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Schoolgirls: Embodiment Practices Among Current and Former Sex Workers in Academia

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SCHOOLGIRLS:
EMBODIMENT PRACTICES AMONG CURRENT AND FORMER
SEX WORKERS IN ACADEMIA

By

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A doctoral project submitted in partial fulfillment
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation looks at how marginalized people experience embodiment in intellectual spaces. By looking at the experiences of twenty current and former sex workers in academia, I find that individual actors practice two kinds of embodiment, what I label 1) fragmented (consciously separating erotic and intellectual work) and 2) confluent embodiment (making erotic and intellectual work more confluent). I find that embodiment practices change depending on the social context in which they occur. My findings expand the literature on embodiment and sociologies of the body for a more robust and fluid definition of the ways individual actors practice and reflect on their own embodiment. By looking at how current and former sex workers in academia talk about 1) why they entered academia and their expectations there, 2) the experiences that constrain their ability to do intellectual work, and 3) the way they resist constraints in academia, I find that individual actors simultaneously inscribe and resist classical dualisms put forth by 18th century philosopher Rene Descartes. I furthermore find that interviewees' reflections on their fragmented embodiment practices, practices that mirror Cartesian dualisms, expand sociological concepts of "disembodiment" for a more agential and fluid understanding of embodiment. By utilizing an Arts Based Research format, my work also resists the traditional writing structures of academia that have, historically, positioned authors and researchers as subjects while rendering their readers passive objects.

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be written into the fabric of our bodies. And to all the feminists who oppose the human rights and dignity of sex workers in their uncritical fondness for the prison industrial complex—thank you for being an infinite source of motivating anger.

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personal, political, and intellectual interests in sex work, I am nonetheless grateful for the opportunity to reflect on issues that arise because of our conflict. That sex work is still a source of great pain for mothers, fathers, and siblings of sex workers is why I continue to write.

And to Lulu, my Granny reincarnated into a geriatric poodle.

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DEDICATION

For Bambi

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

My abhorrence of neoliberalism helps to explain my legitimate anger when I speak of the injustices to which the ragpickers among humanity are condemned. It also explains my total lack of interest in any pretension of impartiality. I am not impartial, or objective...[This] does not prevent me from holding always a rigorously ethical position.

--Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy, and Civic Courage* 1998

Imtiaz Ali's film *Indian Tomorrow* depicts a savvy sex worker and her investor client. The short film, which garnered both critical acclaim and moralistic incredulity, prompted one local Indian journalist to proclaim that, "prostitutes who rattle off sensex [India's stock market] figures during sex exist only in the world of fantasy art" (Jha 2016). The assumption is that sex workers do not have the intellectual capacity to "rattle off" insider knowledge about the stock market. For all intents and purposes, sex workers are culturally devalued in this way—sex workers' intellectual capacity is apportioned from their bodies while their bodies are imbued with a host of cultural, ethical, and moral meanings. Even the intellectual critique of "pornification" holds sex workers, specifically porn workers, accountable for Western culture's increased use of bodies and sex to sell products (Carline 2011).

The cultural assumption that erotic laborers are "of the body" as opposed to "of the mind" is not unique to sex workers. Linking negative connotations of the body to certain categories of people has been one way that entire groups of people have been marginalized for centuries. From the belief that women cannot overcome their reproductive functions or engage in rational thought, to associating black women and men with an insatiable hypersexuality, the

mind/body dualism has been part of the ideology keeping many marginalized people out of higher education (Bordo 1993, Hill Collins 2000, Payne 2013; Tuchman 2009; Miceli 2006; Taylor 2006).

Engendered from a Cartesian formation of the mind as the privileged site of knowledge, contemporary Western cultures often consider intellectualism and sensuality to be dualities. It was Descartes's 17th-century philosophy that set the stage for these modernist problems concerning the mind and body. Dualism, in its Cartesian application, positioned the mind's way of knowing as superior to the body's; the body's functions, its sensations, its subjective and seemingly irrational realities were seen as parallel but separate from the mind's rationality in this classical formation.

This classical dualism has since been rearticulated by the study of embodiment. Scholars in this field seek to transcend the idea of mind/body separation through embodied research and through research on embodiment practices (Merleau-Ponty 1945; Foucault 1964, 1975; Mauss 2006; Elias 2000; Mead 1967; Bourdieu 1987; 2000; Lamont 1992; Wacquant 2004; Turner 2008; Wajcman 1991; David 2002; Negrin 2002; Featherstone 2000; Aalten 2007; O'Connor 2007; Lande 2007; Okely 2007; Crossley 2007). In addition to examining how entire groups of people are seen as less able to transcend their bodily identities, embodiment research looks at how individuals see and build their own relations to their bodies. Regimes of gender and sexuality play out on the bodies of women, LGBTQ people, and other marginalized groups at work and in schools in ways that these individuals express through their own embodied practices. For example, in order to appear as undifferentiated as possible, lesbian youth engage in hyper-feminine dress and behavior in order to project an image of sexual "purity" to their colleagues (Payne 2013). Individuals distance themselves from their bodies, practicing what

some call self-concealment or disembodiment (Leder, 1990; Aalten 2007). However, other scholars argue that individual actors are always embodied, even when their embodied performances draw from classical dualisms (Wajcman 1991; David 2002; Negrin 2002; Featherstone 2000). For example, D. R. Gordon (1990) looks at the experiences and meanings of cancer and the practice of nondisclosure of the diagnosis in Northern Italy. He finds that the practice of nondisclosure, while engendered from Cartesian dualities of life/death, good/bad, and mind/body, is nonetheless a conscious decision for people who view “coming out” with the disease to be tantamount to social death (275).

There is tension between embodiment literature that attempts to transcend Cartesian dualisms and the particular bodily—and *biopolitical*—constraints experienced by marginalized people. As a scholar interested in bodies, their performativities, and the state apparatus that manages them, I am inclined to produce knowledge from my particular bodily standpoints. And yet, as an unexpectant single mother, my prior indulgence into the world of the flesh—commercial sex, drugs, and urban excursions into the underground sewer systems of Las Vegas, as examples—were suddenly off limits, and rightfully so. A new bodily reality emerged, one simultaneously constrained and profoundly enlightened by the growing life inside me. This bodily constraint of pregnancy, birth, and single-mothering led me to new questions regarding the body and embodiment—not merely how the body functions within particular socio-political environments, but the discourse that embodied subjects use to reflect on their own embodiment practices. Throughout the following research project, I explore not only the actual, tangible fleshy experiences of embodied practices, but also the palpable tension between discourse and bodies.

Diving into this tension between discourse and the lived, fleshy experiences of embodiment, I find that there are several unanswered questions in the embodiment literature. How do sexually marginalized actors reflect on their own embodiment practices? Do they embrace or reject a mind/body dualism in all spaces? In this research, I ask how marginalized individuals experience embodiment and the discourses they use to reflect on their embodiment practices in intellectual spaces and what their approach means for how scholars understand embodiment and disembodiment. Through in-depth, critical life story interviews with twenty individuals who have either formerly labored or currently labor in the sex industry and who are currently either enrolled undergraduates, graduate students, or affiliated with universities as faculty or in teaching or research positions, as well as including my own narrative throughout the project for a total of 21 research subjects, I ask: What are the embodied practices of current and former sex workers in academia? And what kinds of discourses do they draw from in order to reflect on these practices? Grappling with these considerations given my own bodily constraints is indeed a tricky task, and more easily accessed through a mixed-methodological approach. As such, I use both traditional methodologies like interviewing as well as more experimental, arts-based research methods like postmodern poetry and autoethnographic vignettes. Although arts-based methodologists and theorists are hesitant to advocate for any one particular method in accordance with arts-based research, I use sociologist Norman Denzin's (2003) description of methods that relentlessly resist "the structures of neoliberalism [in service to a] democratic-socialist-feminist agenda" as my guiding light (Denzin 227). That is to say, my arts-based methods—postmodern poetry and autoethnographic vignettes—are loosely tied around the notion that emotionality and its expression through postmodern poetry and autoethnography add a bodily component that other traditional methodologies leave out. Likewise, I employ critical

life story interviewing—a more traditional method—in order to get at what postmodern poetry and autoethnography cannot. Through this mixed methodological approach, I explore the tension between traditional methods and arts-based methods, just as I explore the tension between discourse and bodies.

I find that the way individual actors reflect on their embodiment practices—the discourses they draw from—are as important a site of analysis as the practices themselves. I find that embodiment is not a homogenous or singular process, but one mediated by class, race, and diverse strategies of resistance. I find that, overall, my subjects engage in two kinds of embodiment that vary by race and class. Depending upon circumstance and context, interviewees reflect on their embodiment practices by either using discourses of, what I call, fragmented or confluent embodiment. Confluent embodiment—or the process by which individual actors see themselves as simultaneously of the body and of the mind—is often equated in the embodiment literature with transcending heteronormative Cartesian dualisms (Payne 2013). Fragmented embodiment, on the other hand, is often devalued in intellectual work, even called “disembodiment,” if it is not overlooked completely. I find that discourses of fragmented embodiment reflect, instead, a conscious tool of navigation and survival among sex workers in academia, a tool that may problematize scholars’ current conceptualizations of “the disembodied actor.” Furthermore, my findings problematize Cartesian frameworks *themselves* within embodiment scholarship. There is no longer a distinct mind/body dualism in contemporary society; there is, instead, the performance of antiquated dualisms and as well as their manifestation through performative embodiment practices. That is to say, sex workers in academia are not controlled by the internalization—and subsequent performance of/reflection on—disembodying discursive practices, but undergo complicated apprenticeships in which

embodied practices/reflections are resultant upon particular biopolitical constraints, even when those practices and discourses mimic Cartesian dualisms. Appendix C details the relationship between the conscious practices of embodiment in relation to larger biopolitical constraint.

Why Sex Workers?

In the *History of Sexuality, volume 1*, Foucault (1978) makes a genealogical argument about discourse and bodies. He claims that sexuality is at the intersection of punitive, disciplinary societies and the material, bodily manifestation of disciplinary discourses (145). Through discourses of the body, societies carve out various populations in order to estimate their value. The discursive way societies estimate various populations' value is what Foucault calls "biopolitics." The social process of biopolitics happens through dehumanizing cultural narratives about groups of people, or discursive practices. The discursive practices over the last 200 that orient the experiences of women who perform erotic labor is an example of Foucault's biopolitics— through cultural narratives of sex workers as intellectually inferior and deviant, as well as narratives that position sex workers as either victims or criminals, even progressive feminists claim that prostitution "destroys communities" (Berg 2016: 1). Although much has been written about the moral and ethical meaning of sex work and sex workers' bodies in particular (Crenshaw 1991; Best 1998; Delacoste and Alexander 1988), I am primarily concerned with mainstream discourses of intellectualism and competency and how individual actors respond to these discourses through the reflection of their own embodied practices. As others show, mainstream, cultural, and even feminist discourses surrounding erotic labor often paint sex workers as irrational—and thus intellectually inferior— as well as deviant (Doezema

2000; Cheng 2011; Self 2003). Furthermore, research has focused almost exclusively on sex workers' psychological and bodily experiences with selling sex, reducing the sexual economy to individual motivations of women in a "deviant" profession (Calhoun, Fisher, and Cannon 1998; Carey, Peterson, and Sharpe 1974; Skipper and McCaghy 1970; Thompson and Harred 1992). It is only in the past twenty years that research has begun problematizing these frameworks of deviancy and intellectual inferiority (Weitzer 2012; Walkowitz 1992; Scoular 2007; Sullivan 2010; Stack 2010; Self 2003; Frank 2003; Scoular 2007; Sanders and Campbell 2014).

