our program, unfortunately we have no way of waiving the application fee. Below we have linked you to potential resources but they are time-sensitive and at this

time it may be too late. We hope you are able to ultimately submit your application. We would love to consider you for our program.

Sincerely,

Graduate Program Number 3

Damn. I know I'm going to go to grad school no matter what, but at this point I don't see how. I can't afford my grad applications – $75 a pop – and this is the third fee waiver rejection I've received. I just paid for the fucking GRE and I barely even have money for food. I'm stressed as fuck as an undergrad and the thought of grad school is making it worse and haven't even gotten there yet. I can't ask my family, we're not close and they're abusers. I grew up in an abusive household and asking your abusers for money is like selling a part of your soul…it's just not a pleasant experience. I've sold plasma here and there but it's not cutting it and those applications are due in a few days. Fuck.

9:00 pm

Kemi

*Girl. I'm broke as fuck. *eyeroll**

Rachel

LOL me too. What else is new?

Kemi

Yeah…but like if I don't come up with some money soon I don't know if I'll be able to complete these grad school applications. Like…

Rachel

Damn. Well what you gon do sis?

Kemi

You know what…fuck it. I'm about to get on the Shush app and sell some nudes.

Rachel

BITCH!!! I know that's right! I was just about to tell you to do it. People do that shit all the time, you should be able to come up easy.

Kemi

Bet.

10:00 pm

Let me look in this closet for some cute booty shorts. I need some good lighting too; good nudes are honestly all about angles.

click

I feel like a contortionist trying to get the best shot, LMAO. This is it, I think.

click

Perfect. Let me post this shit up.

DM me for details about nudes.

10:05 pm

48 unread messages

Guy1

how much for a pic?

Idiot1

lemme see…

Idiot2

bend over baby ☺

Guy2

wats the rates,,,?

Kemi (to everyone)

Hey, this is Kemi, my pics are $5 each but I also have a premium ChitChat account and for $25 you can have access for the life of the app. If you want personal videos we can discuss.

10:15 pm

Guy1

y would I pay u for nudes?

Idiot1

I get nudes for free ma

Idiot2

*yeah…not payin for nudes *shrug**

Guy2

…

Kemi

Ok…then why the fuck are yall in my inbox?

11:00 pm

Scammer1

I'll buy some…but how do I know if you're cute?

Scammer2

Can I get a lil sneak peek? I'll buy.

Kemi

PG 13 Rated *Photo 1*
PG 13 Rated Photo 2
PG 13 Rated Photo3
(sent)

*Those are PG… imagine when I take off the bra and shorts..*fire emoji**

Silence.

1:00 am

Fucking jerks.

Took my photos and ran. No more doing that Kemi, what the fuck. Now you're getting played.

1 unread message

SweetGuy1
I'll buy some. How much?

Kemi
$20 & you gotta send me the money first.

SweetGuy1
Of course
sends money

OMG. Yes! Shit. Like this shit was getting old. Let me send him a few extra.

SweetGuy1
Wow, u r really beautiful. Thank you.

Kemi
No problem, lmk if u ever want more ;-)

SweetGuy1
Do you do any direct service stuff?

I haven't really thought about it but… I could make all the money I need tonight.

♦

I've always done sex in exchange for something.

I've done sex in exchange for love and affection. If I'm bored and want someone to hang out with me, I know no nigga is gonna come and hang out for free; he wants pussy. I think if we were all honest with ourselves, we would have to admit that a lot of us are casually engaging in transactional sex. I've never had a boyfriend, never had a girlfriend, never been in a committed monogamous relationship. For me, sex has always been a transaction. I've always used it to get the things I want, and it's never been about this "sacred space".

I've always been ok with fucking someone and not knowing their name. I'm okay with fucking someone and not caring if they give a fuck about me. I'm okay with fucking someone and never talking to them again. I'm comfortable with casualness and sex.

♦

Well…fuck it.

Kemi
Call me.

incoming call from SweetGuy1

2:45 am

Kemi
BITCH. I did it!!!

Rachel
OMG!!!! How did it go?!

Kemi
It was good, he was really sweet! He couldn't afford much more than some heavy petting but it's all good! I got what I needed.

Rachel
Ok cool I'm just glad everything went ok!! I'm proud of you.

Kemi
I'm proud of me too! I wanted money. I needed money and I got money!! I'M GOING TO GRAD SCHOOL!!

I been exchanging sex for things for a while. I've been smiling seductively for things for a while. I've been leveraging showing my cleavage to get things for a while. The better question is when

have I *not* engaged in sex for things? I can't think of a time in my life that I haven't been using the projected sexual desires of others onto me.

I don't know how to be a girlfriend, but I'm a *really* good fuck. And because I'm good at sex, I can do it for other things I need. Transitioning from wanting things in exchange for sex, to wanting actual money in exchange for sex…it's not a hard jump for me. It's a small jump.

So, if you're going to text me, call me, shoot your shot with me, or DM me and tell me about how much I turn you on? That's great.

Fucking pay me.

Maria: Boobs, Hips, and Hoe Barbies

The jig is up. I don't know how she knows but she does. I don't know what the fuck is going to happen but there's nothing I can do about it now. It wouldn't be a big deal if I was only waitressing at the club like it started out, but I'm dancing at a whole other club now. I can't believe she bought that shit; that I was waitressing at a "hookah lounge". What hookah lounge is open until 4 or 5 in the morning? When I was waitressing, I would leave the house in my uniform with my hair and makeup done. Now I'm leaving the house with a duffle bag right after rolling out of bed – since I get ready at the club – it's easier that way. But I think I got too comfortable and now everything is catching up with me.

Looking back, I think I always knew that I would eventually dance somehow. I have always been super fascinated with strippers and fast money; and I think it has everything to do with how sex was projected onto me. I've always been a curvy girl. One day in elementary school I woke up and – boom – I had hips and I've been labeled a hoe ever since; regardless of what I did or didn't do.

I remember hanging out with friends and some of their parents would give me the side-eye. I'd overhear them asking "Why is my kid hanging out with her?" all because I had hips and boobs before everyone else. One time another kid's mom told her daughter not to play with me because I played with Bratz dolls. Her daughter had Barbie Dolls and she didn't understand why I would want to play with "hoe Barbies." I preferred to play with Bratz dolls because they looked more like me than Barbie did. But I guess that made me a "on-the-way hoe." I didn't even have my first kiss until I was 16 but it didn't matter, I was a hoe to everyone based on my body. My body kind of put me on this path. My body – and apparently Bratz dolls – indicated where I was going. Thanks a lot, Bratz.

"Maria…did you hear me?" mom's voiced pierced through my thoughts

"No Mom, what did you say?"

"I said what's the worst thing you've ever done?"

Oh Shit.

"Honestly" I said "…lie to you."

Mom has been onto me for a while now. But I think this is it, it's over. I'd been being kind of shady and she knew it. My location – on my cell phone – was always turned off now so she couldn't track where I was. I told her it was broke – it wasn't. I was tired all the time and I could tell that she finally started to pick up on things. I thought this dinner was to celebrate her new car, but I was wrong. I never wanted to lie to my mom, and I guess I won't anymore.

"What did you lie to me about?" Her face was stern, serious.

"You know, don't you?"

"Yes, but I want to hear you say it."

I'm about to have a full-blown panic attack and I'm doing my best not to hyperventilate at the dinner table.

"It's okay Maria, what are you so afraid of?"

"Well…Mom. I'm dancing."

"I know…I know."

She just took a sip of her water and looked off in the distance. Tears started welling up in my eyes. I didn't know how to take her reaction, I almost preferred a different one.

"So, what now? Are you going to slap me? Are you going to make a scene?"

"You really think a lot less of me than I thought."

"Am I out of the house? Can I at least keep my car? What's about to happen?"

"What are you talking about? Nothing is going to happen. I love you no matter what you do."

"What about Dad?"

> "He's not thrilled about it, but he understands. He just wants you to be safe. *We*… just want you to be safe."

We spent the next few hours just talking, and I told her the whole story about how I got here. How I went to a club with friends on New Year's Eve and it was the best night of my life, the rest was history. I assured her that I didn't do VIP or extras at the club. She told me that it would have been okay if I did. I don't think she believed me, but I will always appreciate her for understanding either way. She revealed to me that our family is no stranger to sex work. She told me that my dad used to work as a security guard at a strip club, and at one point he also worked as a phone sex operator. I couldn't believe it. I still can't. She also told me that my abuela was a gogo dancer back in Mexico many decades ago. I guess it *does* run in the family. What's that bible saying? "There's nothing new under the sun" or something like that, I think I know what it means now.

♦

Once my parents found out I felt like a small weight had been lifted. My Dad and I never talked about his past or mine. It would make us both uncomfortable, so I didn't really see the point. But I appreciated that he was okay with it, even if it was silently; and I am still curious to know how he got into that work all those years ago. Maybe we'll talk about it someday when more time has passed.

While I don't have to worry about my family, I do worry about being found out at school though. I don't dance anymore but I know people don't have the capacity to understand. As a society we

can't even talk about sex comfortably. We don't have a shared understanding that people use it, experience it, or value it differently. So, I don't expect them to even begin to understand that world.

This whole double life thing is probably the most difficult part of it all. I'm not ashamed of what I did but I am terrified that it might get out. If you're found out as a sex worker, it becomes part of your life forever. No one was ever shocked to find out someone was a waiter 20 or 30 years ago. No one is ever thrown off if they find out you used to be a cashier or once worked in retail. But it's like "You were a stripper?! OMG!". It's all so hypocritical because the same girls that judge sex workers, dance just like me when they go out clubbing. Then they sit around during finals week complaining about their shit classes that they barely study for and say "Oh fuck it, I'm going to be a stripper" but in the same breath go around and judge people who do it, people who are actually being about it. They grow up to be Mothers who instill respectability into their daughters and judge other little girls who have hips, little girls who have boobs, and little girls who play with Bratz dolls.

They joke about wanting to have a sugar daddy or wanting transactional sex not realizing that it too is sex work. They joke about someone's job and lifestyle as if we were failures…as if we *are* failures. And while they joke about others' reality, I wonder if they reflect on why. Are they jealous? Do they wish they had the knowledge or confidence to do what I did? In a world of fake ass Barbies who all act the same, think the same, and believe the same; I'll take being a Bratz hoe with boobs, hips, and a history every day of the week. And I regret nothing.

PART 2: FINDINGS

In this section I present findings from the data. My research purpose was outlined through three broad areas of interest, including how social identity and their relationship to power shapes the experiences of college student sex workers, how college and university leaders can support them, and what they are learning as a result of engaging sex work. I situate these broad categories as grand tour themes since these areas of interest guided the inquiry. Beyond these three broad themes, I offer a total of six key findings that speak specifically to trends and patterns that I recognized in collaborator narratives through the Listening Guide analysis process.

Before discussing the broad themes and key findings I will briefly discuss student histories and motivations to offer critical context. While histories and motivations are not necessarily findings in this study, I hope to situate collaborator experiences in ways that more deeply contextualize the subsequent discussion.

Motivations

Unsurprisingly, and in keeping with nearly all of the existing literature on college student sex workers (Haeger & Deil-Amen, 2010; Roberts, Bergström & La Rooy, 2007; Sagar et al, 2016; Tsitsi, 2010), money was the main motivator for all collaborators in this study and their decision to engage sex work. Specifically, many students cite the amount of money students receive for sex work in relation to the amount of time they spend doing the work as a primary factor for their decision. However, based on the stories of the collaborators in this study, the *amount* of money and *circumstances* through which they needed money varied greatly based on other factors. For example, as evidenced in his story, Gui only engaged sex work in crunch time/pinch time situations to get himself out of a financial bind that threatened other aspects of

his life that he deemed important (getting home to a sick relative, avoiding university holds being placed on his account etc.). On the other hand, Kathleen simply wanted financial independence. More specifically, her loan debt was looming, and she wanted to take responsibility to pay it off herself instead of her parents,

> …realizing that I was probably going to be graduating the next year, I had a lot of student loans. My parents said they would help me, and while I appreciate that and know I'm very lucky for that, I didn't feel like they should. So, you know, looking at your $40,000 plus debt, it's like you start to panic about it.