How sex workers are embodied and marginalized is an important consideration in the context of the changing landscape of higher education. In a study that explores the experiences of 6,750 students in the UK, criminologist Tracey Sagar (2015) and her research team found that one in twenty students labored in the sex industry. More than half cited economic motivations, including student loan debt. Moreover, "sugar dating" websites like SeekingArrangements.com facilitate the exchange of companionship for financial and tuition support and boast that nearly a third to one half of their "sugar babies" are students. As journalist Judith Evans (2015) points out, the exponential growth in sex working students owes everything to hikes in tuition and ballooning college debt—an average of more than \$70,000 for undergraduate students in the United States. Alongside rising tuition costs, the adjunctification of PhDs may also contribute to the increase in sex work worldwide. With nearly 67% of American university faculty employed as adjuncts—a part-time position that receives no benefits or health care—many university instructors earn far below the poverty line (Tuch 2014; Kendzior 2012). And yet, when current or former sex workers publically occupy spaces of intellectualism, like famed pornography actor and Duke undergraduate Belle Knox, cultural discourse tends to defer to antiquated concerns with intellectual inferiority and deviancy, referring to sex workers in school as "troubled" (Allen

2014).

The intersection of so-called body and mind work is particularly fascinating in an historical moment often defined by its “pornification,” or the mainstreaming of the sex industry (Brents and Sanders 2010; McNair 2006; Attwood 2011; Paul 2005). Juxtaposed with continuing Cartesian dualisms that devalue the body, understanding current and former sex workers’ experiences in higher education might help to unveil a growing contradiction between current cultural concerns about the sexualization of labor and calls for embodied research.

While prostitution has always been stigmatized, trafficking discourses in today’s cultural climate serve to heighten concern about sex workers’ agency and activity. Anti-prostitution feminist discourse draws from Cartesian dualisms of mind and body in order to critique erotic labor in seeing sex workers as “disembodied,” as powerless “others” who are coerced into “using their bodies” (Pettman 1997). Anti-prostitution feminist discourse also organizes sex workers into Cartesian dualisms of “victims” and “perpetrators.” The victim/ perpetrator dualism tends to simultaneously glorify and hold blameless the alleged victims of the sex industry while also punishing so-called perpetrators (Brents and Sanders 2017). These categories of victim/perpetrator mirror classical dualisms associated with the Madonna/Whore complex. The “Madonna” or “good girl” is defined by her virginal rejection of the carnal world and stands in opposition to the “Whore,” or “bad girl,” who is defined solely by her body. That the Madonna/Whore dichotomy is still an organizing force in the process of embodiment for women in contemporary culture is an important sociological consideration. As sociologists uncover how Cartesian dualisms imbibe particular bodies with a host of ethical and moral meanings, scholars might move closer to a more robust understanding of Foucault’s biopolitics.

Other sexually and racially marginalized groups of people occupy bodies imbued with heightened ethical and moral meanings—queers, feminists, and women of color, as examples (Gordon 2012). As these groups of people became more accepted into mainstream society, though, so too did their complexity as both thinkers and sensualists. Discourses of queer sexual identities have moved beyond the stigmatizing, dualistic language of hypersexual perpetration (of which queers were often accused) with real-life, material, and biopolitical effects—queers are less likely now to be the victims of invasive, punitive, bodily hate crimes than thirty years ago, as one example. And within academia, feminist theory, critical race theory, queer theory have all become important intellectual movements of the late 20th and early 21st century based on an epistemology that embraces embodiment in some ways.

Cultural narratives and the biopolitics specific to sex workers are often premised on Cartesian dualisms of mind and body that subsequently paint sex workers as irrational and deviant, as well as either victims or criminals. Moreover, sex workers' bodies primarily culturally define them. This social location at the intersection of presumed irrationality, deviancy, victimization, and criminalization, can add great insights to our understanding of embodiment practices in higher education and in scholarship.

Bodies and Embodiment

Looking at the body as terrain through which individuals enact power relations, Simone de Beauvoir (1972) was the first to proclaim that women are not born but become a subjugated class defined by gender. Her influential work shows the body as a socially produced text upon which meaningful and hierarchical differences—namely, differences of gender— are inscribed.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945) furthermore conceived of a “body-subject” in which the body is always constituted in around social reality; individual actors construct and are constructed by corporal experiences in society. Like Beauvoir, Merleau-Ponty’s work transcends the legacy of classical Cartesian dualisms in social scientific research by showing how bodies become culturally meaningful. More contemporary scholars acknowledge the body as socially situated in relation to sexuality, gender, and identity (Wajcman 1991; David 2002; Negrin 2002; Featherstone 2000) and approach individual actors’ bodies as social texts: “a system of meaning that has a definite structure existing separately from the intentions and conceptions of individuals” (Turner 2008: 521). Pinpointing a definition of the body is difficult, though, particularly because the body-as-text formation implies a social reality that is always exterior to it, whatever *it* is. Some even draw into question the “reality” of the body *at all* amongst growing technological changes where there is “a weakening of the boundaries between science, technology and bodies” that throws into doubt a cohesive definition of the body (Shilling 2007: 8). In order to grapple with the complexity of the body-as-text, Foucault (1979) distinguishes between the fleshy and the mindful body. The former, he argues, “[gives] way to the mindful body as a focus of concern [wherein] the control of anonymous individuals [is] replaced by attempts to manage differentiated populations” (Shilling 2007: 8). A preoccupation with death, as an example—the ultimate fleshy experience—gives way to “an interest in controlling details of life;” the mindful body is thus aware and reflexive of its fleshy reality (Shilling 2007: 8). Reflexivity is what distinguishes phenomenological work on *embodiment* from sociologies of the *body*. And while the literature on phenomenology is vast, scholars use the term to designate embodiment as a performative process rather than the body as an individual analytic (Turner 2009). It is the study of embodiment to which I now turn.

Pierre Bourdieu (2000) uses the notion of “habitus,” or habitual processes, to show how social and cultural statuses are not only texts inscribed *on the body*, but performances that are done *through the body*. Bourdieu’s (2000) habitus moves beyond the body as an analytic for a conception of embodiment. That is, if the sociological study of the body is predicated on the assumption that the body is a text inscribed with social meaning, the study of embodiment is primarily concerned with the phenomenology of performance or the *practice* of the body. As Turner (2008) explains

[The] theoretical conflicts between representation and practice can be resolved by sharply distinguishing between ‘the body’ as a cultural system in which bodies are produced as carriers of powerful symbolic realities and ‘embodiment’ as the practices that are necessary to function in the everyday world (522).

The study of embodiment, then, necessitates reflexivity. Bourdieu (2000) describes “reflexive embodiment” as the way individual actors understand their own bodily performances in their daily lives (5). Contemporary conceptualizations of reflexive embodiment, though, tend to talk about it homogenously, or as a singular process (Berbary 2012; Tanenbaum 1999; Skeggs 1997; Mac an Ghail 1994) To address *how* marginalized people experience embodiment, I look at the lived experiences of people traditionally defined by their bodies—sex workers—in an environment traditionally defined by the mind— academia.

The Research

Questions about the impact of the mind/body dualism on marginalized groups’ access to

higher education are important to understand how embodiment works. To better understand how marginalized individuals experience embodiment in intellectual spaces, I look at the lived experiences of twenty individuals who have either formerly labored or currently labor in the sex industry and who are currently either enrolled undergraduates, graduate students, or affiliated with universities as faculty or in teaching or research positions. Specifically, I explore how marginalized people like sex workers talk about Cartesian dualisms in three ways:

- How do current and former sex workers in academia talk about why they entered academia and how do they describe their experiences there?
- How do current and former sex workers in academia talk about the experiences in academia that constrain their ability to be intellectuals and do intellectual work?
- How do current and former sex workers in academia talk about the way they resist aforementioned constraints?

Drawing from arts-based research methods, I include autoethnographic accounts of my time as a sex worker in academia. This adds to the philosophical and sociological move towards self-reflection as a critical pedagogical practice and the researcher's own "sentient, suffering, skilled, sedimented, situated, and structured" position (Wacquant 2015: 4). I address Loïc Wacquant's (2015) "Six S formation" of the embodied researcher in order to practice embodiment as I simultaneously study it; autoethnography achieves social competency, "as distinct from empirical saturation" (Wacquant 2015: 1-4).

Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 introduces the main themes of my research project—namely, contemporary incarnations of Cartesian dualisms, their impact on marginalized people like sex workers, and sex work discourse. Chapter 2 reviews the literature on classical dualisms, sociologies of the body and embodiment scholarship, Critical Universities Studies, and research on the sex industry, including contemporary feminist discourse on erotic labor. I then explain my methodologies for this study in Chapter 3.

In chapter 4, I explore Wacquant's (2015) notion of the researcher as sentient and situated (4). By drawing from my experiences as a former sex worker, including my work as an erotic dancer, I use "The Strip Club" to temporally frame my dissertation. Beginning and ending with my experiences at The Strip Club allows the reader greater insight into my sentiency, which has, for more than a decade, been situated around my erotic labor.

In chapter 5, I explore the "promise" of academia for twenty current and former sex workers in academia, or, how interviewees talk about why they pursued an advanced degree. I find that self-identified lower-class interviewees—both women of color and white women—enter academia as a means of exiting sex work and garnering "legitimacy." That is, interviewees demonstrate a conscious decision to practice mind/body divergence, what I call "fragmented embodiment." Fragmented embodiment entails differentiating one's academic self from cultural depictions of sex workers as being primarily bodily in nature (as opposed to being an intellectual). Fragmented embodiment involves consciously hiding their sexuality in academic spaces. Fragmented embodiment privileges the intellectualism that academia has over bodily labor.

Self-identified middle and high-class interviewees expressed that they enter academia as a means of making sex work and intellectual work more confluent, to “further activism,” as one interviewee says. This group thus practices mind/body confluence that transgresses Cartesian dualisms, or what I call “confluent embodiment.”