Although money was the primary motivation for collaborators in this study, the circumstances and context through which they identified the need for money was different than in previous studies; which I discuss further in chapter five.

Histories

All collaborators recall having some deliberate experience or coming to knowing around sex/sexuality that in many ways informed their path to engaging sex work. For example, both Tianna and Maria distinctly recalled how people would project sex onto their bodies when they were growing up. In Maria's story, for example, her early physical development informed how she was perceived and treated by other kids as well as their parents. She was often considered a "hoe" simply because of how she looked and the types of toys she played with. She discussed in her interview that once she did start exploring her sexuality those projections framed her understanding of sex and who she was, sexually. Tianna had a similar experience,

> I remember once I started growing hips, I was suddenly this jezebel and I was treated differently. And at 14 or 15, I'm trying to make sense of my place in all of it. Then I started high school and some of the older girls would ask me "Are you a hoe? Because

> you kind of look like a hoe." I remember a specific incident in high school. I was in a large group of friends and this girl's boyfriend was coming to visit and she said that everyone could meet her boyfriend except me she said, "I don't need all that ass around him." Although she was joking, I didn't like being made to feel that way. So, I embraced it. It made me feel edgy. Like yeah, I was this bad ass hoe, what's up? So, I'm being hit with all of these messages for years and so I finally just decided to run with it. Like maybe I am this person people think I am. I started being flippant about sexual things even though I wasn't sexually active at all.

In addition to projections onto collaborators that formed their experience some of them had environmental or familial factors that influenced the ease of transitioning into sex work. Kemi, for example, discussed her complicated relationship with sex and how that informed her transition into sex work,

> I don't want to do the thing where people are talking about sex work like "I had a tragic childhood and so that's why I do sex work." I'm not trying to frame it that way. But in thinking about my sexual history and how my sexual identity formed, I've never been under the illusion that I had to enjoy sex or that sex was something that needed to be pleasurable for me.

At the end of her story, Kemi recounted that she had always been engaging in sex for something, that it was/is a transaction that she engages in, and she suggests that many people do also, if they would only be honest with themselves. Similarly, Gui discussed how his exposure to sex workers in his community growing up – although stigmatized – made him more receptive and open to it as a legitimate form of work and survival. He spoke in his story about how his mom had always told him that she would engage in sex work if she ever needed to. Gui also shared,

> Sex work was stigmatized in my community as I was growing up, but I still felt that they should be respected, and I still feel like it's a legitimate source of work – desperate times call for desperate measures. I know some people do it for fun, but I understand for some people it's the only source of income that they can get that's steady. So for me, I would never say that I was "predisposed" to sex work because that carries a lot of connotations with it that are very anti-sex worker; but I would say that I was more open to it than other people would be. I understood why someone might want to do something like sex work.

As evidenced by collaborator quotes, they each have connected histories and experiences to sex work - or sex and sexualization generally - that informed how they perceived sex work, how they perceived themselves as sexual people, and their ultimate transition into sex work.

Sex Work and Social Identity

> *I haven't been able to capitalize off of my queer identity very much. I fucking wish I was able to get a sugar momma; just do some gay shit for pay. Of course, I'm gay for free all the time, you know what I'm saying? I would love to exploit my sexuality, that would be so amazing. - Stokely*

When I started this dissertation research, I intended to focus on an experience in the margins of the margins; that is, when scholars and educators have equity and justice conversations, what voices and experiences are missing? I developed two key findings related to social identity. First, collaborators in this study feel they are further marginalized beyond what I conceptualized; they are in the margins of the margins (of the margins). They situate sex work as a minoritized identity that is further complicated by their racial and sexual identities. The second key finding illustrated the complexity of their identities as queer sex workers (for those

that are queer). They experienced difficulty in negotiating/reconciling the violence of dealing with cisgender heterosexual clientele and how that experience obscures their own sexual identities.

In the Margins of the Margins (Of the Margins)

As queer and/or sex workers of color, the collaborators in this study were acutely aware of how power and dominance differentially influence their sex work realities. The rules are different, the stakes are different, the support and consequences are different than that of white and heterosexual sex workers who are primarily centered in extant research. In framing their stories through an intersectional lens, the multiplicative nature of power and dominance emerged constantly. For example, Kemi articulates how she must navigate sex work as a fat, black, woman versus how she perceives white women being able to navigate sex work,

> I would literally look at what I knew white girls were charging and cut my rates in half to make sure I could get clientele. The other big difference is safety, as a Black woman I am under no illusions that if I came up missing the police would give a fuck about me. I get that all sex workers deal with police but adding on that I'm in a Black body, there is even less empathy. And if I get caught, I don't have the "Oh my God, I'm a white girl. I just made a mistake." I don't have the innocence thing and so if I get caught, I'm fucked. If I get attacked the police won't empathize or see me as a human being. I'm just fucked.

Maria vocalized the same sentiment as Kemi, and recognizes specifically the difficulty faced by Black sex workers which differs from that of white sex workers,

> For white women it's easier to come out as sex workers. Of course, there is shame for everyone, but for women of color just being outed can be life or death. I'm bi-racial and

> could be seen as white-passing so my experience isn't as bad. But for Black women, transgender women, it's life or death.

Multiple collaborators named the reality of building and maintaining clientele and how anti-black racism or fetishism are the two primary experiences sex workers of color face. Tianna recounts,

> As soon as I joined this website, I realized that my options were vastly diminished just because I'm Black. So many men's profiles are like 'no blacks, no Latinas, I don't like curvy girls' and similar language. So I was like, 'damn…if I was lighter-skinned, if I was thinner, I might make a killing.' It's a weird thing because in certain communities the way I look is super celebrated but then living in a big white area and this particular city, it's definitely not that.

As a white sex worker, Kathleen also noticed the overt bias in how clients sought sex workers and she named the internal conflict of dealing with clients who held those views,

> Sometimes I would go and look at other sugar babies online to see who I was 'competing' with. I feel like it was a lot of predominantly Black women and it was interesting to see how many men were like 'I'm not looking for Black women.' And it felt dirty to be what they (the men) were looking for, but I would play it up like 'oh I'm the girl next door' even though that's not me at all. It felt dirty to have to kind of become someone else.

Multiple collaborators indicated that they felt limited in clientele that was available to them, further, the clientele they do have available force them to deal with fetishization at times which they experience as a type of violence. However, they shared that while they may exploit racist stereotypes/beliefs, they are fully aware of them and they are not views they hold for themselves.

They reconcile engaging with the fetishization because they at least make money for it. Gui offered,

> I think my clients are most interested when I play up stereotypes but am also confident at the same time. As a gay man they have the same stereotypes of me as they do Asian women. If I pretend to be submissive but also be sexually open at the same time and also kind of coquettish and shy too, it makes a lot of guys like really curious. And the clients that have those fetishes also pay more.

Finally, even among the Black community sentiments around anti-Black racism permeated the sex work industry. Maliah recounts,

> I started out at an 'international club' there were 30 white girls and only five Black girls. I had a really big 'fro when I started, and I wanted to change my hair and they weren't having it. 'You can't have no braids and no twists. Don't come in here with no faux locs or any of that because that's not gonna excite white men. And the type of people that it *will* attract are the type of people we don't want in our club.' And this was coming from Black management, Black owners. One of the OG dancers told me 'If you put braids in your hair, you won't be able to work. You have to look exotic, and here, hair makes you look exotic.'

Collaborators in this study recognized the complexity of wanting to ensure sex workers decisions to engage sex work are respected (including their own), yet they also expressed that at times engaging in sex work creates negative experiences for them. Collaborators did not always feel that their experiences were reflected in the sex worker advocacy/activist movements, as such they felt that some of the most difficult experiences of those engaged in sex work are not always uplifted. Kemi suggests,

> I feel like the focus on white women kind of also makes you focus on escorting and cam services and generally Black girls don't cam. When we talk about Black sex workers we're going to be talking about the more degrading things. If we're talking about trans women who are doing sex work we're talking about doing some of the most degrading of sex work. And so, when you only focus on white people who are doing sex work, you get to build this illusion of sex work as this this fluffy feminist thing. You don't see the same variation of what you have to do for a check. What I have to do to secure a bill as a Black sex worker is different than what a Black trans sex worker might have to do. I think a lot of the pop articles are always focused on women who want to push the narrative that sex work isn't all bad and I'm glad for that push even though it's kind of also very white.

Kemi's comments are an example of when the polymorphous paradigm is useful. She spoke directly and vividly about negative aspects of sex workers for herself as a Black woman and how she perceives the experiences of some trans sex workers. As researcher, I had to situate the *why* of those negative experiences and ensure that my thinking and processing did not cement the negative aspects as a reason why sex work should not exist or why we must "save" these individuals from sex work. Instead, I tried to work through *how* power structures inform the negative experiences and to develop an understanding that situates those experiences as a larger *systemic* issue. Finally, I reiterate that a 'good vs bad' 'right vs wrong' designation is not the goal of the work but writing toward equity, justice, and truth are. Stokely shared similar sentiments about how Black sex workers must maneuver with different expectations than white heterosexual sex workers,

> The more marginalized you are, the more disposable you're perceived to be. White women are granted this sense of victimhood that we don't get. We don't get to be a

> victim, even if we are victimized, we don't get to act that way. We're supposed to just move the fuck on. It's easier for people to care more about white women and what happens to them even if they do have criminalized identities like being a sex worker. And while really complex, that's a huge privilege to have, they're given more resources than we are because they're given more attention.

Although sex worker voices are generally marginalized, collaborators believe that their voices and experiences are even further marginalized because of their racial identities, specifically because of the danger associated with their speaking out. Tianna offered,

> White women are poised to be able to speak out more and feel less afraid. And there's this double standard where, for example, Black people sell weed and usually go to jail. When white people sell weed it's like 'look at this entrepreneur.' But I feel like that goes for anything like when white people do something it's edgy and cute and when Black women do it (sex work) it's like low class.

Collaborators were consistently clear on the how their experiences differed from white and or heterosexual sex workers, the corresponding difficulty, and the violence of those differences. Further they named the complexity of wanting to remain honest about the negative experiences while also not contributing to diminishing sex workers agency – and choice to engage sex work – including their own.

Queer (In)visibility

Collaborators' discussions of sexuality in relation to sex work was relatively varied. Of seven total collaborators, there were five different ways they articulated their sexual identities. Further, even when they identified in similar ways, they still understood their sexual selves in relation to sex work differently. Given this, their sexualities were simply rendered invisible

because they were typically dealing with cisgender heterosexual men as their clients, and those clients would often assume collaborators were heterosexual themselves. For example, Tianna shared,

> It was interesting because so many clients felt comfortable expressing their sexual curiosities to me (around queer curiosities), but a lot of times when people would come to me they wouldn't even know that I wasn't straight. They would just say you seem mature, you seem open-minded, you seem like you would understand this.

Stokely indicated that she embraces 'sex worker' as a social identity because of the way it informed all of her other identities. Being queer complicated her sex work because she openly admitted to not liking men, and she admitted to experiencing trauma and violence of servicing men as part of her clientele. In her sex worker space, her queerness was rendered invisible,

> I was doing it (sex work) for survival, I wasn't doing it because I liked it. It has impacted me so much that I can't not identify as one [sex worker as a social identity] because it informs so much of my experience of my relationships with people, it informs my sexual life with people who aren't my clients, it informs my relationship to my body. So, there's so much trauma related to my queerness as it relates to sex work.

Similarly, to how some collaborators discussed fetishization in a raced space, Kathleen experienced difficulty in her bisexual identity, fetishization, and how being a bi-woman sex worker, her relationships to both men and women suffered,

> You have to play into your stereotypes and market yourself. I put on my profile that I'm bi because guys fetishize it. The most difficult part of sex work for me though has been maintaining healthy relationships with my actual partners, not clients. My sex life has been affected and at first it wasn't – I was very good at separating it. But sometimes I

> have to remind myself if I'm having sex for pleasure, like, this isn't a job. When I'm having sex with someone I care about, I have to remind myself 'you're not working right now'. I am allowed to say, 'can we stop?' My relationship was affected too, she [partner] kept saying I don't know how you separate sex with clients [men] and sex with people you like and love. So, there was a burden on my relationship.

Finally, Kemi shared that her queerness is rendered invisible because of the way her being Black and woman speak "louder" in terms of how she is viewed as she maneuvers through the world. Further, sexual identity is sometimes rendered invisible because collaborators need or chose it to be,

> I'm very in my blackness, it's what I do. And I'm not saying my Blackness isn't colored by the fact that I'm a queer woman, but I'm just not as politically queer as I am politically Black. So, when it comes to sex work, I don't even think about it because it is what it is. I am who I am. I'm not saying it never comes up (my sexuality) but it doesn't come up unless it's brought up. Whereas my Black is there, and my womanhood is there at all times.

Queer collaborators had unique and highly individualized experiences related to how their sexual identities materialized – or did not materialize – in relation to their sex work. Sexuality was complex in their sex worker realties due to the connection of power, dominance, violence, and engaging with cisgender heterosexual men as the overwhelming majority of their clientele.

Sex Work & College/University Support

> *Let me be very clear, sex work is simply a shitty job I had to work when I didn't have money. It was not horrible or traumatic. I wasn't trafficked. It was just a shitty job I had to do because I*

> *needed to make money and I feel like most people - including university admin and staff - don't view it that way. I think they would feel like they have to 'save' me from the work. I would have really preferred for someone to save me from working at Target.*
> -Kemi

The next broad area of inquiry related to college and university support. Throughout this dissertation I have shared letters written by collaborators to some person, group or entity at their college or university. Consider those narratives as contextual framing to the findings presented here.

I developed two key findings from collaborator stories. First, students generally lack confidence and trust in their colleges, universities, and student educators to understand their experience or be able to support them in the ways that they need. However, when collaborators imagined revealing their participation in sex work – or seeking help related to being a sex worker – they overwhelmingly identified faculty members as likely persons to confide in, and not university administrators and staff. As a result of this, the second key findings I developed related to how students were unsure of what their institutions could do to support them, or perhaps more importantly what they *would* do to support them.

A Vote of No Confidence

Collaborators in this study largely perceived agents of their institution – faculty, staff, administrators – to be untrustworthy with their realities as sex workers. They indicated that they lacked confidence in institutional actors to be empathetic, supportive, or understanding of their position or decision to engage in sex work, or their ability to protect them should they run into

trouble as a result of engaging that work. Gui indicated that he wanted his institution to know that he – and others – existed, but that was the extent to which he wished to engage his institution,

> I wouldn't want to be communicating with them often to be honest. I want them to know that we exist because they pretend that there aren't a lot of problems at school, but I feel like in many ways it can also be illustrative with other problems when it comes to income equality and also the need for emergency loans.

Gui's comment illuminates that he believes the invisibility of sex workers is connected to a larger lack of care or concern by his institution related to the financial needs of low-income students, or students with critical financial needs. Tianna shared that for her revealing her engagement in sex work to staff, faculty, or administrators wouldn't be worth the risk,

> It wouldn't be worth it. Even if there was a group or club or anonymous chat, I think would feel infinitely more comfortable if it were something run by students or even a grad student as opposed to like faculty and staff, because I feel like so many of them talk. If there's a gender studies professor who's really progressive and understands and I find [and share with] that person, I don't want them running into my business professor and my being engaged in sex work coming up. I don't know.

Beyond the concern of their sex worker realities being casually shared as Tianna names, collaborators were also concerned that their engagement in sex work might be used in a vindictive manner against them. For example, Kemi states,

> Faculty and staff have no reason to know I am a sex worker. I don't need the stigma. I don't need any of the problems that come with it. The university and members of the administration already didn't like me and so the last thing I needed to give them was a

> reason to get rid of me. I don't know but there's no way they would have heard I was a sex worker and not tried to get me away from sex working. There's no way I could tell them, and they would just leave it be.

Across all collaborators' experiences, only one – Stokely – shared that there was a student affairs practitioner that they would have felt comfortable with sharing their identities or seeking help in relation to sex work,

> I worked in the LGBT resource center last year and my boss was just so cool. One day I was just really really stressed, it was like an evening that we're running an event. I arrived late and I couldn't focus. After the event I sat in her office and just busted out crying and I was telling her that I was really stressed about financial security and that meant that I'm going to have to pick up more clients. I didn't know if I could. It didn't make me feel anxious or anything because I trusted her. It didn't feel wrong to tell her and she responded just fine. She didn't stigmatize me for it and she actually gave me a raise. So that was nice.

In addition to the one student affairs/student services space, collaborators also named women's centers as spaces they might consider going if they needed help or support. However nearly all collaborators named faculty members as persons they would have felt most comfortable revealing their sex worker identity or seeking help *if needed*. Maliah offered,

> In one of my pop culture classes a student was saying negative things about dancers and my professor chimed in to say 'everyone has their opinion, but I'm just letting you know that I had a friend who worked at a club. She paid off her student loans, she has a home in her name and paid for, she put her daughter through college. So let's be careful not to be so quick to judge.' After hearing her it made me feel more comfortable and so right there

> I raised my hand and said 'I work at a club downtown, so what's up?' The girl turned around and froze she was like 'OMG…girl you are a dancer?'

In addition to faculty members who showed advocacy for sex workers in a vocal way, collaborators' narratives also indicated that the more minoritized identities a faculty member had the more comfortable they would feel. This does not necessarily mean they would absolutely go to them for help; instead it means the more dominant identities they hold, the less likely they expect they would be able to understand their experiences. Stokely shared,

> I didn't find a professor who I loved until this year. A woman of color in my program. I feel like I could have outed myself to her for some reason if it came up or if I felt super comfortable one day. I feel like I would never disclose it to a man, I just wouldn't. I don't like none of them.

The theme of faculty – as a potentially supportive group – arose constantly in collaborator narratives. In Kemi's case there were multiple faculty members that she would have gone to without hesitation,

> It may sound horrible, but I would most likely seek help from faculty. I'm thinking maybe a women's center, but I don't think they would be equipped to help me outside of "Oh my god girl, get out of sex trafficking." I don't know if this is a unique experience, but my undergraduate faculty advisors were some of the best women I've ever met in my life. I can't imagine getting into a bind and going to an administrator, but I can definitely name like three or four professors right now that I would have gone to. Like no questions asked.

Collaborators were overall wary of the various agents of higher education but they each named that there was someone or someplace that they *might* go if they were ever in dire need. Faculty

members were identified multiple times in the inquiry as the individuals whom collaborators would seek out over any other institutional agents.

Can they do Anything?

Across all collaborator narratives there was a deep questioning on what college or university leaders could do to support them, what they would be willing to do, and even if institutions implemented supportive actions, if they would feel comfortable taking advantage of that support. In some ways because of the stigma around all sex work and the legal issues around some sex work, collaborators in this study assumed and expected colleges and universities to be a place unwelcoming to them. Tianna had few ideas, but she was clear that it needed to be student run or driven,

> I can't think of anything besides like a student-run something. I don't know maybe a group chat or like a meeting space or something like that. I don't know how they would ensure that it was a safe space so that people weren't showing up just to see who was in there or something though.

Similarly, Mariah could only come up with counseling support – something that exists already on many campuses. When I asked if she felt like she could go there and talk about sex work, she realized that perhaps counseling services, as they stand, are not very useful to her,

Maria	I mean, I know there's counseling services that are here, so I mean, I guess that would be helpful, but that already exists.
TJ	Do you feel like you could go there and talk about things related to sex work specifically?
Maria	I don't know. I would have to see their counselors. It if is a man no. Definitely not a white woman, just being honest. I don't know. I don't

> know if the average counselor could relate. I don't think they could help me. I don't think they would even understand how to navigate that.

Across the board collaborators struggled to envision a good faith effort by institutions to support them. In the case of Kathleen, she wondered about the legality of it all,

> I was thinking on the way over here…can they do anything? I realize the legality issues around sex work but also are they allowed to do something without it seeming like they are encouraging it or whatever bullshit the government will come up with? I don't know if anything directly can be done.

This sentiment was shared by all collaborators as they struggled to indicate what would have been helpful or supportive. They attempted to envision support based on what types of offices, programs, and services already existed at their college or university and could not imagine beyond those examples, in some ways it seemed as if they assumed their institutions should not or would not be supportive, therefore, they did not ever imagine how support might have manifested for them.

As I could see that collaborators struggled to come up with suggestions, I was curious if *my* presenting suggestions would help spur any ideas for them. From my practitioner lens, I offered examples of things that I would have personally tried, and I asked collaborators if they felt that action would have felt supportive to them. For example, I asked them if their college or university hosted a student activity fair how it would impact them if they saw a/the local chapter of a sex work organization like the Sex Worker Outreach Project (SWOP) tabling. Every collaborator responded that the presence of an organization – like SWOP – tabling, giving out information and resources would have been incredibly affirming for them. From there collaborators produced additional ideas such as the development of emergency loans and a

campus food bank for people like Gui who only engage in sex work for emergency purposes, or free HIV/STI testing for all students through which student sex workers would also benefit. Collaborators mentioned they would like to see more campus speakers, panels, faculty lectures, and brown-bag events that discuss topics related to sex work but that do so from non-deficit lenses that also do not conflate sex work and sex trafficking or do so in reductionist ways.

Sex Work and Weighted Consciousness

> *When you are spending private time with a person and they're paying you for it, they feel like they can be their most honest selves, their most primal selves and sometimes their most disgusting selves; and I don't mean that in a sexual way at all. -Tianna*

Through my initial setup and framing of the study, I was interested in what collaborators were learning as it pertained to sex work. However, once I began to engage with collaborators, their stories, and the data analysis process it was clear to me that collaborators were actually beyond learning. Learning seemed to be too shallow of a concept to understand the gravity of understandings and realizations collaborators were coming to. Given this – the gravity of their experiences, understandings, and realizations – collaborators developed what I interpret as a weighted-consciousness. I developed two key findings as part of a larger theme of weighted-consciousness for collaborators and their engagement in sex work. First, engaging in sex work provided each of the collaborators a heightened sense of clarity as it related to power and dominance and particularly the violence of men. Second, engaging sex work provided a backdrop for collaborators to understand themselves, and more specifically develop agency, confidence, and voice in a way nothing else in their life had.

Clarity of Power and Dominance

All collaborators spoke directly, succinctly, and vividly about how engaging sex work revealed to them how dominance and violence materialize in the world and in their own lives. Sex work made clear for them how power is enacted including a deep sobering reality that – in their own words – "men are trash," and robust intersectional understandings of equity and justice which informed and refined their own values.

Intense distrust of men. Engaging in sex work forced collaborators into close proximity to men which provided them with a better sense of the pervasiveness of toxic behaviors that go beyond the stereotypes of certain *types* of men (e.g. the "douche fraternity guy" or "jock athlete"). In fact, collaborators indicate that as a result of engaging sex work they remain wary of a vast *majority* of men – including the unusual suspects. Kathleen offered,

> It's not like I had a bunch of faith in men in the beginning, but because I saw so many different kinds of men, [sex work] made me realize I can't trust any man…at all. Like even the men who seem like such good family men, who love their wife and they have kids, and they've built a wonderful business, and they're so kind. But then they ask for disgusting things and treat you like shit. And I feel like at the core, every man I'm going to come in contact with, there's some creepy part of him. And what would they ask for or try to get away with if/when they are able to pay for something?

Maria shared that her wariness of and clarity about men was not limited to strangers but even the men closest to her, as sex work found her questioning who men *truly* are,

> I can genuinely say everyone in the club acts the same when it comes to men coming in. I know my brother acts the same, my Dad acts the same, family members, friends,

> everyone acts the same. I don't know how to explain it but it's like they get filled with like primal lust.