In Chapter 6, I explore Wacquant’s (2015) notion of the researcher as suffering (4). By drawing from my experiences with clients in the sex industry, I paint a nuanced portrait of erotic laborers and consumers of the sex industry. By addressing the complex suffering of both my clients and me, I move sex work discourse beyond dualisms of liberation/oppression.

In chapter 7, I look at how interviewees talk about the experiences in academia that constrain their ability to be intellectuals and do intellectual work. I find that Cartesian dualisms organize sex workers’ sense of constraint in academia inasmuch as sex workers are generally seen as bodies before minds. However, I find there are differences in how narratives of constraint are employed. More marginalized sex workers in academia—particularly women of color—talk about feeling hypersexualized by their academic peers and flagged as culpable (potential) perpetrators of crime with less access to redemption than their white colleagues. Alternatively, less marginalized interviewees—particularly white women—believe others see them as victims in need of protection. Moreover white interviewees have access to redemption in academia so long as they reject their sex working past. I find that interviewees’ constraints reflect similar discourses that frame prostitution in contemporary society, discourses of victim/perpetration/redemption VS. criminal/perpetrator/hypersexual.

In Chapter 8, I explore Wacquant’s (2015) notion of the researcher as structured (4). By drawing from my experiences as a drug user within a particular historical moment, I structure my sociological bias—as well as my paradigmatic orientation—within a larger sociopolitical

context. I indulge the time-honored sociological tradition of taking hallucinogens on the famed—and consumer-oriented— Las Vegas strip in order to be closer to Foucault.

In Chapter 9, I look at strategies of resistance for twenty current and former sex workers in academia. I find that more marginalized sex workers remain “closeted” about their sex work in academia, but rather than seeing this practice as the internalization of traditional gender roles and Cartesian dualisms, I find instead that Cartesian performances are conscious and calculated and are an agential response to outside forces. In other words, interviewees demonstrate, again, a conscious decision to practice mind/body divergence, what I call “fragmented embodiment.” Alternatively, less marginalized sex workers resist constraints by being “out” about their erotic labor in academia; they thus practice resistance in ways that transgress the mind/body dualism and constitute a practice of confluent embodiment.

In Chapter 10, I explore Wacquant’s (2015) notion of the researcher as skilled and sedimented (4). In this chapter, I use the birth—and near death—of my newborn as a metaphor for the impossibility of conducting objective social scientific research. The explosive “little death” of birth, the most bodily experience one can have, is simultaneously a universal and definitively subjective experience, just like conducting (and completing) this research.

In Chapter 11, I conclude with final remarks about the sociological relevance of my work, particularly as it contributes to the literature on embodiment, Standpoint Theory, and prostitution research, as well as suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Sociologies Of The Body And Embodiment

Contemporary objections to Descartes's maxim, "*Cogito ergo sum*," or "I think therefore I am," come from the life works of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. Following their phenomenologist tradition, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945) emphasizes the constitution of meaning and human experience through the body. Merleau-Ponty (1968), like other phenomenologists, argues that the body is the primary site of knowing—"indirect ontology" or the ontology of "the flesh of the world" (13-14). That is, the world and our sense of self are phenomena in an ongoing, ephemeral, and fluid process. Phenomenological work on the body, including emergent sociologies of the body, critique classical Cartesian dualisms by examining the body as socially significant as opposed to a neutral stage upon which social interaction takes place. For example, how the body is "represented in society and how it functions as a symbolic system" is the task of sociological research on the body (Turner 2008: 516-17). In this framework, the body is itself an analytic, a text upon which social relations are inscribed. By interrogating the body-as-text, sociologies of the body attempt to understand how the body is a "representation of the social relations of power" (Turner 2008: 517). It is important to note the epistemological differences between sociologies of the body and the study of embodiment—the former, engendered from phenomenology, looks at the body as a social artifact. The latter concerns what philosopher Judith Butler (1990) calls "performativity," or the practice of the body. Though embodiment concerns "the practices that are necessary to function in the everyday world," sociologies of the body and the study of embodiment often go hand-in-hand (Turner 2008: 522).

Sociologies of the body owe their ontological framework to philosopher Michel Foucault. In his archeology of knowledge and histories of the body, Foucault (1979) unveils hierarchies and power relations that are intimately tied to particular bodies. He distinguishes between “anatomo-politics of the human body” and “bio-politics of the population” in order to show how power relations work through and on the body (139). By examining the “clinical inspection of individuals” whereby bodies are, as individual entities, disciplined and punished by both outside forces and self-policing efforts (or, anatomo-politics), Foucault demonstrates the macro-level politics (or, bio-politics) that subsequently carve out various populations—by order of sexuality, particular bodies, and identities—in order to estimate their value (Turner 2008: 523). Foucault’s foci show that bodies—much like identities—are historically and socially situated. Moreover, Foucault (1964) argues that embodiment is an integral piece in the discursive practices of archaeology, genealogy, and ethics. That is to say, “both the body and the mind *together* are in question” (Foucault 1964: 214). Individual actors do not know the world simply by thinking about it, as Descartes once argued; how actors think about the world is constituted in and around social institutions and state apparatuses that punish, supervise, and constrain bodies (Foucault 1975: 29).

One of the most influential studies of the anatomo-politics of gendered and sexualized bodies and embodiment comes from social psychologist Barbara Lee Fredrickson. Looking at the embodiment practices of 154 women tasked with performing high-level mathematical equations while wearing bathing suits, Fredrickson (1998) posits that “American culture socializes women to adopt observers’ perspectives on their physical selves,” leading to “self-objectification” that manifests in diminished mental performance (269-284). That is, women—socialized to self-police their intellect in the midst of outside sexual objectification—are *less* embodied when they

are perceived to be “only of the body.” And while the study offers interesting insight into the anatomo-politics and biopolitics of socialization and sexualization, it lacks comprehensive analysis of the women’s own reflections on their embodiment practices. In fact, many feminist scholars argue that the separation of mind and body—or, the internalization of Cartesian dualisms—is an example of sweeping disembodiment and is moreover a reflection of larger, gendered biopolitics (Pettman 1997; Hynes ad Raymond 2002; Hesford and Kozol 2005).

In order to problematize embodiment as a static and singular process, some scholars look at how individuals reflect on their own embodiment practices, or what Bourdieu (2000) calls “reflexive embodiment” (5). Sociologist Marion Fourcade (2010), for example, argues that the practice of embodiment takes two forms in contemporary society: self-disciplinary and externally disciplining. The former refers to what Foucault (1979) calls “mindful” embodiment, or the process of censoring one’s bodily behavior because of perceptions about others’ perceptions of one’s body. The latter refers to what Foucault (1979) calls “biopolitics,” or the sociopolitical means by which certain bodies are policed and suppressed in contemporary society. Fourcade’s work, like Payne’s, looks at *how* individual actors practice embodiment, though she moves beyond dichotomous conceptions of embodiment/disembodiment to show that marginalized people are often conscious of externally disciplining regimes. However, her work stops short of looking at individuals’ reflections on their particular practices of embodiment.

More philosophical work on embodiment is influenced by Foucault’s anatomo-politics and biopolitics, too. Post-structuralist feminists like Judith Butler (2001) take into account the social nature of the body and its impact on performances of gender. Butler is primarily concerned with gender performativity as it takes place through a socially constructed body, or the *practice* of the socially constructed body. Several recent studies look at the embodiment practices—or

performativities— of marginalized people and find that their embodiment practices often mirror Cartesian dualism of mind and body (Aalten 2007; Lande 2007; Okely 2007; Crossley 2007; Clegg 1994). For example, scholars find that feminists in academia often resort to practicing, what is colloquially referred to as, “keeping your head down,” or performing “a gendered concept of the self revolving around [traditional gender stereotypes]” (O’Connor 2007: 91).

Cartesian Dualisms, Discourses Of Protection And Hypersexuality In School

Descartes’s devaluation of the body is consistent with heteronormativity, in how it socially constructs and culturally in/validates specific bodies and sexual practices. When groups are defined as sexual deviants, they are disembodied and devalued, and often through, what some scholars call, discourses of protection (Jacobs 1996). Critical University Studies offer important insights into how institutions of education heteronormatively devalue the body. Although the discipline is primarily concerned with “higher education [as] an instrument of its social structure, reinforcing class discrimination,” Critical University Studies also critically interrogates gender and sexuality in academia (Williams 2012: 1). For sociologist Melinda Miceli (2006), as an example, her study on queer youths in high school shows how dominant cultural attitudes about sex, sexuality, and gender manifest in curriculum, or what she calls a “hegemonic curriculum” (344). Hegemonic curriculum refers to the specifically heteronormative aspects of contemporary education; that is, processes of “learning heterosexuality” that are sometimes tacit yet nonetheless structurally situated. Though Miceli is not explicitly in dialogue with Descartes, her conception of “learning heterosexuality” is nonetheless synonymous with classical dualisms— schools propagate cultural ideas of “good” bodies and “bad” bodies as well as “appropriate” and

“inappropriate” bodily practices. Like others demonstrate, Miceli shows how divergent bodily practices—being openly queer in school, for example— lead queer bodies and non-normative practices to be singled out as necessarily hypersexual, necessarily predaceous, and necessarily deviant (Wyss 2004; Youdell 2005; White 2002; Petrovic 2005; Rahmili 2009; Stewart 1999). As sociologist Gaye Tuchman (2009) furthermore argues, the fear of being labeled “sexually deviant” or “predacious” in institutions of higher education acts as another means by which intellectual spaces—and intellectuals themselves— devalue their own bodily desires and put others’ bodies under surveillance. Under “the guise of scientific administration,” Tuchman (2009: 1) argues, academics force sexually marginalized intellectuals to appear “as mainstream and undifferentiated as possible” so that bodily differences go unnoticed (Jacobs 1996: 288). Oftentimes, appearing as mainstream as possible is couched within discourses of protection—when schools socially construct sexually marginalized people as deviant and predacious, it becomes necessary, on the one hand, to protect mainstream and heteronormative people from the alleged rapaciousness of minorities. On the other, ideologies of protectionism, inasmuch as they are used to justify policies that affect marginalized people themselves, are shown to deny their agency (Jacobs 1996).

While these aforementioned studies tend to focus on the heteronormative *structure* of schools, others look at the individual, embodied practices of students themselves. Yvette Taylor (2006), for example, looks at the experiences of lower-class, queer identified academics and shows how the intersection of class with perceptions of sexual deviancy in institutions of higher education lead to perceptions of hypersexuality and perceived research bias. Taylor addresses the more micro-level performances of embodiment that are often overlooked in structural analyses of heteronormativity.