Gui, a gay cisgender man, shared a similar sentiment about his learning to be uneasy around men:

> Men can be kind of scary. When they get you alone, they think they can do things or kind of pressure you into doing things that you may not want to do and that's scary.

Gui's articulation of men as scary made him experience anxiety when he had to meet clients and added to the trauma of his experience. Kemi identified that for her the most difficult thing about engaging in sex work is the fear of getting caught, but specifically as a result of a vindictive man,

> The fear. Being afraid of someone finding out and someone being vindictive and calling my university or leaking my pictures. So, these men are your clients, but they're also…men. And men get their feelings hurt once and every person who comes in contact with him for the next 20 years has to suffer. It's like everything about sex work and men being resentful of the fact they're willing to pay for this service, it's scary.

Every single collaborator named some form of realization of how deep the toxicity of – particularly cisgender heterosexual – men can go. They spoke about their new-found wariness, deep skepticism, and constant surveying of the men they come into contact with. They spoke about fear and trauma – read violence – and it informed how they approached protecting themselves from men. They developed a distrust of men because they were able to see beyond the "face" they believe most men present to the world. Collaborators move through life constantly surveying; whether it is an individual in their family, someone at the store, their doctor, they ask themselves, "who are you *really*? Who's behind that face?" Indeed,

collaborators credit sex work with providing them a vivid understanding of men in ways they believe they would not have received otherwise.

My feminism will be intersectional, or it will not be at all. Sex work helped cultivate a more robust and radical feminist politic for collaborators. They were pushed in their worldviews when they witnessed various struggles across difference. Additionally, collaborators reconciled sometimes competing and conflicting aspects of their identities and experiences – and that of others – which allowed them to advocate and have empathy for themselves and others. Stokely shared,

> Sexual liberation looks different for me because of all of my identities because of being a Black Muslim woman sex worker; to reclaim sexuality looks really different for me. In terms of being a Muslim, the issue of modesty comes up. But modesty is a political thing as well as a spiritual thing. Modesty in Islam is about regulation, in multiple ways. For me it reminds me to be modest in my relationships with others; modest in terms of how I walk through this world and making sure that I'm always being mindful of how much space I'm taking up. It's about agency and taking control of your appearance. I'm going to be sexual on my own terms and be modest so that you can't see shit I don't want you to see.

Similar to Stokely, Tianna also indicated that sex work informed her feminism,

> I think so much of what young women are taught is how to interact around men and what appropriate interactions are and how to coddle or work around their feelings to maximize benefits. A lot of times people frame that benefit as 'how do I find a husband' which is not something that interests me. So, in going off the grid and completely ignoring everything that I've learned about how to deal with men, I learned that there are no rules.

> Be yourself, see where it goes. I won't be made to feel like I have to mute myself or make myself smaller in real life. I had to do that in sex work situations, and I got something out of it [money]. And so, I'm like, wait a second…people do this in real life? And they don't get anything out of it? I'm *definitely* not doing that.

Kemi, who at the time of our interview had ceased engaging in direct services, reflected on how sex work helped her build empathy for herself and others still engaged in direct service work,

> I'm seeing a lot of the anti-sex work rhetoric, legislation, and atmosphere that we're living in right now. I appreciate that I've engaged in sex work because it has allowed me to not be a trash person to sex workers to judge them or myself as harshly as other people. I've seen the things people say to sex workers online and our perceived values and it's like, this is just the job we're working. Also, it's given me perspective on labor, what labor means, and the cost of your labor. I don't think if I wouldn't have done sex work in the official capacity that I would have ever been able to realize the unofficial ways that I engaged in sex work, and how a lot of us engage in exchanging sex for some type of thing we want.

Maliah found that sex work provided her the space and language to identify the need for intracommunal inclusivity and coalitions,

> I have a guy friend who was really popular on our campus and he was pro Black everything. But when it came to the experiences of Black queer people or Black trans people, he acted like he didn't know how to include them. But what I tried to get him to understand is they're still Black. You're an influencer on this campus and people know you're very involved you have an organization dedicated to better the Black experience on campus, how do you go day to day and try not to include Black trans or queer people?

> Inclusive, bitch, and that means everybody. You have to include all of us. A struggle is a struggle and dancing got me there.

Collaborators demonstrate remarkable clarity that materialized as a result of the gravity of being sex workers with racially and sexually minoritized identities. And as a result of that gravity they developed weighted consciousnesses and the ability to hold multiple truths.

Confidence of My Voice

Each of the collaborators in the study indicate that engaging in sex work allowed them to strengthen their voice as well as confidence in who they are, their bodies, and their decision to engage in sex work; a confidence they may or may not have found if they had done something else. Maliah recounts,

> It's ok to say no and that's in every aspect of life. I feel like I'm a really nice person and I never want to say no. So when I'm at work sometimes I feel like I have to put on this big smile and act like everything is ok, but it's okay to not be okay. If I feel like [someone] is doing too much, I'm gonna let [them] know. Like, I'm not with that, relax. People sometimes think we sell our souls because they see one girl do something and they think that we all do that. But deep down inside, maybe that girl wanted to say no but she didn't think she could. It's okay to say no. If anyone ever makes you feel uncomfortable it's okay to say no.

Maria, who is also a dancer, spoke to the pressures of the club and how it allowed her to harness her voice in a way to set clear boundaries,

> Definitely stand your ground. People will try to pull one over on you, whether it's trying to get you to do something you're not comfortable doing or even setting rates and clients trying to talk you down. Don't settle because you're there to make money and they

> should be there to spend it. Period. Sex work has allowed me to understand my worth and how I price my work. I definitely think there's a confidence surrounding anything that I do when it comes to money in terms of what I will and won't do.

Like Maria, Kemi also established her limits not only with clients but how far she would be willing to go to secure her survival in the world. Additionally, Kemi's developed consciousness helped her to reconcile what might seem like competing or conflicting values – hers and society – related to how she *should* feel as a sex worker,

> I learned what I'm willing to do for money. Some people say 'I would never do this or that' but I have no shame about it. I felt like I kept waiting for myself to have this weird morality moment that a lot of people talk about related to sex work being bad. A moment when I was going to feel horrible about it. I never had that. I kept expecting it to happen, I kept waiting for this moment and it just never happened. I think I learned when it comes to my survival, I make no compromises. I learned my own limits and what I'm willing to do for a check.

Collaborators in this study indicate that sex work helped them understand incredible things about themselves that were beneficial not only in their sex work realities but in all of their realities. Kathleen offers that through sex work she established confidence in her voice, in her boundaries, and in her body,

> Prior to sex work if I was having sex with someone I was just focused on having a good time and I didn't feel allowed to say 'we are going to use condoms and this is how it's going to go and no you can't stay over or yes you can stay over'; I learned how I kind of feel about my body in a sex related atmosphere and the overall confidence with it. I learn

something different with each client, like body confidence or how to be safer, or how to be secret.

Collaborators named that they were able to establish a confidence in themselves and their voice. They developed an unapologetic ethic related to their understanding of self, their survival, their decision to engage in sex work, and incorporating those developments in their lives outside of sex work. The weight of their consciousness around their decisions provided them with a greater understanding of how to maneuver through dominance and the violence of the world.

Chapter Summary

In this Chapter, I presented three grand tour themes which contained six total key findings that materialized from interviews with seven college student sex work collaborators who are queer and or students of color. The first theme related to social identity and I found that collaborators in this study identify their experiences as being queer and racially minoritized has them experiencing sex work – and the corresponding stigma and violence – in markedly different ways than white sex workers. They find their voices are not uplifted in the movement, and they indicate the complexity of what it means to choose sex work and how to both acknowledge the choice and also sex workers who work in the direst contexts and conditions. Additionally, collaborators find themselves experiencing tensions in relation to how their sexual identity materializes – or does not materialize – in relation to their sex work and they navigate the impact, violence and trauma of being queer and having cisgender-heterosexual men as their primary clientele.

The next theme related to college and university support where collaborators generally lacked faith and trust in college and universities – by way of faculty, staff, and administrators – to understand their sex work, or to act or advocate on their behalf. They found that in the

unlikely event that they did seek help or reveal their sex work, they were most likely to do so with faculty and not administrators or staff. They report limited ideas about the ways college and university leaders could realistically and powerfully support them. They assumed higher education is not welcoming or supportive of their sex work realities, and as such the proverbial "bar" is so low that it is on the floor. Finally, however, when they were presented with suggestions of actions staff and faculty could take, they were able to develop additional ideas of what would be supportive to them.

The final theme related to developing weighted consciousness and collaborators express in vivid detail how sex work helped them develop the capacity to understand the world more authentically, to bear witness and give language to the way violence shows up particularly from men, and they learn to hold competing and conflicting truths about themselves, the world, and the realities they must maneuver. They developed a praxis of intersectionality around how they understand oppression, their own experiences, and that of others. They also developed dynamic confidence in self, in their voice, in setting boundaries, and advocating for themselves.

In the next chapter I will discuss these findings, suggest what the implications of these findings may be and offer directions for future research related to college student sex workers.

A Letter from Tianna

Dear Black Sororities,

As a proud and active member, I am aware of the good you are capable of doing in communities, and your long record of advocating for social change. But we need to talk. We need to reckon with the harmful images you are projecting and upholding. Many of the standards of behavior you are requiring for prospective or initiated members are very close, if not identical, to the standards enacted by the sorority's founders. But sis, that was 100 years ago.

Your vision of what constitutes a well-rounded woman is in desperate need of an update. So let's rip the band-aid off: Chastity does not define womanhood. Purity is not a measure of femininity. Nothing that I do sexually impacts the good I do in the community, and the people who think it does, are just wrong. I am confident in that knowledge now, but wasn't always, and your conditioning contributed to my confusion. You taught me that women who were open about their sexuality were "less than."

I can have a perfect GPA, do hours of community service, and sell sex. And I can - and do - still contribute positively to society. I am still a good representation of what we should stand for. Most of us at this point understand that women's sexual behavior is not indicative of our moral values. Waves of feminism have come and gone, and yet you, the place where women got to allegedly better themselves, are still stuck in the early 1900's. This is not encouraging women to 'carry themselves better', on the contrary. Just like we see in church systems, all these standards are doing is encouraging judgment, and liars. The venn diagram between the judgers and the liars is a circle by the way.

Holding onto these outdated puritanical standards is denying women the sisterhood we desperately need and were promised. It is important to serve the community, but it is equally important to take care of ourselves as black women; to take care of each other. I have found so much love and joy and solidarity in my organization. I've met women that would do anything for me, and I for them. But even those closest to me in the sorority will never know that I engaged in sex work, because I know that through our conditioning during the pledge process, their first thought would be "How does this impact the organization? What would this say about all of us?"

We have been programmed to believe that upholding a non-sexual image is a key part of achieving success as black women. While I understand the genesis of that thought process, I believe many of us now realize that is no longer the path to true liberation. The tides are changing as they have many times in history before. Opposition to sexual freedom from organizations that claim to champion equality and justice will not age well. You do not have the luxury of waiting for legislative or legal changes to embrace sex workers. Our sisters are out there: lonely, in danger, and in need of your support.

And if you are really about everything that is in your oaths and mission statements, you owe it to them. To do anything otherwise is anti-progressive, anti-feminist, and reactionary at best. Get from behind the times, or get left behind, as the rest of us march on toward a safer, more inclusive tomorrow.

With love, One of your own (Tianna).

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

I have a lot of trauma in my life and so much of it is surrounded by silence. I hate the silence of my story sometimes. And so even though my [sex work] story isn't horrible - it isn't dramatic or violent - I still get to tell it and that's important to me. It's important I don't live my life in silence. - Kemi

Kemi's comment above was in response to my inquiry to her about the research process, what it meant to her to be a collaborator, and to help me assess if I met my goal of creating an ethical and power-conscious experience for them. From the moment she spoke those words, I have been simultaneously haunted and inspired. I have been in ongoing reflection about the trauma, the pain, and the violence of silence. I have stayed in continual meditation about what it means to be burdened by the silence of our individual and collective stories; what does it mean for someone to hate the silence of their story? And in the case of the collaborators in this study, who is responsible for silencing them? This is a question and that scholars and researchers must contend with.