Anthropologist Elizabeth Payne (2013) finds, disembodiment for sexually marginalized people happens as the result of internalized Cartesian dualism that separate women into “good” girls and “bad” girls. Looking at the experiences of lesbian youth in high school, she finds that larger cultural and historical regimes of gender and sexuality play out on the bodies of young lesbians; young women express these regimes through their embodied practices. In order to appear as undifferentiated as possible, lesbian youth engage in hyper-feminine dress and behavior in order to project normative images of sexuality to their colleagues. Payne finds that there is an immense amount of social pressure on adolescent girls to portray heteronormative images of sexuality in school, even when they identify as queer. She analyzes the youth’s indoctrination into Cartesian formations of heteronormativity, ultimately concluding that young lesbian students internalize ideas of sexual “purity” that frame their experiences in school. By utilizing a “Critical Life Story” interviewing methodology, she argues that lesbian youth are “disembodied” because of, what appears to be, their bodily disavowal of their own desires. While Payne’s work is an important contribution to the literature on *how* individual actors practice embodiment, her conclusions nonetheless set up a dichotomy between “embodiment” and “disembodiment” without interrogating intellectual assumptions about what those dichotomous terms mean for the individual actors who practice them. In Payne’s work, “embodiment” refers to a static, singular experience that actors either have—and subsequently practice— or they do not.

Other scholars find that the marginalized groups they study distance themselves from their bodies, practicing self-concealment or disembodiment (Leder, 1990; Aalten 2007). By focusing on the outcome of bodily experiences as opposed to addressing the role of the body in that process, Philosopher Drew Leder (1990) argues that actors become an “absent body” (69). In

this dualistic formation of absent/present bodies, Leder argues that a Platonic emphasis on the purified soul in which an “immaterial rationality” is central to intellectual thought, one propagated through higher education, moves the “telos [of Western culture] toward disembodiment” (3). That is, he critiques the focus on the mind in intellectual thought as the central way that actors’ bodies become invisible.

Female academics of color, including Black Feminists, also address Cartesian dualisms in schools and intellectual thought more generally. Black Feminists link performances of professionalism—or, “respectability politics”—in higher education with compulsory heterosexuality, perceptions of hypersexuality, and intellectual inferiority for women of color (Gordon 2012). Others show how “professionalism” and the respectability politics of workplaces are often connected to performing traditional gender roles—for women, that often translates to performing “the good girl” or the “Madonna.” In fact, a great deal of research on the experiences of minorities in academia show how the gendered segregation of labor markets intersects with race and class for a “presumed incompetence” of women in academia (Aguirre 2000; Aisenber and Harrington 1988; Aleman 1995; Anderson and Smith 2005). Some even point to the sexual harassment of female academics, including female sex workers in higher education, as one gender-specific terrain women in academia navigate on a regular basis (Fitzgerald and Ormerod 1993; Fitzgerald 2015)

Sociologist looking at workplaces outside of academia find that women have similar experiences. Jennifer Pierce (1996), for example, in her ethnographic observations as a paralegal in two law offices, finds that “doing gender” in workspaces traditionally defined as “men’s work” means women feel compelled to perform traditional ideas of femininity. She finds that female-identified paralegals and attorneys enact more maternal, nurturing, and soft-spoken

performativities for fear of being marked as “ineffective.” Though her study did not specifically engage Critical University Studies or academia as a workplace, “doing gender”—or the embodied practices specific to gender— is nonetheless applicable to schools. The gender performativities of those interviewed for Pierce’s study offer interesting insight into the practice of embodiment in workplaces and how these practices are related to Cartesian incarnates of good/professional/normative/virginal bodies and bad/unprofessional/deviant/hypersersexual bodies. Indeed, others use these considerations of embodiment to analyze higher education’s bourgeoisie sensibilities, ultimately arguing that gender, race, and class inequality is propagated through institutions of education (Soley 1995; Readings 1996; Slaughter and Leslie 1997; Noble 2001; Washburn 2005; Berry 2005; Bousquet 2008; Newfield 2008; Masse and Hogan 2010).

Sex Workers In School, Anti-Prostitution Discourse, And The Victim/Criminal Duality

Cartesian dualisms of “good” and “bad” bodies also arise in discourses that are critical of prostitution and sex work more generally. Legal scholar Catherin MacKinnon (1989) and former prostitute and scholar Andrea Dworkin (1990) are perhaps most recognized for their anti-prostitution feminist theories. In their feminist theories, there are two groups of people in the sex industry—victims (good bodies) and criminals (bad bodies) Together, MacKinnon and Dworkin critique the sex industry as an extension of the (male) state—a violent apparatus that encourages male domination over women. In anti-prostitution discourse, women do not have agency, they cannot “choose” to sell eroticism; women are instead coerced into measuring their bodily worth through sexual currency and erotic desirability, which leads to patriarchal sexual exploitation and gendered subjugation. Women who labor in the sex industry are thus inherently victimized

because the sex industry is one manifestation of patriarchal entitlement, sexual currency, and male desire. Anti-prostitution feminist discourse on the inherent victimization of women in the sex industry continues to inspire contemporary anti-trafficking policy across the globe. Federal anti-trafficking policies in the United States, for example, blur the boundary between agential and forced sexual labor. And yet, some argue that anti-trafficking policies intent on “protecting” women in the sex industry leads to an “increased policing of women” and the widespread propagation of heteronormativity (Brents and Sanders 2017; Outshoorn 2004). Indeed, research finds that anti-trafficking policing often punish sex workers and migrant workers in the name of ‘protection’ rather than providing social services (Cheng 2011). Like discourses of protection surrounding “deviant” sexual behavior and identities in schools, discourses of protection surrounding the sale of erotic labor make two claims: first, these discourses claim to protect the mainstream population from “deviants” and second, discourses of protection claim to protect the so-called deviants from themselves. Interestingly, there remains a dearth in the academic literature addressing sex workers’ own reflections and embodied practices in the context of these discourses, particularly as they play out in spaces of intellectualism.

Some scholars claim that by denying sex workers’ agency, anti-prostitution discourse on the sex industry devalues the intellect of women who sell erotic labor (Chapkis 1997; Delacoste and Alexander 1988; Kempadoo and Doezema 1998). Moreover, some argue that denying the agency of sex workers is emblematic of larger biopolitics that devalue and control particular bodies. For example, sociologists Barbara Brents and Teela Sanders (2017) argue that:

In Europe the embryonic development of the discipline of criminology compounded the turn against women involved in selling sex as ‘deviants,’ marking them out as distinctly

different from ‘normal’ women [...] She [the prostitute] was an offender, a quintessential ‘bad girl’ and subject to an emerging penal ideology that irregular behavior must be isolated and controlled (2017).

The so-called “bad girl,” or the archetype prostitute who does not define herself as a victim but rather an agent of her own body, is subsequently subjected to harsher state control, which exercises immense power over her body. Laura Maria Agustin (2007) also shows how anti-trafficking policies affect migrant women and are rooted in racist and colonialist attempts at controlling bodies of color. Agustin’s findings are particularly relevant in the context of lingering Cartesian dualisms— as scholar Brittney Cooper (2015) states of the intersection of race and sexuality, “White womanhood and the need to protect it animates the core of so much white supremacist aggression towards black people” (1). Sexual virtuousness—or, “good” bodies—always stand in contrast to sexually “impure” or “bad” bodies, wherein the former refers to white bodies while the latter refers to bodies of color. Scholars show how the markings of “victim” and “criminal” for women in the sex industry, particularly within a racist sociopolitical environment, mean that white sex workers are more often than women of color to be deemed “victims” and their bodies redeemed; this process of redemption is necessarily at the expense of black and migrant women’s presumed perpetration (Gordon and Dubois 1983; Marcus 1974; Ryan 1979; Walkowitz 1992; 1980, 1982; Weeks 1981). As writer Magalie Lerman (2015) observes:

The [...] war on [sex] trafficking [is] housed within the criminal justice system, operating through punishment and incarceration. [The war] seeks to eliminate [...] abstract opponents by attacking communities of [...] sex workers, composed mainly of poor people of color (1).

These considerations—of discourses of protection and their biopolitical power of intellectual devaluation, punishment, and incarceration— have yet to be addressed in the context of higher education. Examining the embodied practices of people in higher education within a larger social context of “neoliberal governance [...] populist campaigns, racial and nationalist fears, culture wars, and sex panics that justify the repression of those who are outside the norm” is an important sociological task (Brents and Sanders 2017). Indeed, it may provide insight into 1) the intellectual tension between the mind and body, 2) the experiences of marginalized people in higher education, and 3) the embodied practices of current and former sex workers in academia.

I am not the first to look at the experiences of sex workers who are also in higher education. Sociologist Carol Rambo (1989;1992; 1994; 1998; 1999; 2006) paved the way for phenomenological inquiry into the experiences of students who moonlight as sex workers. She also inspired later work on sex workers’ performances of intimacy (Sanders 2007; Trautner 2005; Bradley-Engen 2009; Bernstein 2007; Murphy 2003; Barton 2006; Allison 1994; Chapkis 1997; Flowers 1998; Zheng 2009). Drawing from her own autoethnographic accounts as a sex-working college student and, later, as a former sex worker in academia, Rambo (1999) states that as a sex worker, she “carve[d] out [her] own autonomous niche in an otherwise oppressive context” (1). Rambo engages anti-prostitution discourse by acknowledging the “oppressive context” in which erotic labor takes places while she simultaneously demonstrates her own agency within that context. While Rambo’s work is mainly oriented towards phenomenology, others look at sex work in relation to the larger political economy (Hoang 2016 Altman 2001; Brennan 2004; Brents, Jackson and Hausbeck 2010, Hubbard and Sanders 2003; Lee 2010; Prasas 1999; Sanders 2008; Weitzer 1991, 2000). Examining the intersection of the political

economy, sex work, and higher education, scholars find that neoliberal changes to higher education, including increased tuition costs, push female college students towards using sex work as a means of paying for and accessing education (Sanders and Hardy 2013).

For critics of anti-prostitution discourse, narratives of sex trafficking operate on two levels: first, they exist as a means by which we culturally weed out “virtuous” and “victimized” bodies from “perpetrating” and “criminalized” bodies and, second, they are predicated on larger structures of classism and racism. And while many sex workers have written about how they navigate this complex terrain of anti-prostitution discourse in society more generally (Simon 2015; Fitzgerald 2015; Burns 2015), no one has looked at the way sex-working academics navigate this landscape *outside* of the sex industry, particularly in intellectual spaces. That is, while many empirical studies of the sex industry focus on the social organization of sex workers and their day-to-day work activities (Hoang 2016; Frank 2002; Trautner 2005; Bradley-Engen 2009; Bernstein 2007; Barton 2006; Allison 1994), few have explored the experiences of sex workers in other work environments. There have certainly been considerable contributions to the study of workplace and organizational identities and hegemonic curriculums of sex, sexuality, and gender (Britton 2004; Califia 1997; Frye 2000; Garber 1992; Green 2004; Griggs 1998; Schilt and Connell 2007), but none have explored the experiences of current and former sex workers in academia.