Discussion

At the onset of this writing, I vowed to do a dissertation differently and this concluding chapter will be no exception to that vow. While I will discuss the findings that were presented in chapter four along with implications and directions for future research, I will also discuss the process and importance of framing research – particularly with people and populations in the

margins of the margins – in ways that reduce epistemic violence, avoid diminishing their voice, and the importance of uplifting what counts as good and true knowledge.

Part of the difficulty of this study was that there was limited information on college student sex workers and almost none of the existing research focused on the experience of queer Black students or queer students of color. As such, the majority of chapter two focused on situating and contextualizing sex work in historical, contemporary, and political contexts; while the literature that focused on minoritized folks was quite broad and on occasion presented with problematic/deficit framing.

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of college students engaged in sex work. I focused on student histories, motivations, how social identity shaped their experiences, what they learned as a result of sex work (although learning as a concept did not rise to meet the gravity of their realizations and understandings), and what college and university leaders can do to support them. I took a learning and asset-based perspective to inform and to guide the study, and I focused specifically on sex workers with multiple minoritized identities.

Motivations

Like many pieces of existing literature on college student sex workers (Haeger & Deil-Amen, 2010; Roberts, Bergström & La Rooy, 2007; Sagar et al, 2016; Tsitsi, 2010), students indicated that money was their primary motivator for engaging in sex work. However, this study provides depth that gives nuance to that truth. For example, Kathleen, a white queer middle class cisgender woman, was the only participant where it seemed that the need to engage in sex work was not as dire as other collaborators. Gui, Tianna, and Kemi talked about their sex work earnings as being food money, bill money, parking ticket money, or grad school application money. Even Maliah spoke about being so “broke” that she had to sell plasma to buy costumes to

dance her first night to make money. To this end, the multiplicative nature of power – particularly for the queer collaborators of color – situated the need for sex work differently. While being relieved of college student loan debt is important for peace of mind, prosperity, and happiness, those realities are slightly different than needing to eat or pay day-to-day bills.

Given that this inquiry focused on college sex workers with racially and sexually minoritized identities, it is fair to say that collaborators experiences with oppression in relation to their social identities – prior to their college enrollment – also inform how and why these college students come to sex work. The connection of their racial and sexual identities to sex work and how they experience it, should not be understated. Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) requires that researches situate their work with a deliberate analysis of power and its multiplicative nature based on social identities and realities. Prior to sex work collaborators were already experiencing oppression in the world and for nearly all of them their experiences were related to class/capitalism. The system of dominance is happening altogether at the same time (white supremacist capitalist patriarchy imperialism), and collaborators' racial and sexual identities *informed* the direness of their circumstances when they decide to engage in sex work. Further their experiences differ from what sex workers with dominant identities experience.

The results of this inquiry provide depth and nuance to the "money as motivation" finding that is prevalent in extant research about why college students engage in sex work. For example, if sex workers with dominant identities engage – mostly – to pay for college (although some also do so to pay for living expenses) and sex workers with minoritized identities do so for survival (to eat, to pay basic bills and necessities), then what does that mean for when they finish college? If one sex worker pays for college with their sex work and another paid to *eat* through college, although they both were able to utilize the sex work for their needs, they still find

themselves in inequitable and vastly difference realities post-degree. This is a reality that scholars and researchers must attend to when speaking to the experience of sex workers and to avoid flattening difference so severely that it renders these experiences invisible (Crenshaw, 1991; Luft, 2009).

More importantly, given intersectionality as a framework, this study evidences once again that focusing on single issues is insufficient when trying to understand or create solutions for problems created by a system of dominance (McClain, 2016; Qambela, 2016). For example, as I discussed in chapter one, the legalization of marijuana has adverse effects on communities of color and poor communities (Mohdin, 2018; Zezima, 2018). Similarly, the sex work legalization versus decriminalization debate does not situate addressing sex work as a complex problem that differentially affects people based on social identity. In the case of this study, moving beyond single-issue focus/analysis means embracing the reality that labor (capitalism) is violent, and as such, people around the world work hard to try and survive it as best they can. However, those who find themselves at the nexus of dominance from a race perspective and sexual identity perspective must navigate that survival in markedly different ways from people not at that nexus. Sex work is no exception. In this way, money is – and may continue to be – the primary motivation for college students engaged in sex work, but the *gravity* of that motivation is informed by other factors.

Social Identity

Beyond the connections of social identity to motivation, collaborators in this study helped reveal a tale of two experiences in sex work; sex workers with multiple minoritized identities and those without. They revealed marginalization further and beyond what I conceptualized in this study and often they do not see their experiences reflected in the discourse about sex workers.

The stories of collaborators in this study also reveal how their sexual identities are complicated in relation to sex work because of how they are rendered invisible, and they are rendered invisible because of the experiences of primarily servicing heterosexual cisgender men as their clientele.

The findings related to social identity connect strongly to tenets of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) in that scholars, educators, advocates, activists, and any interested parties must avoid flattening difference in matters of equity and justice (Crenshaw, 1991; Luft, 2009). Social identities matter because they color each of our experiences in different and dynamic ways. To presume that all sex workers experiences are the same is a mistake. To assume that all college student sex workers experiences are the same is a mistake. Even when well-intentioned, failing to conduct inquiry, research, writing, and advocacy in ways that give nuance to power-consciousness and how power differentially affects lived experience is dangerous, and as collaborators name, deadly. Further, not only are the motivations to engage sex work seemingly different, so are the outcomes and experiences.

In one of the only studies that focused on U.S. college student sex workers (see Haeger & Diel-Amen 2010), there was a marked difference between the way their participants spoke about consequences and benefits and the way collaborators in *this* study speak about them. For example, the researchers note,

> In addressing the costs and negative consequences of working in the sex industry, the overwhelming response is that the stereotypes that others held about them and the draining and degrading nature of the work are the greatest consequences (Haeger & Diel-Amen, 2010; p. 7)

In a study with only white – and what I assume to be – cisgender heterosexual women, it is interesting that stereotypes are the greatest consequences. In this study, collaborators in some ways indicated that was the *least* of their concerns. They worried about violence – in part due to the *type* of sex work they do – from police and clients and specifically what someone would *do* to them as a result of stereotypes and negative views. My mention of this is not to diminish the experiences of the women in the previous study, but instead to illustrate how power related to social identity drastically change the gravity of a situation. The quote above also mentioned the degrading nature of their work. Again, in a study with all white women, I raise Kemi's earlier point that when the discourse shifts to examine sex workers with sexually and racially minoritized identities, the discourse *must* center those that do the *most* dangerous and sometimes *most* degrading types of sex work. Therefore, scholars and educators must not only render visible the experiences of college student sex workers but to ensure that when we do, we invoke and intersectional lens and not only focus on white women. While their experiences are important and legitimate, their experiences do not always represent the fullness and complexity of the work. For example,

> Rather than an emphasis on physical and sexual violence because of the work—which is a concern in the sex industry more generally—the more dominant concern of these students is the negative stereotyping and the mixed feelings they have about what they do at work. (Haeger & Diel-Amen; p. 19)

I appreciate the acknowledgement of the sex industry and sex work more broadly and particularly the connection to violence of the work as it speaks directly to how collaborators experience *their* work. Collaborators shared the concern of stereotyping and stigma; however, it did not emerge as their greatest concern. Furthermore, collaborators did not have mixed-feelings

about their decision to engage in sex work. They were clear: they wanted and needed to survive, and they make no apologies about that. Where they have mixed feelings relates to negotiating how to uplift the narrative that sex work can be freely chosen and also violent.

Collaborators revealed – in no uncertain terms – that sex worker experiences are not equal and sex work may not be necessarily empowering all of the time, a narrative they perceive to be dominant in "mainstream" sex work advocacy spaces. People with minoritized identities have a range of experiences related to sex work – as evidenced by collaborators in this study – *and* they still chose sex work as their labor choice at times for various reasons. Similarly, to the polymorphous paradigm (Weitzer 2010b; 2011), collaborators indicated that context matters, social identity matters, and they are careful and deliberate to ensure that they do not reproduce the oppression paradigm, because they are clear about their choice to engage in sex work. To that end, if collaborators – and sex workers like them – are careful in how they manage their narrative as not to hurt the work, advocacy, and choice of other sex workers, then scholars, researchers, and educations all need to imagine how we might collectively turn our attention to their experiences. How do we determine ways to center them so that we don't contribute to the silencing of *their* stories and experiences?

College and University Support

The bar is low in terms of what college student sex workers expect – or do not expect – from their undergraduate institutions. During the interview/data collection process I initially refrained from offering any suggestions to collaborators because I wanted to see what would naturally come up for them.

After some time, given that so few ideas were generated, I began to suggest possible courses of actions that college and university faculty and staff could take, and I asked

collaborators if some of the things I mentioned would be helpful. For example, I asked if a local Sex Worker Outreach Project (SWOP) chapter tabled at a student involvement fair, would that feel supportive to them. I asked if programming, speakers and events were offered – where sex workers came to campus to discuss their experiences – would it be helpful to them. I asked if health centers or counseling centers deliberately and blatantly advertised that they were interested in supporting college student sex workers – either through their websites, brochures/literature, or in person conversation – if it would be useful to them. In every case the collaborators indicated that not only would those things be helpful but then they started to flood our conversation with additional ideas they had not thought of before.

This brings me to the importance of this finding: it is not the responsibility of any college student to know exactly all of what they need, all the time. In fact, higher education institutions and the faculty and administrators that make them up, often pride themselves on - incorrectly - claiming that they know what is best for students at any given time during their college career and through their personal and professional development. Why would the experiences of these students be any exception? To be clear, I am not saying we need to be paternalists to these students or any students, but certainly when educators first ask a student what they need, if they seem unclear, we (should) know what to do to help them until they can figure that out.

Furthermore, college and university leaders hold institutional power that in many ways mirrors the type of violence and dominance reproduce in society more broadly. As such it is not on oppressed people to have to continually fight, resist, and advocate for themselves when higher education faculty, staff and administrators can take bold and brave action to alleviate the pressure they experience. At the beginning of this dissertation I offered very plainly that college and university leaders – collectively higher education – may never rise to the occasion to support

college student sex workers in any meaningful way – particularly higher education as we know it now. However, I would be remiss if I did not offer a general guideline for how to potentially approach support of college student sex workers based on the collective imagining and world-making that we engaged together through this study.

Once I offered some suggestions to the collaborators, they had a few different ideas for what would have been helpful to them. For example, in Gui's letter to the student body he mentioned,

> Things such as 24-hour testing, free testing, sexual health screenings on campus, increased access to birth control, contraceptives and sexual health education. It would also be helpful to institute a financial aid emergency loan program and a campus food bank at our school for people who may feel inclined to do sex work because of short term financial troubles.

Kathleen similarly offered,

> So that made me think of something that the university could do for sex workers, making STI testing accessible. You mentioned knowing an institution that does them for free; but on our campus – foran actual comprehensive screen – it's like $100. If I'm a sex worker and I have to get tested very regularly and pay $100 every time, it creates a hardship.

Beyond the specifics of my – or collaborator – suggestions, I think the critical trend that arose is what is important for college/university leaders and student educators to consider. If there is *any* interest in seeking to support college student sex workers, we must think about and implement programs and initiatives that they can take advantage of that 1) benefit *all* students equally regardless of their designation as a sex worker because this allows them 2) to never have to come forward. In the most basic sense this concept connects to a general principle that when we center

the needs of the most marginalized among us, then everyone becomes centered. College student sex workers are not an exception to that guidance. As sex worker activism and advocacy continues to grow and develop, I maintain hope that our institutions might also continue to develop and grow so that we move closer to being able to reduce stigma so that college student sex workers can "out" themselves as such – if they wish – and still find support. Until then, we must assume they will not come forward but that should not mean that they are unable to feel and be supported.

Weighted-Consciousness

Collaborators spoke about their experiences in clear and direct ways. There were rarely, if ever, moments of confusion or uncertainness about who they are and what their sex work realities meant within the context of a system of dominance as well as their racial and/or sexual identities. Collaborators not only had a consciousness of power, social identity, and how they manifest in the world but those consciousnesses were *weighted*, *concentrated* and *endarkened*. By endarkened I borrow from Dillard's (2000) endarkened feminist epistemology where she situates endarkened in contrast to "enlightened" which is typically used to "express[ing] the having of new and important feminist insights (arising historically from the well-established canon of white feminist thought)" (Dillard, 2000; p. 662). Endarkened reframes what it means to come to knowing and rejects traditional western understandings and philosophies and instead locates knowing at the "intersection/overlap of the culturally constructed socializations of race, gender, and other identities and the historical and contemporary contexts of oppressions and resistance for African-American women" (Dillard, 2000, p. 662).

Similar to the concept of endarkenment, intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1991) also establishes how one comes to knowing based on the cross-sections of identity and power,

something that collaborators identified as a familiar experience. While collaborators articulated they had an understanding of oppression – even from childhood – based on their racial, sexual, faith, and classed realities, something about their experiences as *sex workers* accelerated, elevated, and weighted their individual and collective consciousnesses. That is, sex work seemed to materialize as a consciousness raising phenomenon in their lives.

My introduction to consciousness-raising as an intentional political tactic and intellectual exercise is based in the historical literature of second wave feminism/feminists (Redstockings Manifesto, 1969; Rosenthal, 1984). Consciousness raising was utilized to help make – mostly – white women aware of oppression and patriarchy and help them make connections between their individual experiences and a systemic phenomenon (Maeli, 2016; Redstockings Manifesto, 1969). However, that tactic is in direct contrast to the way Black women, for example, articulate a *historical* and *ancient* knowing around oppression because of the nexus of their gender and racial identities (Dillard, 2000), without the need for the political and intellectual *exercise*. Given this, I position sex work as a consciousness-raising event in the lives of collaborators that is more in line with what would be a *natural* come to knowing *as a result of* the additional weight of *how* the system of dominance presses upon sex workers, specifically.

Sex work as a social or avowed identity is not additive to these collaborators' identities; it is multiplicative and exponential and manifested as the findings discussed in chapter four including a clarity of power and dominance, critical understanding and radical empathy for others, and a deliberate and unapologetic confidence of their voices. Their consciousnesses moved beyond a binary of right and wrong – as it related to moral and legal assumptions about sex work – and instead oriented their understandings through justice and survival. They

transcended “learning” in the most basic sense and instead illustrate a weighted consciousness and endarkened awareness.

As I reflect back on my initial interviews with some of the collaborators in this study, I was in awe at how exceptional they were. I had no idea what to expect and at the same time they exceeded every expectation of what I thought they could be. On 12/3/18 I wrote a research memo,

> These collaborators are incredible humans. Today I cried with one of them, we cried together. They are so *smart* but more than that, *sharp*; and *deliberative*. I don’t know what I was expecting but holy shit I am in awe and I’m learning.

This memo was early in the data collection process, but it illustrates that it was immediately clear that these students were much different. It was evident, instantly, that they had an awareness that is significant and exceptional. I am clear now that what was surfacing was their weighted consciousness, which resulted in my assessment of them as smart, sharp, and deliberative.

From the beginning it was obvious to me that *what* and *how* they understood the world had advanced them far beyond what I have ever experienced as a practitioner working with college students. They demonstrated to me a relatively thorough conscious awareness about the world and how power informs it. They achieved this awareness in such a short time – and more deeply than most people might ever. They developed a keen consciousness about themselves in a way most of us will never have to and as far as I am concerned, they are better for it.

As a reminder form the demographics table, each collaborator began their sex work between the ages of 19-22 and at the time of our interview none of them were above the age of 25. So, their consciousnesses, the way they experience(d) the dominance, and their articulations of how they understand and reconcile their sex work and their criminalized identity seems to be

quite advanced. The way they discussed their experiences, understandings, realizations is on par, if not exceeding, the way my peers and colleagues in doctoral studies, for example, discuss them. Their analyses and meaning making is advanced; it is odd to me that an experience that is so deeply, deliberately, and decidedly contributing to their development is *so* relegated to the margins that virtually no one in our work has seemed to notice.

Intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1991) instructs that power and dominance changes situations, circumstances, contexts, and experiences. In addition, intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1991) further reveals why and how these consciousnesses might be so robust and unique. As I wrote in chapter three,

> …knowledge is produced and legitimized from the experiences and stories of individuals *resisting from the margins*; in other words, *their experiences under and through dominance are part of their knowing*. Intersectionality theory reinforces the importance of honoring and legitimizing lived experiences as a way to interrogate and deconstruct oppression (Crenshaw, 1991; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; hooks, 2015).

To be clear, I am not suggesting that one can only achieve the type of consciousness these students demonstrate through experiencing oppression, dominance, and pain. However, *because* they experience these things and still get up for class in the morning, *because* they have to silently navigate carrying the realities of their sex work, and *because* they do it as a means to survive, they are experiencing a consciousness raising event that is robust and probably critical to their survival long beyond their time in the ivory tower.

As I reflect on my past work with students, I struggle to think what exactly could I teach Kathleen about the world? What could I possibly reveal to Maliah about herself? How would I frame for Gui what it meant to think critically in crunch/high pressure situations? How could I

achieve those aims and not insult the integrity of their experiences and the legitimate knowing that has precipitated from them? I offer these rhetorical questions not to disempower my work or that of my college student educator colleagues, but to urge us to consider how we approach our work with students; so that we assume *some* of these students know things. And how do we honor that knowing?

In chapter one I wrote about the sobering reality that support for college student sex workers may never materialize in any meaningful way in higher education. A reality that is not lost on collaborators in this study. However, after meeting these dynamic individuals I have to wonder and radically imagine how might we transform our contexts to affirm and center these incredible people. How do we provide them space to be experts on development, learning, and knowing, without exploiting their labor, or expecting them to offer it? Education is about integrating what we read from books, what we consume from others, *and* what is innately inside of us. We *can* affirm for students – at the very beginning – that they *know* things and they should embrace that knowing and the consciousness that comes along with their lived experiences. Educators must remind students, just in case they do not know, that their living is part of that knowing, and further we must believe it ourselves. We must remain open to that knowing and *all* the places that knowing may come from; including sex work. In her work *Teaching to Transgress*, bell hooks (1994) words ring as a critical reminder of what this may mean,

> The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility, we have the opportunity to *labor for freedom*, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an *openness of mind* and *heart* that allow us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move *beyond boundaries*, to *transgress*. This is education as the practice of freedom. (p. 207)

This practice might help us disrupt dominant notions that marginalize, render invisible, and exact violence on college student sex workers. Educators must determine what it means to labor for freedom and on behalf of college students who labor in, inarguably, one of the most difficult contexts, one that is stigmatized and criminalized.

Future Directions

The literature on college student sex workers is limited, specifically research that focuses on those with racially and sexually minoritized identities. When I set out to explore the experiences of college student sex workers of color and or queer college student sex workers, I was unsure what combination of social identities and sex worker experiences I would get. I am grateful to my collaborators in this study for their brilliance, their vulnerability and most of all, their stories. I am grateful for their contributions to this work.

What became evident over the course of this inquiry is that people and populations in the margins of the margins *want* to tell their stories. They want to be heard. They want to be listened to. Particularly if the person on the other side of the literal and figurative table approaches their narratives in an ethical, fair, and power-conscious way. I had ongoing discussions with collaborators about how our collaborative efforts in this research was affecting them, why they decided to collaborate, and what other researchers could do in the future to re-create a sense of community and trust that we built together. They shared many things, the most important of which is, people with multiple minoritized identities want to see studies that explicitly center them for example Kemi stated,

> I saw the study advertisement and I thought, oh a sex work study? On college students? On queer and brown people? Oh, you actually want to hear from *me*? This is about me. If it would have been just about like sex workers generally. I would have been like,

> whatever. I understand that people like me have to see themselves in whiteness all the time because the narrative is always white, but when I don't have to stretch to see myself in the narrative it's so much easier.

Beyond wanting *explicit, descriptive,* and *specific* centering of their experiences in inquiries, the person who is conducting the inquiry may be more important. For example, many collaborators shared Tianna's sentiments when I asked what made the process easy and affirming for them,

> You not being white covers a huge gap for me. We've kind of touched on this yesterday. I think sometimes like white women have really good intentions but when it comes down to actually having the conversations, I feel like a lot of times when I get comfortable and I start to, you know, actually speak on things that are unique to a black experience [or sex work experience]. They're just these large gaps in their understanding. And so what started off as a therapeutic conversation becomes like me teaching this person what it's like to be me.

The quotes illustrate two of three points I offer for future directions. First, if researchers pursue inquiry on college student sex workers with racially and sexually minoritized identities it would help if those inquiries are made specific to them. If collaborators can avoid having to guess if an inquiry is about them or have to force to see themselves and their experiences in whiteness, it would be invaluable. Secondly, it was affirming for collaborators to work with someone who shared in experiences they have. I mentioned in my positionality that while I do not understand power and dominance from a sex work perspective, I know and understand what *it* is. To this end more Black, brown, queer, trans, fat, generationally-poor scholars should take up research like this, if they are interested and able. To be clear, I am not necessarily suggesting that any and every one with these identities should assume they have license to engage in these inquiries – as

power-consciousness and ethics go beyond identities you hold – I am suggesting *if* anyone is going to do it they must understand and empathize with what it means to be in the margins of the margins and how to design inquiry that best explore those realities.

The final consideration connects directly to my line of inquiry. Theming the data in this study was interesting because this work was about how social identities inform virtually all other aspects of the study. However, I believe there is more to uncover based on social identity groupings of collaborators, which I did not engage in this study. For example, I had one white collaborator the rest were people of color. If I withdrew her data from the analysis, I wonder how it would change the analysis process or findings. Similarly, I had two heterosexual dancers of color who had comparable experiences to each other but lots of differences from other collaborators likely because of the legal nature of their work, and their sexual identities. Another example relates to my curiosities about how queer folks experience sex work if and when they primarily serve queer clientele. How are those experiences different? With the exception of Gui, all collaborators serviced cisgender heterosexual men as their clientele. While Gui's data could serve as a case, I think there is more to potentially learn about the comparative experience of college student sex workers. This is especially true given the violence and distrust of cisgender heterosexual men (specifically) was so prevalent a finding in these collaborators' stories and experiences.

Finally, I did not have any collaborators who identified as transgender, who I imagine have even more unique experiences that might be important to be aware of. Given all of this, should inquiries seek to look at the experience of college student sex workers with racial, sexual, or gender minoritized identities, I recommend more stringent collaborator criteria – for example,

a study that centers *only* Black trans sex workers or *only* queer sex workers who service queer clientele etc. – to develop new findings and deepen finding transferability.

Conclusion

In one of her seminal works *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, bell hooks – author, professor, feminist, and cultural critic – wrote about her understanding of the margins and the center as parts of a larger whole. As a poor Black woman from Kentucky she spoke about train tracks that divided where she lived (the margins) and the city where affluent white people lived (the center). She offered,

> Across those tracks was a world we could work in as maids, as janitors, as *prostitutes*, as long as it was in a service capacity. We could enter that world but we could not live there. We had always to return to the margin, to cross the tracks, to shacks and abandoned houses on the edge of town.
>
> There were laws to ensure our return. To not return was to risk being punished. Living as we did-on the edge-we developed a particular way of seeing reality. We looked both from the outside in and from the inside out. We focused our attention on the center as well as on the margin. *We understood both*. *This mode of seeing reminded us of the existence of a whole universe, a main body made up of both margin and center*. Our survival depended on an ongoing public awareness of the separation between margin and center and an ongoing private acknowledgment that we were a necessary, vital part of that whole. (hooks, 1985; n.p. emphasis mine)

I turn to bell hooks words at the end of this work because in many ways it was her words that informed my journey to advocate for people, populations, and ideas in the margins of the

margins. That is, those people and experiences who are missing from equity and justice conversations, even when scholars, researchers, and educators believe we have everyone and everything covered.