Consciousness Of The Oppressed And Sex Worker Resistance

Moving beyond the Cartesian dualisms of victim/criminal and “good”/“bad” girl that frame anti-prostitution discourse, scholars look at the political and social organizing efforts of

sex workers and their allies (Jackson 2016; Kempadoo and Doezema 1998; Kempadoo, Sanghera, and Pattanaik 2011; Jenness 1990; Mathieu 2003). Many find that sex workers resist the stigma of their erotic labor by forming communities based loosely around a shared, criminalized status with other sex workers (Vanwesenbeeck 2001; Gall 2007; Robnett 2002). Scholars thus claim that sex workers share an “oppression consciousness,” or an understanding of the world specific to the intersection of gendered, sexualized, and criminalized labor (Chowdhury 2006; Jackson 2013).

Likewise, scholars show how sex workers resist the negative stereotypes of erotic labor through a process of “associational dialecticism” (Chowdhury 2006: 347). Associational dialecticism refers to the ways sex workers contextually “closet” certain aspects of their life. For example, sociologist Teela Sanders (2005) shows how sex workers respond to the fear of social stigma surrounding sex work by using monikers and different personas while engaged in erotic labor. Rather than analyzing these “closeting” strategies—or, strategies that appear to disavow bodily labor—as a form of disembodiment, Sanders instead shows how “associational dialecticism” is a strategy of survival. If embodiment refers to “the practices that are necessary to function [or survive] in the everyday world,” then bodily practices of survival, even when they mirror Cartesian dualisms that seemingly devalue the body, must nonetheless be forms of embodiment (Turner 2008: 522). No one has of yet considered embodiment as a heterogeneous, fluid process in the sociological analysis of the bodily practices of sex workers.

Although studies on sex workers’ collective consciousness contribute to burgeoning research that problematizes traditional “deviancy” frameworks associated with research on the sex industry and, furthermore, offers an important, nuanced look at the embodied practices of sex workers, focusing on strategies of resistance specific to spaces of erotic labor tends to reify

cultural conceptions of “the whore” as *only ever* a whore. Looking at strategies of resistance and community building among sex workers engaged in other forms of labor—as students and as academics, for example—expands current sex work discourse for a more robust portrait of erotic laborers. Additionally, looking at the embodied practices of resistance for current and former sex workers in higher education may add to the sociological understanding of how female academics create “ripples of resistance within [academic] organizations” (O’Connor 2001: 94). And finally, overall, by looking at the embodied practices of sexually “deviant” female academics like sex workers, my work also engages larger, critical conversations about the “meta-discourse of modernity” in academia for a better understanding of how marginalized individuals experience embodiment in intellectual spaces (Bauman 1987).

CHAPTER 4: METHODS

In a ransacked apartment with discarded cigarettes burning holes in the carpet, I open the novel, *If on a winter's night a traveler*. Penned by postmodernist and grandfather of Magical Realism, Italo Calvino, *If on a winter's night* begins thus: “You are about to begin reading Italo Calvino’s new novel, *If on a winter's night a traveler*.” The 1979 novel, in the form of a frame story, is divided into two “voices:” the first is the second-person description of a character attempting to read the novel, *If on a winter's night a traveler*. The second “voice” is the first part of a new book that the reader finds. By employing different “voices,” the manuscript deals with the often-ignored tension between author and reader, space and time. By employing a nonlinear storytelling structure, Calvino rearticulates the object and the subject; he blurs the boundaries between arbiter of truth—author—and passive recipient of information—the reader— while anchoring only certain aspects of the narrative in linear time.

Arts Based Research Methods (ABR) likewise rearticulate the object and the subject in social scientific research. Though practitioners of ABR often shy away from mandating specific ABR methods, there is a general conception among ABR theorists that methodologies that draw from literary-based writing styles, including postmodern poetry and autoethnography, fall under the umbrella term ABR (Knowles and Cole 2008; Cahnmann and Taylor 2008; Leavy 2009). Scholar Patricia Leavy (2013) even argues that scholars may apply ABR to the design, data collection, analysis, interpretation, representation, and evaluation of research projects, not merely the representation of data through more literary-minded presentations. Some even include “digital ethnography” and the use of technological advances like digital video under the umbrella term of arts-based research methods (Murthy 2008). Within this framework, I use ABR to

collect, analyze, interpret, and represent my autoethnographic data—presented through both vignettes and postmodern poetry. I also use ABR in the representation of interview data, which I collect through a more traditional methodological approach.

Sadly, there is more theoretical writing on ABR than there is demonstrated practice. This oversight is perhaps yet another example of a specific kind of tension in social scientific research—the privileging of theory over practice. Sociologist Brooke Wagner (2009) grapples with this tension between theory and practice in her autoethnographic account of “swingers,” or people who practice polyamorous lifestyles. By using both interview data as well as nonlinear, postmodern representations of her own autoethnographic experiences at a swinger’s club, Wagner not only problematizes contemporary postmodern sexuality research, but the dearth in ABR literature all together. Anthropologist Katherine Frank (2002) also uses a mixed-method, postmodern and traditional approach to researching, analyzing, and presenting her data on masculinity and consumers of erotic labor. By supplementing traditional, qualitative methods like interviewing and observing with interludes of fiction from the perspective of erotic laborers, Frank’s work challenges the traditional academic structures of conducting and presenting research, traditional methodologies that, in effect, actually miss the bodily aspects of embodiment practices.

In order to look at how marginalized people experience embodiment in intellectual spaces, I use ABR, particularly the style of magical realism, as well as more traditional research methods. While I am committed to the strenuous investigation of the lived experiences of sex-working academics, I am simultaneously invested in creating beautiful writing that people want to read, writing that challenges the traditional structure of academic writing. To this end, I embed autoethnography throughout the data chapters and use a nonlinear, multi-vocal, Magical Realistic

writing style for interludes. The interludes I include at the beginning of each data chapter are meant to emotionally engage the reader for a broader portrait of what it means to be a sex worker in academia. I also use more traditional qualitative methods including participant-observation and Critical Life Story interviewing for the meat of this study. This research project is thus both a love song to all of the sociological and philosophical theorists that have shaped my personal and academic orientations as well as a multi-vocal, nonlinear exploration that privileges emotionality over positivistic research through postmodern poetry and autoethnographic vignettes. In the following section, I first describe my own standpoint as a former sex worker-turned mother who still struggles with the culturally stigmatized identity as “whore.” Juxtaposing segments of a children’s book with my toils as a post-partum interviewer, I also describe the beauty of “stumbling” in the research process. I then detail the field of this study, and my use of autoethnography as a method as well as its relationship to my recruitment process. I then explain my interview process, data collection and analysis, this particular study’s issues with validity and reliability, my motivations for this study, the multiple ethical problems I encountered as a researcher of the sex industry, and the general limitations of this research project. Finally, I offer a brief note on the multiple “voices” that I employ throughout this study.

The Mother, The Whore, And The Stumbling Interviewer

The vulnerability is toxic in these early mornings. My infant and I enter into a similar kind of panic, then— hers, no doubt, owes everything to the discomfort of a full diaper. Mine, hallucinatory sleep deprivation. Fruit hovers about fruit trays and calligraphies of light pulsate on the floor. If I am *Homo faber*, I am infantile, nay, mere udders for infant. A postpartum body

self-preserved only inasmuch as milk courses through a disembodied body; a postpartum body requires neither sleep nor sanity. And I wonder if:

1) “To her husband she is after all nothing but the mother of his legitimate children and heirs, his chief housekeeper and the supervisor of his female slaves, whom he can and does take as concubines if he so fancies” (Engles 1884: 3).

I am The Mother.

*

My inbox dings, and I find that I am tentative. I rethink the breast milk fetish ad. I think:

1) Plugged into the illusion, into the performance, swimming in seas of bodies, my naked reflection is, in spite of speed, in spite of drink, momentarily sober. Contingent upon its own repeated fantasies, the illusion of intimacy as the death of sex, it seems as though the spectacle I pedal is just one of many opiates that the masses imbibe too readily. When onstage or in hotels, I think, “Now, you’ll never *not* see the things of men and, of course, they do not see you,” and I am heavy with knowledge. Now, when I step outside, I weigh 300 pounds.

2) I am displayed in a sort of circus cage while The Stranger masturbates; “just animals,” I think and The Stranger wonders aloud, “What are *you* doing here?”

3) I am on the Indian Reservation and The Men throw pennies at me. I bend over, naked, and collect them, humiliated.

4) There is a cancer growing inside the casinos here and yet, there I am, and I am in dives where people puke from intoxication so that they might just keep on intoxicating. I do not know, in this moment, that someday soon I will have hemorrhoids the size of apples. I do not know, in this moment, that someday soon I will have a postpartum body and that that body, almost of its own accord, will become entirely “unprofessional.”

I am The Whore.

*

I interview her over the phone...

We're going on a bear hunt.

We're going to catch a big one.

... hallucinations commence.

What a beautiful day!

We're not scared.

Oh-oh! A forest!

A big, dark forest.

Infant at my breast, light convening...

We can't go over it.

We can't go under it.

Oh, no!

We've got to go through it!

...The Interviewee sighs.

Stumble trip!

Stumble trip!

Stumble trip!

I am The Stumbling Interviewer.

The (My) Field

This research project draws on my own experiences in the sex industry and from 20 interviews with current and former sex workers who are also in academia as undergrad students, graduate students, or faculty, both part-time and tenured, for a total of 21 research subjects. My “access,” a problematic term itself, is rooted in my work as a sex worker and my activism as a sex workers’ rights advocate. Gaining “access” to “hard to reach” populations is a contested and ambiguous pursuit (Cook 2002). While “hard to reach” populations may include drug users, people living with HIV, people from sexual minority communities, asylum seekers, refugees, people from black and ethnic minority communities, and homeless people (Flanagan and Hancock 2010), I problematize this conceptual framework. Of course, drug users, people living with HIV, people from sexual minority communities, asylum seekers, refugees, people from black and ethnic minority communities, and homeless people are only “hard to reach” in the context of outsiders attempting to study populations of which they are not already an intimate member. Sex workers have long critiqued the academic imperative to study sexual minority communities when the researcher is unfamiliar with community and when research does not directly benefit research participants. Like Lime Jello (2015) explains:

‘Nothing about us without us’ means that sex workers are so over research that uses our knowledge without paying us back, that investigates our lives without asking us what we need to find out, or that talks about us behind our backs, protected from critique by an academic journal’s paywall (1).

Lime Jello’s astute critiques of academia inform my methodology. Although I was unable to

financially compensate my research participants, I oriented my research towards concerns around questions I saw multiple times in sex-worker-only spaces. For example, Charlotte Shane, in an interview for the online publication, *Tits and Sass*, states:

I think liberal arts academia tends towards the insular and useless, but I still believe it's a beautiful idea—learning in groups of peers in a structured way, studying great ideas, talking about “texts.” In practice, it's got all the same systemic problems every other place does (the racism, the sexism) but it prides itself on being enlightened and better than that, so in some ways it's even more toxic. I hated my first bout of grad school but was (again) naive enough to think maybe it would be better at a different school and in a different subject (1).