Hook's articulation of the margins as part of a larger and whole universe is critical to understand the *why* of it all. Increasingly our world is becoming more dangerous, more violent, and more volatile. Over the past three years in the United States, we have been under threat of a nuclear war, natural disasters wreak havoc and signal to us we are not taking care of the planet, poverty, hunger, homelessness, racially minoritized folks have their families, homes, and land ripped apart. We die by state sanctioned violence. Black folks, brown folks, indigenous folks – particularly those that are women, poor, disabled, queer – are no strangers to the violence of this country, its governments, or it's processes. It's coded in our DNA. The same is true of sex workers.

These minoritized communities and experiences – and in this case sex workers – have always been the canary in the proverbial mine. They always feel the impact hardest, they are always hit and hurt first. However, the rest of us cannot outrun the inevitable forever. As long as we stay on our current path and as long as sex workers are in bondage, so are we. We are liable and we are complicit. For every conversation we did not have, for every time we turned away, for any time we did not disrupt for and with them. It may not be in my lifetime, but it will come. The *it* being the violence. If the violence remains unchecked, the disaster will come for us all.

hooks (1985) tells us that the margins are a part of a whole, *the* whole. She tells us that the survival of those in the margins depended on a keen awareness of their separation, and I now argue our collective survival is also dependent on the awareness of that separation, the impact of that separation, the implications of that separation, and our decision – or indecision – to act on it.

We must determine what it means to learn, to help, or at the very least work to finally – to ultimately – render the experiences of sex workers (on campus and in the world), visible.

A Letter from Maliah

Dear Maliah,

Tomorrow is an exciting day, pretty nervous huh? But that's ok. You'll be fine. There is always a reason for everything You need to make sure you are always comfortable, safe and aware. You don't need to let this job define you either sis! You are dancing to make sure you'll always be taken care of.

I don't know when you'll break the news to the family but make sure the timing is right. You are going to be great at this new (and any future hustles) because you get it out the muscle. Maliah you have to save! Also make sure you don't get lost in the chaos. Don't ever let nobody disrespect you either, just because you choose to dance does not make you any less valuable.

I can't wait until you graduate then you'll see all the hard work payoff. You are destined for greatness. I'm so proud of the woman you are becoming. The grind doesn't stop. You'll make it to the top. Remember God does NOT make any mistakes! His timing is always perfectly done ☺

Love ya <3

-Maliah

P.S. If a few years you're gonna get an opportunity to be in a research study to share your story…make sure you do it. Tell your story no matter what. It will inspire you more than you know.

EPILOGUE

- Maliah: I'm crying 😭. I feel like I wanna keep reading, reading, and reading! You really told my story ❤️. It makes me feel good.
- Tianna: Lmao I love it!!!!!!!!!! You totally nailed my tone, lol. It was so clever.
- Kathleen: Omg that was incredible. Wow.
- Stokely: 😭😭😭😭😭😭 I'm SCREAMING this shit was so funny and well-written, I looooove it 😭😭😂❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️ It's perfect 👏🏾
- Gui: So awesommmmme! It is a bit surreal to read my story on the page like that. Thank you!
- Kemi: Omg that's incredible!!!!!!!
- Maria: I just read the first version of the story and I couldn't be happier with it. I honestly put off reading it because I wasn't sure if I was ready. After reading it you helped me come farther in my healing and it's almost as if you organized my thoughts (which tend to be jumbled lol). I wanted to say thank you so much and I hope so much success to you and your endeavors 💕

Each of the above messages were responses to collaborators' first look at their stories from Chapter 4. For me, the process of working with them was the absolute best part of this experience, and in fact, I was quite sad when the data collection and analysis phases ended. I wanted to continue to be connected to them in some way, and not for research purposes but because they are incredible humans, ones that I will not soon forget. In the moments that I received each of their messages, I experienced a sigh of relief and simultaneous joy. I had

honored their stories – and although I would do revisions with several of them – it was clear that even on the first attempts they felt honored by my attentiveness to their narratives and my ability to ethically and authentically start us on the path of writing them. In all of this, their approval is the only reward I was – and continue to be – after.

I wrote about endarkened feminist epistemology in Chapter 5, and I discussed my identification with Black feminism and womanism as a personal and scholarly politic in Chapter 3. Taken together these concepts reveal why my primary motivation was an authentic and ethical engagement with my collaborators. It was important to me in this dissertation research to move beyond a practice of participation, which is an imperative – I believe – in works that seek to tell the stories of others with experiences that researchers do not identify. Further, endarkened feminist epistemology offers that we must conceptualize research in ways that,

> moves us away from detachment with participants and contexts and their use as "ingredients" in our research recipes and toward an epistemological position more appropriate for work within such communities.
>
> Thus, a more useful research metaphor arising from an endarkened feminist epistemology is *research as responsibility,* answerable and obligated to the very persons and communities being engaged in the inquiry. (Dillard, 2000; pp. 4-5)

When these collaborators shared their excitement at reading their stories, their relief about my sharing control of the research process, and the healing they experienced as a result of not having to bear the silence of their stories, my cup was filled. Their articulations illustrate that I was responsible in my research with them, and I know that I am a better scholar because of it.

As I reflect on my experience, I am both exhausted at all there still is to do, and also inspired that I am not alone in the work. I think about my dissertation committee who pushed me – even up to and after the final defense – to go further, deeper, and more radical in the work. I think about my dissertation chair, who, when I presented this topic and a different "safer" topic option, she *immediately* encouraged me to pursue this one. I am in awe that so much of my doctoral and dissertation experience was an exception to what is often the violent experiences that doctoral students with minoritized students face; and for that, I am grateful.

In the same breath, I am exhausted because I have felt vicarious violence as a result of this research. To be clear, what I experienced pales in comparison to that of my collaborators and sex workers in society broadly. However, I experienced stigma and obstacles as someone unapologetically engaging in power-conscious inquiry about sex workers. Those experiences were important and necessary to help me get closer to understanding the gravity of collaborators' realities. For example, one association who offers research grants for the study of college students replied to my proposal submission with the following rejection,

> The committee greatly appreciated your proposal pushing the edges of existing research, while also exploring a population that is quite vulnerable and (we perceive to be) hidden within higher education. Your proposal is the most creative proposal put before the committee in some time, and it resulted in a robust discussion among the entire committee.
>
> In considering your proposal, the committee expressed some concerns how participants would be recruited for this study, given the extremely vulnerable nature of this population. Additionally, the committee would have appreciated some insight into how

> this is a significant issue in higher education. Also, the committee was a bit unsure, within the proposal, the overall aim of the study. Was it in terms of these individual's identity? How they interface with campus resources? The nature of their interaction with the campus? A bit of clarity on this point would have been welcome by the committee.

It is odd, to me, that a proposal that was the most creative in "some time" and also pushing the edges of existing research was not funded, and for reasons that truly read as mere excuses. I do *not* believe that there were flaws in my articulation, clarity, or framing of the research purpose and its importance to higher education. I *do* believe the decision-makers were worried about the optics of the potential (very) public conferring of the grant to me – and having to announce the topic – at the conference luncheon. I applied for this particular grant to help fund the collaborator incentives as it was important to me that I honor their labor beyond the typical 'chance at a $25 gift card to Amazon' as is typical in research studies. I paid them out of my own pocket, but thankfully I was awarded some funding by another association later in the process, who saw the critical value in this undertaking.

In addition to this example, I think about the many raised eyebrows, concerned tones, and confused faces that I witnessed when I revealed to inquisitive minds what I and my collaborators were working on. I think about my long process – though it felt more like a battle – with IRB. While I knew going into this project that IRB would be a nightmare, at the same time sources confirmed for me that my IRB process was longer than nearly everyone else in my program; even for a full review. I kept wondering if perhaps someone, somewhere, was trying to figure out how to deny my request or hold it up long enough so that I would give up and choose another topic. I was and still remain unapologetic about this work, advocacy for sex workers, and power-conscious and collaborative approaches to research. And also, I will remember every single time

I felt 'judged' by someone who did not seem to understand why this work was important, including, those who profess to value equity, justice, and truth. I will remember every obstacle that materialized throughout this process, and I will not soon forget them.

Finally, I will remember the anxieties and fear of doing this work. I worried so desperately about the safety and privacy of my study collaborators. I worried that some law enforcement person/agency, or anti-sex work advocacy group might have an axe to grind and work to dox my collaborators somehow, or – in the case of law enforcement – attempt through 'legal' means to try and find out who they are and somehow punish all of us. Whether my paranoia was warranted or dramatic is inconsequential, but I mention it here to illustrate that this project showed me what it means to do important, radical – and in some ways – dangerous research. When I meditated on the concept of 'danger' within the context of research inquiry I thought about *Create Dangerously* by Edwidge Danticat (2010) she states:

> *Create dangerously for people who read dangerously. This is what I've always thought it meant to be a writer. Writing, knowing in part that no matter how trivial your words may seem, someday, somewhere, someone may risk his or her life to read them.* (p.10)

I believe this project moved research and inquiry well beyond the bounds of the intellectual exercise to a praxis of radical, disruptive and potentially liberatory work. What would it mean for scholars to research dangerously? How might we take on or share the risks associated with or experienced by the subjects of our research inquiries? This dissertation has moved my thinking along in this regard. I understand, in ways that I did not before, a fraction of what sex workers might experience. I learned what it means to worry about privacy and protection, specifically theirs, and what it might have meant to sacrifice myself, if it came to it, to protect them. And I certainly would have (will). I am ready to do more dangerous work, because it matters. I am

ready to continue on until it is not dangerous to take up these topics, or to *live* them, for those that do so every day.

Finally, I hope others might join me in pursuing radical and disruptive work about college student sex workers. College student sex workers – like the collaborators in this study – want to tell their stories, they want to be heard, and they want ethical researchers to take up projects like these to further the work and advocacy for sex workers rights. Before beginning this inquiry, I was unsure if any collaborators would join me on this project. However, 24-hours after my initial call went out, I had a total of 17 college student sex workers interested in the study. By the time I closed the call, there were nearly 30.

As you have just read, I had a total of seven collaborators who decided to participate. One reason for the lower number is that I wanted to model an ethical praxis of consent. Therefore, after my second attempt to reach potential collaborators (with no response) I stopped contacting them. I chose to do this because I did not believe a potential collaborator needed to answer their phone to tell me they were no longer interested, for me to assume they were no longer interested. Lack of a no does not mean yes. Perhaps they changed their mind, got cold feet, or got scared. Speaking to a researcher with whom you've never met – about a sensitive subject – is hard, and I understand that. At the same time, I wonder if I had a research team, and was able to follow-up sooner with folks, if more students would have followed-up with me. In any case, I look forward to furthering this work and continuing to develop research projects that college student sex workers can collaborate with and feel how the collaborators in this study felt afterward.

As I think about the final moments of this dissertation and my time as a doctoral student – as now the newly minted Dr. Stewart – I am reminded that I always loved endings more than beginnings. I like the clarity that endings provide, that hindsight is 20/20, and that more than

anything, the reality of the journey cannot be disputed; the journey was the journey and we cannot dispute what was. However, in this instance, I think it is important to go back to the beginning to conclude this ending. As part of my preliminary exam process I was asked to write a lengthy case by engaging in various reflexive writing exercises to refine and define my topic. For one part, I was given three very simple questions with a 100-word limit to respond to each of them,

Why does this topic matter to you?

This population is in the "margins of the margins" and my work seeks to center such individuals. The system of dominance is relentless in everyday life. The more oppressed social identities you have, the more violent that system tends to be and sex work is one such case. The institution of education itself is built on and with the same dominance I seek to disrupt, and I engage it as a means to survive. If my work can make their experiences better or easier, then my work in education (an institution of violence) will not have all been for naught.