Shane's experiences mirrored my own in many ways—I love the authentic pursuit of knowledge and can think of no better way to spend my time. Simultaneously, I believe my negative experiences as an undergraduate and graduate student were largely related to my sex work. I started wondering, *Do other sex-working academics share my experiences?*

My sex work and activism led me to many spaces that sex workers occupy, but it is worth noting that I occupied these spaces as a sex worker before I occupied them as a sex-worker-and-researcher. Since “coming out” as a sex worker in 2006, having worked in the sex industry for several years before “coming out,” I attended over twenty conferences to present on issues related to sex work and higher education, including invited keynote presentations for sex-worker led organizations like the Sex Worker Outreach Project and the Desiree Alliance Conference. Before entering graduate school to study the sex industry more seriously, I was already known in my community of sex workers as a sex workers' rights advocate. My sex work and activism

experiences come from an assortment of endeavors; for over ten years, I worked as one or more of the following at any given point in my sex-work career: a nude model, a “bikini bar” dancer, a full-nude erotic dancer, an independent escort, a peep-show dancer, and an amateur pornographer. These “fields” took place in the Midwestern and Southwestern United States, in five distinct cities with varying degrees of legal issues. In fact, when my sex work was not explicitly criminalized, it lived in the land of ambiguity. For example, while it might have been more socially acceptable to labor in the legal “titty bars” of Omaha, Nebraska than, say, to sell sex in the hotels there, both jobs entailed laborious eroticism and the performance of intimacy, to say nothing of the always expectant ends—the sexual gratification of men. That is to say, in my capacity as a sex worker trying to make a living, I engaged in legal and illegal behavior, in spaces of licit and illicit sex work and I engaged in activism intent on decriminalizing that labor while also maintaining a critical eye for the gendered industries in which I worked.

In the summer of 2015 I was invited to collaborate on an amateur pornography shoot at the Center for Sex and Culture in San Francisco, California. This research draws from my experiences there, too, including intimate engagements with famed sex workers. . I also draw from my work as the Volunteer Coordinator for the Desiree Alliance Conference, a position I held from 2008-2014. As supplementary data, I analyze different texts—the sex worker-run zine *Working It!* as well as the online publication *Tits and Sass*.

Autoethnography

Autoethnography is a qualitative research method that draws from ethnography in the social sciences and autobiography in literature. The method, which includes an author’s own

reflections on personal experiences as they relate to larger research data, places the self within a social context (Reed-Danaha 1997). Indeed, self-reflection and personal narrative have been successfully utilized in research on both the sex industry and academia (Holt 2001; Rambo and Mynatt 2006; Ronai and Cross 1998; Ronai 1994; Ronai 1992; Ronai 1989). Moreover, autoethnography has been successfully used by researchers wishing to include graphic, audio-visual, and performative aspects of social life in their research (Miller 2010; Scott-Hoy 2002; Saldana 2008; Bartleet and Ellis 2009; Furman 2004). The practice is now used across various disciplines in order to connect the “autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political” (Ellis 2004: xix).

However, autoethnography is not de facto an arts-based research method. Because it draws from more traditional research methods like ethnography, it can often reify the methodologies it seeks to tacitly critique (Pace 2012). By employing postmodern and nonlinear styles, styles meant to solicit emotionality, my autoethnographic components emerge as “arts-based.” Several scholars have used autoethnography as an arts-based method (Jarvio 2006; Anttila 2007; Tay and Leung 2011). Social Worker Rich Furman (2004), for example, uses autoethnographic and postmodern poetry to reflect on his own embodiment practices after learning of his father’s cancer. The use of “systematic sociological introspection” through more postmodern and nonlinear writing styles allows for the fleshy contextualization of patterns that emerge through more traditional research methods like interviewing (Ellis 1991: 10). Using autoethnography, then, allows for a more holistic, fleshy, and compelling examination into the lives of current and former sex workers in academia while investigating my own embodiment practices with the same vigor in which I investigate my research subject’s. It also grapples with the tension between traditional and arts-based methodologies—perhaps a false dichotomy—just

as the entirety of the piece grapples with the false dichotomy of Cartesian dualisms. If it all feels just a tad bit “schizophrenic” for the reader, that might indeed be the point... That humans, as social creatures, are bound by discursive practices in contemporary society while also recognizing, in our deepest, fleshiest places, the antiquated nature of these practices is itself a kind of... “schizophrenia.”

Additionally, I am influenced by sociologist Norman K. Denzin’s (2003) call for a “civic, publicly responsible autoethnography that addresses the central issues of self, race, gender, class, society, and democracy” (225). This is in-line with an Everyday Life Sociology (Adler, Adler, and Fontana 1987; Smith 1987, 1999, 2005) that uses multi-vocal methodologies in order to more fully address the inter-subjective and bodily knowledge/s of marginalized people (Willis 1977; Dickens 1996; Ellis 2006, 2008; Richardson 1997; Leavy 2009; Nisbet 2002; Holman Jones 2005; Vannini, Waskul and Gottschalk 2011; Hyslop-Margison 2009).

My constant self-reflection through autoethnography and non-academic writings detailing my experiences in the sex industry greatly aided in the recruitment of my research participants, too. As an intimate member of the sex workers’ rights community and my own local sex working communities, I first recruited sex-working academics that I knew as colleagues or friends. Using purposive sampling, I asked my colleagues and friends to spread the word to other known academics with current or former experience in the sex industry. Purposive sampling is a popular method for reaching so-called hard-to-reach populations, including sex workers (Browne 2005; Kalton 1986; Kaplan, Korf, and Sterk 1987; Morgan 2008). Friend, ally, and noted pioneer of the sex workers’ rights movement, Stacey Swimme, acted as a sort of gatekeeper—she posted information regarding my study on national and international email listservs for sex workers, which resulted in several requests for interviews. Using purposive sampling within the sex

worker's rights network, I interviewed people who were, 1) heavily involved with local sex worker rights organizations, and/or 2) affiliated with the only by-and-for sex worker health clinic, the St. James Infirmary, and/or 3) personal friends and acquaintances who I met in my capacity as a sex-working academic. I developed the interview protocol around sensitizing concepts from existing literature on the experiences of sex workers, sex worker activists, and contingent worker organizing, performative identity, Standpoint Theory, and critical pedagogy. Interviews generally lasted from 45 minutes to an hour. I also published preliminary findings from this study on the sex worker-led website *Tits and Sass*, which garnered the attention of sex-working academics wishing to participate in my study.

Interviewees And 'The 21'

From July of 2013 to December of 2015, I conducted twenty Critical Life Story phone interviews with current and former sex workers who currently work and/or study in academia as undergraduate or graduate students, adjunct instructors, or faculty. Interviewees reflect a range of demographics in terms of academic discipline, race, ethnicity, and nationality. However, all interviewees self-identified as cisgender women and only two lived outside of the United States at the time of our interview. In order to begin to identify key concepts and my approach to the interviewees, I conducted an initial focus group prior to the Critical Life Story interviews. The focus group consisted of friends and acquaintances that self-identify as current or former sex workers in academics. All but one of the women from my initial focus group later agreed to a Critical Life Story Interview. Developed by anthropologist Elizabeth Payne (2011), Critical Life Story is a fully open-ended interview practice that allows for the articulation of "hierarchical

structures” not readily accessible through more traditional interviewing practices.

All interviewees were 18 years or older at the time of the interview, current and/or former sex workers, and currently students, researchers, professors, or adjunct professors at an accredited university. I began each interview with the same “lead-off question” (Carspecken 1996): “What kind of salient stories can you tell me about your experiences as a current or former sex worker in academia?” After the predictable hesitation and requests for more information, which I did not often provide, interviewees paved their own, unique interview paths. I only asked questions specific to academia and/or sex work after the interviewee led me there. For example, if an interviewee described sex work as a means of escaping poverty—as they often did—I subsequently asked if academia was a form of escape, too.

After receiving verbal consent, I recorded each participant’s interview. Upon completing the interview, I transcribed it, taking great care to eliminate any and all references to particular cities, people, and/or universities. I also collected demographic information, including each participant’s sex-work history and academic discipline, though again, I eliminated specific identifying information. Appendix A outlines my process of gaining consent, including my requested Waiver of Consent, which allowed me to conduct interviews with verbal—as opposed to signature— consent. Requesting a Waiver of Consent was a deliberate yet nonetheless tough decision for me to make, but ultimately I decided that forgoing written approval would be in the best interest of my interviewees. By allowing my twenty respondents to participate in the study with little paper trail, I practiced what Anthropologist Susan Dewey (2013) calls “Ethical Research With Sex Workers” (46). Appendix B outlines the questionnaire I used to guide my interviews, which were based on my research questions. In the section below, I offer brief descriptive characteristics of the twenty women I interviewed for this research project. But first,

a note on terms; all terms below refer to how the services are provided and performed by cisgender women, despite the fact that all genders and sexual identities are represented in the sex industry:

- *Full-Service Provider*—this refers to sex workers who offer sexual services, which sometimes include some kind of sexual penetration, either as intercourse or oral sex. Historically, this population has been pejoratively referred to as “prostitutes” and/or “whores.”
- *sub*—this refers to a professional “submissive,” or a sex worker who engages in BDSM play for pay and performs a role of submission (in s/D relationships, the submissive partner’s pronouns are typically written in lower-case letters).
- *Dominatrix*— this refers to a professional “Domme,” or sex workers who engage in BDSM play for pay and perform a Dominant role (in s/D relationships, the Dominant partner’s pronouns are typically capitalized).
- *Pro-Switch*—this refers to a sex worker and professional kink provider who offers both performances of submission and Domination in a pay for play BDSM performance.
- *Stripper*—this refers to a sex worker who is a professional erotic entertainer or erotic dancer, often performing “table dances” or “stripteases” in bars, theatres, or other spaces legally designated for erotic entertainment. The legality surrounding erotic entertainment varies from country to country, from state to state, and from county to county. As a generalization, strippers and erotic dancers engage in some form of strip tease for paying customers.
- *Camgirl*—this refers to a sex worker who engages in erotic and sexual behavior

online, either as a live performer via various “cam” sites like “My Free Cams” or “MFC,” Syte, or by selling erotic video through various sites like NiteFlirt.

- *Pornography Performer*—this refers to a sex worker who performs erotic labor on film. The legality surrounding pornography varies by country, state, and country, but as a general rule, the production and consumption of consensual adult pornography is legal in most Western countries.

Characters

1) Name: Anna

Race: white immigrant to the U.S.