Why does it matter to the participants of your study?

"Only one thing is more frightening than speaking your truth. And that is not speaking." – Audre Lorde. This topic matters to participants because it affects them in dynamic and material ways and engaging this study might give them a way to speak their truth toward a liberation praxis for sex workers. The efforts and advocacies around sex-work will be an uphill battle, with the benefits of the labor remaining potentially unseen in our lifetime. Perhaps they do not see themselves as activists in a sex worker liberation movement, but surely they might welcome an ear for their stories.

Why does it matter to the field of education?

It *should* matter because educators purport education to be a bastion of liberal greatness with all the inclusivity and equity one could hope for, though there is a lacking of evidence and praxis toward that claim. It *should* matter because college is so expensive that some students can *only* attend through sex work. It *should* matter because we allow other students to make decisions about their bodies (sometimes for institutional benefit), with no moral judgements. It *should* matter because it affects our students, and we should *want* to make good on our claims that we intend to support them all.

In research we read, we write, we re-write, we receive feedback and write some more; it is a relentless cyclical process that feels unending. Through our working and re-working of our research and writing, the needle on our compass, our practical and proverbial direction, might shift (and it probably should shift if we are doing "it" right). Occasionally however, we get the fortunate chance of being on the right track – at the beginning – and we find that the beginning and the ending are not that different at all, and I think this is one such case. In some instances, the ending puts you right back at the beginning, but this time, older, wiser, more informed, and better equipped to do it again (and again and again), and I think this is one such case. Sometimes, the ending is truly just the beginning, and this time, that *is* the case.

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APPENDIX A

Verbal Consent Form

Thank you for your interest in this study. I appreciate your time! My name is TJ and I am a researcher and doctoral candidate from the University of Georgia, under the direction of principal investigator (PI) Dr. Chris Linder

The purpose of this study is to better understand the realities of college students engaged in sex work Specifically, I am interested in your background and what led up to your decision to engage sex work, how your social identities have informed your experiences, what you are learning as a result of engaging/having previously engaged in sex work, and from your perspective what colleges and universities can do to support students engaged in sex work, if anything. You elected to participate because:

- You are currently enrolled in an accredited not-for-profit college or university; or you are within 2 years post-undergraduate graduation.
- You identify as having engaged in a form of sex work at some point during your time as a college student.
- You are 18 years old or older.

- Though you are not required to hold the following identities I am specifically interested people who are:
    - Black and LGBTQ; or a person of color and LGBTQ; or a Black woman of any sexual identity or gender.

Before starting the interview, I need to explain your rights as a research participant in this study and our procedures for addressing confidentiality.

You will be asked to participate in two 2-hour audio-recorded interviews. Interviews must take place within one week from each other and can be conducted in person or virtually through Skype or Google Hangout Participation in this study is voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time, with no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision to participate or not will have no bearing on your grades or class standing with your college or institution. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to, and we may stop the interview or the recording at any time. You will select a pseudonym for yourself and your name will not be associated with anything you say in the interview. The interview will be transcribed, and at the end of the analysis process, the digital file of the interview will be destroyed. The transcription of the interview will be stored on iCloud and the transcription document will be password-protected. Confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. Specifically, no guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet by any third parties. Only I will have access to the transcripts and audio through the password.

The artifacts that you will be asked to create at the end of each interview will either be:

- Interview 1 - write a letter to your college or university; or create a drawing of a timeline to describe and highlight your experiences as a student engaged in sex work.

- Interview 2 - write a letter to yourself. More details will be given during the study.

Total participation time is 4-6 hours.
Once you have completed these artifacts, I will upload them to the password protected iCloud. If you decide to write a hardcopy, I will scan it and you may take them when you leave.

I will take every precaution to ensure that everything you shared with us is protected. Only the study team will have access to the identifiable information, and it will be destroyed upon completion of the interview and only your pseudonym will be associated with what you share. The results of the research study may be published, but your name or any identifying information will not be used - this includes any organization or institution names or identifiers, family member or friend names or identifiers, and as much information as we can that might pose a risk to your privacy and confidentiality -

The findings from this project may provide information on how to better support college students engaged in sex work by illuminating lessons learned through this exploration of your engagement from an asset-based perspective, a learning perspective, and being mindful to social identity. There are minimal risks or discomforts associated with this research. They include discomfort from potentially discussing personal experiences related to your engagement with sex work. To minimize these discomforts, you may stop the interview at any time or chose not to answer some of the questions.

After data collection I would like to maintain your cellular telephone number so that I may share with you my findings and how I plan to write and report the information. There is a small risk associated to my maintaining your contact information to your protection of privacy and confidentiality. To avoid this, you may opt-out of my follow-up with you at any time; and at the conclusion of your participation in the interview(s) I will destroy your contact information.

As compensation for your time, you will receive up to a total of $100 ($50 for each interview), in the form of a visa check/gift card. This will be [insert: mailed, given in person, emailed] to you. Finally, my covering this information serves as the verbal consent process. I will not have you sign a consent form to limit the amount of data, information, and paperwork I have connected to you. A copy of the consent form will be provided to you to keep as a reference, if you would like one.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact me:

TJ Stewart, University of Georgia, tjstewart@uga.edu

Do you have any questions about this?

If YES, then answer the questions.

If NO, then ask, “Do I have permission to ask you these questions?”

If NO, then, “Thank you for your time.”

If YES, then ask, “May I start the recorder now?”

If NO, then, “Thank you for your time.”

If YES, then “Thank you.” [start the recorder and begin the questions]

After the questions are finished, say,
"Thank you for your time. I appreciate your perspective and insight."

APPENDIX B

Demographic Information

- Race
- Gender
- Sexual Identity
- Ability Status
- Socioeconomic Status
- Nationality
- Additional Salient Social Identities
- Type of Sex work
- Undergraduate Institution

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL #1
(semi-structured interview protocol)

Demographic Information:

- Race
- Gender
- Sexual Orientation
- Ability Status
- Socioeconomic Status
- Nationality
- Additional Salient Social Identities
- Undergraduate Institution:
    - Pseudonym:
    - Current Year:
    - Hometown:

Narration Phase:

Leading Prompt: I want you to take a moment and reflect on your time engaging sex work. Specifically, I want to put yourself back to just before you decided to engage sex work. And tell me:

- What were the circumstances that made you consider sex work?
- How did you come to consider it?
- How long did you consider before making your decision?
- How did you make the decision to do it?
- What your introduction was like?

Conversation Phase Questions: (will probe as needed/necessary)

On Background

- Can you tell me a little about yourself? Whatever you like to share. About your history, family, where you come from, how you grew up. Anything you think is important that has made you the person you are today.

On Social Identity

- I will get all of your demographic information at the end of the interview, but I wondered if you could talk to me a little bit about the most salient identities you have. In terms of your race, gender identity, sexual identity, class background faith etc. Which identities are the most important to you?
    - Why?
- How has your social identity affected your outlook on life and the world?

    - How has it informed your trajectory? How has it affected your college experience?
- Has the intersection or your social identity and engaging in sex work been significant? In other words, do the social identities you hold inform your decision to engage sex work?
    - Do/Did your social identities inform how you experience sex work?
    - Do/Did your social identities inform how you how you navigate sex work?
    - Probe/follow-up as necessary.
- As I began this research, I found that most current studies that explore sex workers are largely about white women. People that research sex workers who are also college students, usually focus on students in other countries. What are your thoughts about that? Why do you think there is a lack of focus on Black people/people of color and other marginalized identities and sex work?

On Choosing Sex Work

- Of the available work/labor options how did you come to sex work specifically?
    - How did you even know it was an option?
    - How were you introduced?
    - Walk me through your experience leading up to your first time/night/client/show.
        - What went through your mind?
        - What was it like?
        - How did you feel after?

- Of all the sex work options is the form of sex work you engage in more appealing than others? Is this the only sex work you've done?

Miscellaneous

- If anything, what has been the most difficult part about engaging in sex work?
    - If anything, what about the most difficult thing about engaging in sex work and being a student?
- If anything, what has been the most rewarding thing about engaging in sex work?
    - If anything, what about the most rewarding thing about engaging sex work and being a student?
- Are you aware of the SESTA/FOSTA legislation at all? (if not explain)
    - Has that legislation impacted you at all?
- Is there anything you wanted to talk about or share; or something you thought I would ask that I didn't?

Artifact Elicitation:

Please think back about the day before your very first day engaging sex work. And respond to this prompt: "*If you could write yourself a letter or an email to your former self just before you started sex work what would you say? What advice or cautions would you offer? What would you want that younger self to know?"*

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL #2
(semi-structured interview protocol)

Narration Phase

Leading Prompt: I want you to take a moment and reflect on your time as being both a sex worker and a college student and tell me

- What that experience is/was like?
- How have you navigated the experience?
- Talk to me about how you handle your sex worker identity versus your student identity. Do you keep them separate? Are they blended?

Conversation Phase Questions: (will probe as needed/necessary)

On Learning

- How did you navigate your transition into sex work? Did you have a mentor? Did someone tell you/show you the ropes? How did/do you navigate protecting yourself?
- If you had to name the three biggest lessons you've learned as a result of engaging sex work, what would they be?
- Did those lessons translate in campus or in other aspects of your personal or school life?

- Are there other things you have learned as a result of engaging sex work? Anything you've learned about yourself? About the world? About survival?

On Secrecy

- Is anyone at your college or University aware of your engagement in sex work?
- What is/was your rationale for telling/not telling?
- What is it like having told someone/not told someone?

On College/University Support

- If you haven't revealed your engagement in sex work on campus, are there any circumstances where you would be comfortable with revealing your participation in sex work to staff or administrators at your institution?
    - How about students?
    - What would make you comfortable to do so? (if anything).
- What messages have you/did you receive about sex work while in college?
- What could your institution do/have done to better support you given your sex worker reality (if anything).
- What person, office, or functional role would you most likely seek out for help (if you ever needed it) related to your sex worker reality?
    - Why?
- Do you think your student experience was affected? Were you involved?
- Would you ever attend an event around the experiences of sex workers? Be a member of a student org? Do you/would you take classes in women's/gender/sexuality studies departments?

On the Process

- How was this for you?
- What made you participate?

Miscellaneous

- Is there anything you wanted to talk about or share; or something you thought I would ask that I didn't?

Artifact Elicitation:

1) If you choose the letter: Please think back about the day before your very first day engaging sex work. And respond to this prompt: "*If you could write yourself a letter or an email to your university president, board or trustees, or even to the entire campus community; What would you say to them about your experience? What would you want to say to them about sex workers? Write to them and tell them whatever is on your heart and whatever you would want them to know.*

APPENDIX E

Collaborator Demographic Information

Name	Race	Sexual Identity	Gender	SES	Other Salient Identities	Sex Work	Age*
Maliah	Black	Heterosexual	Female	Middle Class	Feminist	Dancer	20
Gui	Asian American	Gay	Cis-man	Middle Class	Feminist Agnostic	Sex Worker	18
Kathleen	White	Bisexual	Female	Middle Class	Intersectional Feminist	Escort	21
Tianna	Black	Bisexual Pansexual	Female	Poor / Working Class	-	Sex Worker	22
Maria	Bi-racial Latina	Heterosexual	Female	Middle Class	Womanist Activist	Dancer	19
Stokely	Black	Queer	Cis-woman	Poor	Muslim Femme Hoodoo Practitioner	Escort	19
Kemi	Nigerian-American	Bisexual	Cis-woman	Poor	Black Feminist Fat Bodied	Sex Worker	21

*****_age at the time of their introduction to sex work_

APPENDIX F

Collaborator Institution Information

Institutions		
Large Public Institution in the Southeast U.S. Small Liberal-Arts Institution in the Southeast U.S.	Mid-Size Public Institution in the Midwest U.S. Small Liberal-Arts in the Midwest U. S. Mid-Size Public Institution on the East Coast U.S.	Mid-Size Public Institution in the Southwest U.S. Large-Size Public Institution in the Southwest U.S.

APPENDIX G

Research Design Visualization