Class: middle class, though grew up less economically privileged

Area of Study: social sciences, currently a PhD student

Sex Work: entered the sex industry prior to entering academia, former sex worker, was full provider

2) Name: Annie

Race: white American

Class: grew up working-class, now economically privileged

Area of Study: humanities, currently a non-tenured professor

Sex Work: entered the sex industry prior to college as a pornography actress and full provider, currently a former sex worker who still engages in erotic performance art

3) Name: Bailey

Race: white American

Class: working-class

Area of Study: humanities, currently a PhD student

Sex Work: entered the sex industry prior to entering academia, former sex worker, was erotic dancer

4) Name: Beatrix

Race: white American

Class: now economically disadvantaged, though grew up middle/upper-class

Area of Study: humanities, currently a Master's student

Sex Work: entered the sex industry while a Master's student, currently a sex worker as pro-Domme and camgirl

5) Name: Doc

Race: first-generation Latina

Class: middle-class

Area of Study: social sciences, currently a PhD student

Sex Work: entered the sex industry while in academia, currently a sex worker as pro-Domme and full provider

6) Name: Dominique

Class: middle-class

Race: white American

Area of Study: humanities, currently a tenured professor

Sex work: entered the sex industry while a graduate student, former sex worker, was an erotic dancer and full provider

7) Name: Elle

Class: upper-class

Race: white American

Area of Study: social sciences, current a Master's student

Sex Work: entered the sex industry as an undergraduate student, currently a sex worker as an erotic dancer and full provider

8) Name: Fawn

Class: lower/middle-class

Race: white American

Area of Study: humanities, currently a PhD student

Sex work: entered the sex industry as an undergraduate, currently a sex worker (undisclosed specifics about the work)

9) Name: Jamie

Class: working-class

Race: white American

Area of Study: social sciences, currently a PhD student

Sex Work: entered the sex industry prior to undergraduate work, former sex worker, was an erotic dancer and pro-Domme

10) Name: Jenna

Class: working-class

Race: white American

Area of Study: social sciences, currently a PhD student

Sex work: entered the sex industry prior to undergraduate work, currently a sex worker, was an erotic dancer

11) Name: Kay

Class: middle-class

Race: white American

Area of Study: social sciences, currently a non-tenured PhD

Sex Work: entered the sex industry as a graduate student, former sex worker, was an erotic dancer

12) Name: Lena

Class: middle-class

Race: white American

Area of Study: humanities, currently a Master's student

Sex Work: entered the sex industry as an undergraduate student, currently a sex worker in many areas of the industry, including pornography

13) Name: Lola

Class: middle-class

Race: white American

Area of Study: humanities, currently an undergraduate studying abroad

Sex Work: entered the sex industry as a burlesque dancer during her undergraduate work, currently an erotic dancer and full provider

14) Name: Lorilie

Class: working-class

Race: Nigerian undocumented immigrant abroad

Area of Study: humanities, currently an undergraduate student

Sex Work: entered the sex industry after entering college as an undergraduate, currently as sex worker as a full provider

15) Name: Lucy

Class: lower-class

Race: white

Area of Study: humanities, currently pursuing second Master's degree

Sex Work: entered the sex industry as an undergraduate student, currently a sex worker as a phone sex operator and camgirl

16) Name: Lulu

Class: working-class

Race: white

Area of Study: social sciences, currently a Master's student

Sex Work: trafficked into the sex industry as a youth, is now an agential sex worker as a full service provider

17) Name: Noel

Class: working-class

Race: white

Area of Study: social sciences, currently a PhD student

Sex Work: entered the sex industry as an undergraduate student, now a former sex worker, was an erotic dancer

18) Name: Salvia

Class: lower/middle- class

Race: woman of color

Area of Study: social sciences, currently a Master's student

Sex Work: entered the sex industry while in academia, currently a sex worker as an erotic dancer

19) Name: Samantha

Class: lower-class

Race: woman of color

Area of Study: social sciences, currently a PhD student

Sex Work: entered the sex industry as a youth—would legally be defined as a victim of sex trafficking, though she does not define her experience as such—now a former sex worker who was a full service provider as an adult

20) Name: Vivian Salt

Class: working-class

Race: mixed race Asian/white

Area of Study: social sciences, currently a Master's student

Sex Work: entered the sex industry as an undergraduate student, currently a sex worker as pro-sub/Domme switch and full provider

21) Name: I am Juniper in writing, Jennifer at home, Jenny by day, and Dottie at night

Class: middle-class

Race: white/ Native American

Area of Study: social sciences, currently a PhD candidate writing this very dissertation

Sex Work: entered the sex industry as an undergraduate drop-out, currently a former sex worker

Data and Analysis

My analysis of the data began soon after I conducted interviews. Using a data analysis tool called Grounded Theory, my data collection and theoretical orientation occurred simultaneously (Glaser and Strauss 1987). This primarily inductive research method serves as a tool for developing theory, not testing it, which seemingly contradicts my foci on classical

dualisms and their contemporary fineness (Glaser 1978). However, I do not use Cartesian dualisms as a “testable” theory; instead, I defer to the antiquated concept of mind/body dualisms as a roadmap for engaging conversations outside of academia, conversations that are still reliant upon dualisms if only to move beyond them. That is, embodiment scholars and lay people alike recognize the antiquatedness of mind/body dualisms, even when drawing upon them. Yet, Cartesian dualisms—as well as their manifestation through other contemporary dualities like Virgin/Whore, “good” girl/ “bad” girl, etc— still tend to frame discourse about the body and the mind. Using Cartesian dualisms as a roadmap allows me to hone in on the discursive practices of interviewees—how do they talk about their embodiment practices? Using Grounded Theory allows my research to move beyond Descartes to get at the specific theory behind interviewees’ reflections on their own embodiment practices.

There are four stages to Grounded Theory: open coding, theoretical coding, selective coding, and sorting memos. As I gathered new data, conducting more interviews and reflecting on my time in academia as a sex worker, I began using thematic coding. Data analysis was an ongoing process of coding, reflecting on my ideas, and revising them as I continued to collect new data. I conducted three phases of coding the data to identify themes in the data: open coding, coding into categories, and coding for theory generation. Open coding entailed reading interview transcripts line-by-line and assigning codes to segments of text. These codes included:

- reasons for entering academia
- interviewees’ sense of future prospects in academia
- issues of sexuality
- perceptions of hypersexuality
- the impact of race and class on the experiences of sex-working academics

- social stigma, shame, and the power to name
- mind/body dualism in academia as evident in sex working academics' sense of self
- the impact of trafficking and anti-prostitution narratives on sex working academics
- the perception that sex work disqualifies sex working academics from being seen as intellectually rigorous and/or self-perceived intellectual inferiority
- issues of voyeurism in academia, including sexual harassment and misconceptions about sex work itself

The codes above were one way to note preliminary ideas that seemed to continuously pop up in the interviews. Clarke (2003) describes these codes as “temporary labels” (556). I began this stage of coding after completing about half of my interviews.

In the next stage, I collapsed the many codes generated in the initial coding phase into categories guided by my research questions. Attuned to codes related to class, race, constraint, and resistance, I utilized “pattern coding” (Miles and Huberman 1994). I then developed categories that addressed my three analytical axes—identity and sex work, critical pedagogy, and sexual marginalization and discrimination in higher education.

Validity and Reliability

Reliability is the degree to which “an assessment tool produces stable and consistent results” (Phelan and Wren 2005). That this study is deeply entrenched in the messy self-reflections and perceptions of interviewees and myself means that reliability is certainly a

challenge. No doubt, if my study were to be duplicated, the observations, emotions, and feelings—indeed, the embodiment practices—of other researchers would look much different. For these reasons, the reliability of this particularly study is not strong. The validity of my study, on the other hand, or “how well a test measures what it is purported to measure,” is formidable (Phelan and Wren 2005). I sought to observe and write about the ephemeral, embodied experiences of both interviewees and myself, which the study captures. I address the study’s problems with reliability in two ways: by decontextualizing my findings and by using triangulation.

Although individual interviews are one way to understand the lived experiences of socially marginalized people, relying solely on them can decontextualize findings and are clearly based on subjective experiences in the world (Charmaz 2005). Moreover, it is widely believed to be impossible to make unbiased statements from purposive-sampled data (Brace-Govan 2004). Supplementing interview data with autoethnography is likewise decontextualizing and subjective. In fact, autoethnography is often criticized for being narcissistic and irrelevant for these reasons (Coffey 1999). However, the decision *not* to include the researcher’s voice in social scientific research is an equally biased and subjective decision. By utilizing autoethnography, I “attempt to reclaim, through self-reflective response, representational spaces that have marginalized those of us at the borders” (Tierney 1998: 66),

This research project stems from a fervent commitment to anti-establishment cultural productions that challenge and implicate legislators and interpreters (Hughes 1996). Furthermore, by using triangulation—interview data, autoethnography, and sex workers’ writings—I help advance the validity of my analysis and “enhance confidence in the ensuing findings” (Bryman 2003: 1142). This research project included multiple types of triangulation:

by data source (individuals, writings, autoethnographic observations), by method (observation, self-interrogation and alternative research methods, interview) and by theoretical perspective (identity, labor, resistance). And while, admittedly, twenty interviews does not often constitute data saturation in the social sciences, I follow Wacquant's (2015) guide for a "flesh and blood sociology:"

Methodically deploying one's body as an intelligent instrument of practical knowledge production speeds up the acquisition of basic social competency— *the operant capacity to feel, think, and act like a Whatever among the WhatEVERs*—which, in turn, offers a better criterion than data saturation for deciding when you have accomplished your mission (7).

That is to say, I am more invested in the practices of embodiment—including the interrogation of my own through ABR—than in the more traditional qualifiers of positivistic social scientific research that include numerical guidelines for "saturation."

Motivations For Study

As a feminist, I am deeply committed to egalitarianism and the relentless indictment of institutions that actively and/or tacitly stand in opposition to equality. My commitment to egalitarianism stems from a life-long desire to enhance the voices of women and other gender minorities. For this reason, I am profoundly skeptical of positivistic science, which embraces essentialist narratives and totalizing conceptions of truth. Informed by the feminist critique of science, I chose a mode of inquiry—and a topic—that would allow me to emphasize the lived-

experiences of gender minorities who might also be marginalized in terms of their gendered and sexualized labor, class status, and race. Because I also believe that academia is the last bastion of free thought in our bloated, capitalist society, I am deeply committed to the equal accessing of education by poor and minority people. Hence, this project is concerned, fundamentally, with fairness in institutions of higher education, in line with a participatory-action research tradition that aims for social change and restorative justice through inclusion (O'Neill et al. 2008).

Ethical Issues

Research about sex work requires careful consideration of ethical issues (Sander 2006; Shaver 2005). All of my research participants were entitled to clear, non-coercive descriptions of the potential risks and benefits of participating in my project, as outlined by my Institutional Review Board (IRB)-approved project protocol. Though sex work is increasingly socially acceptable, it continues to be stigmatized, particularly for sex workers who engage in illicit labor. As a former sex worker, I am very protective of my sex-working sisters. Thus, I use various strategies to protect the identities of the women interviewed and the relationships I formed with them during the research process. Although I am committed to alternative methods and, in service to these methods, utilize thick, descriptive portraits of my interviewees, I nonetheless took great pains to mask their identities. In cases wherein the unique physical description of a research participant adds to the narrative—like their tattoos or piercings—I take creative liberties with the particularities of that description. I might, for example, refer to an interviewees' "nose ring" when, in reality, she sports a lip piercing. In one case, I describe an interviewee's tattoos. That she has tattoos is sociologically meaningful and should not be left out

of the research story. However, in order to protect her identity, I describe said tattoos as “covering the nape of her neck” when, in reality, her tattoos cover other body parts, not her neck. Moreover, even though I was familiar with many of my interviewees both professionally and personally prior to conducting interviews, I nonetheless used standard confidentiality protections. These confidentiality protections include separating identifying details from data, minimizing the use of full names, and keeping project information in password-protected files. For reasons of confidentiality, I also requested—and was awarded—an IRB Waiver of Consent, detailed in Appendix A.

The topic of sex work is itself socially sensitive, and this sensitivity is exacerbated by my interviewees’ simultaneous statuses as academics. That academics routinely lose their academic jobs because of their moonlighting as sex workers is not insignificant—it demonstrates the incredible stigma of sex work, the vast gulf between intellectualism and erotic labor, and the sensitive nature of this particular study. As identified by Lee and Renzetti (1993), criteria for potentially sensitive research include: being concerned with deviance and social control and impinging on vested interests of powerful people. Deviance and social control are at the heart of any feminist inquiry into gendered labor and each of my sources of data are wrapped up in gendered and sexualized systems of control. My interest in critiquing the structures that position sex workers on the outside of intellectualism suggest changes that could affect the very academics I work with and for.

One of the most critical skills in conducting sensitive research is cultural sensitivity, or the ability to adjust to different settings, anticipate and empathize with people’s concerns, and communicate respectfully in a variety of ways (Sieber 1993). Because I was a sex worker before I identified as an academic, I feel much more at home in spaces of sex work than in formal

university settings. Many of the women I interviewed were familiar with my non-academic writings, which I've published under various pseudonyms. My research participants were well aware of my standpoint as a former sex worker-turned mother who continues to advocate for the decriminalization of prostitution.

Some scholars have described the ethical process of researching sex workers as taking on “a guest role” wherein researchers act as if sex workers have invited the researcher into their living rooms (Shaver 2005: 296). Though this approach is commendable in some ways and adds to a growing academic trend towards treating research participants as agents with their own agendas, I find the approach problematic; I do not have to *act* like I've been invited into the living room of whores. I am, indeed, a whore; I am in the living rooms of whores on a regular basis—as friends, as lovers, as colleagues... as humans doing human stuff. This is not to discount the immense amount of power that researchers exercise over their research participants. I recognize my privileges as a white-presenting cis woman and the kind of institutional protection I am afforded because of those privileges; protection not likewise accessed by my sex-working colleagues for reasons of race, ethnicity, class, area of study, citizenship status, etc. Even in situations wherein I interviewed women with more institutional privilege than me—three of my interviewees were established academics with PhDs at the time of our interview, for example—I nonetheless hold the power of exposure, a power I do not take lightly. As a woman who was disowned by my own mother after being “outed” as a sex worker more than a decade ago, I am deeply invested in protecting the privacy of my research participants because I know, first hand, the detrimental effects of exposure. I took the following precautions with interviewees:

- Correspondence never took place through institutional email addresses

- All interviewees' names were recorded as monikers and, in most cases, I did not know or have any link to individuals' legal names
- By offering a waiver of consent, interviewees were not required to have a signed paper trail in order to participate in the study
- Before publication of any aspect of this study, I emailed interviewees a copy of the document to ensure they were comfortable with how I described both demographics and quotations
- Interviews were transcribed one-three weeks after they occurred and then deleted
- All "off the record" quotations as well as any identifying information, including university affiliation, were left out of transcriptions (in some cases, I even deleted identifying information like descriptions of tattoos or other body modifications)
- Transcriptions will be destroyed one year after the completion of this study
- Even in cases where interviewees expressed comfort using their legal names, I nonetheless used monikers for both consistency and privacy

Further Limitations

Both the design of my study and its implementation are limited in terms of generalizability, my relative inexperience as a researcher, and the topic of sex work itself. As is the case with much qualitative research, my study is not easily generalizable to other settings. While I believe sex workers in academia can give us important insights into the mind body dualism, they are indeed a niche population, and focusing only on their experience makes it difficult to apply my findings to other environments. Not to mention, the small size of my sample—twenty—also

makes my findings difficult to generalize, and the demographics of my interviewees furthermore make my findings difficult to generalize to a larger population. Moreover, qualitative research employs inductive reasoning, which means my research questions are based entirely on my own, subjective worldview (Charmaz 2005). My use of autoethnography is an attempt to self-interrogate said worldview. Nonetheless, this project would have greatly benefitted from, as one example, interviews with non sex-working academics, if only for comparison. My project also could have been enhanced by a diversity of data sources; however, I did employ “member checks” (Lincoln and Guba 1985) wherein respondents reviewed the conclusions I drew based on our conversations. This is one way of mitigating validity issues in qualitative research.

Research on sex work also presents a variety of methodological challenges. Using purposive-sampling to recruit sex-working academics is especially problematic, as it likely resulted in gathering skewed perspectives (Shaver 2005). Starting with people that I know from my work in the sex industry means that various populations were left out of my discussion—for example, I only interviewed one victim of sex trafficking, even though some scholars estimate that there are over 300,000 people forced into sex slavery in the US every year (Estes and Weiner 2001). Clearly, had I interviewed academics who’d been sex-trafficked, my data would look much different.

*

You are about to begin reading Jenny Heineman’s dissertation, *Schoolgirls: Relax*. Concentrate. Dispel every other thought. Let the world around you fade. Best to close the door; the TV is always on in the next room. Tell the others right away, “No, I don’t want to watch TV!” Raise your voice—they won’t hear you otherwise—‘I’m reading! I don’t want to be disturbed!’ Maybe they haven’t heard you, with all that racket; speak louder, yell: “I’m

beginning to read Jenny Heineman's dissertation!" Or, if you prefer, don't say anything; just hope they'll leave you alone (Calvino 1979: 2-3).

CHAPTER 5: SENTIENT AND SITUATED, AN INTERLUDE

Exteroceptive, peoprioceptive, interoceptive

Sensorium experience

Feeling and consciousness of those feelings

The body is the synthesizing medium of this feeling awareness

Shaped by social location, our bodies trace the many places we've been

(Wacquant 2015: 4)

*

Sukenick begins his 1986 novel, *Blown Away*, with the color of time, which he says is blue. And it was precisely the color that overwhelmed me as I prepared to give birth. Perhaps a cautionary tale, time itself seemed to say, “This will be glorious, and it will hurt.” From the orgasm that set sail the tiny sparks of my daughter’s life to mourning its inevitable impermanence, mothering lives in that space where Joyce found art, between the didactic and the pornographic. This is perhaps why, in the throes of weaning-induced depression, I find myself at the strip club in search of *a sensorium experience*...

My makeup glows from under the candor of black light. Pretty girls, pickled in artificial sweet stuffs, just like the cocktails they finger, appear skeptical. Grace sits at the end of the bar, sipping a soda with the grit of decades folded into each other in this place of illusion. Her woozy haze is almost unrecognizable to me, an exercise in exhaustion. When I danced at this Midwest club a decade ago, she and I split little baggies of cocaine into early mornings, waxing poetic about an embarrassment of riches soon to manifest. Finding fodder for optimism at the bottom of white baggies, Grace and I were full of pulp, ripe with possibility. Our Samoan House Mama,

protector of all Midwest strippers, would wag her finger and suck on an asthma inhaler, pressing a cigarette between her lips in the interim. She would say, “You girls are becoming addicted,” and we’d laugh.

Mama was a Marxist. Looking through this aquafarm of bodies, she’d say, “You ain’t a woman, you a woman performance.” And we’d laugh and cut the strings off our tampons because we knew what she meant. And when Grace’s toenail fell off, we laughed even harder because the fleshy soft spaces of the nail’s absence sopped up a wilderness of infection, all those years of dripped sweat and come, and she’d squeeze the puss out, telling us stories of “shower shows” when the men actually spent money. And she’d threaten to squeeze her toe’s puss on the unsavory customers who tipped in change rather than dollars, and all the while we’d imagine a life where our bodies weren’t always so meaningful.

But now, she says, she needs God and sobriety to mourn the death of her son.

I see the same sour faces here—the same self-righteous old men in Christian radio T-shirts espousing new conspiracy theories only ever given consideration in the seedy spaces of desire. I am older now. Where once I found zealous inspiration, however chemically provoked, I now see complexity and, yet, a sort of emptiness. I see a mirror, reflecting back to us in all its unsavory hues, the prism of human sentience. A constellation of wrinkles, my old friends, clients, and lovers now appear heavy with loss, their bodies are *the synthesizing medium of this feeling awareness...*

Two divorces later, identities rearticulated, a decade passed, and words on paper; unemployed, uninsured, and with a child, I can think of nowhere else to go but the strip club where reflection comes readily.

Ten years later, the conversation hasn’t changed—there is still a supernatural longing for

an illusive future where things are better and when fucking strangers for cash is worth its trouble.

I am in the arms of my bereaved old friend. Grace and I watch customers shuffle into this place with lymphatic desperation; they are like the toddler, so distressed in his cessation of tit suckling, that he is indifferent even to catastrophe since he knows only of his own sensation; *exteroceptive, peoprioceptive, interoceptive... shaped by social location, my body traces where it's been...*

CHAPTER 6: THE PROMISE

This chapter will first introduce the women I interviewed for the initial focus group. Using thick description of each interviewee's social location, I then address how and why they entered academia. After introducing each character in order to paint a broader portrait of the focus group that inspired this entire study, I look at how the sex workers in academia I interviewed talked about why they entered academia and what they saw as the promises of a degree or an advanced degree. I look at the expectations that my interviewees had/have for their academic careers with particular focus on how race and class affected how they saw "the promise" of academia.

I will show that self-identified lower-class interviewees, both Women of Color and white women, enter academia as a means of exiting sex work and garnering "legitimacy." That is, my interviewees use discourses of mind/body divergence, what I call "fragmented embodiment," in order to describe their reasons for entering academia. The practice of fragmented embodiment entails differentiating one's academic self from cultural depictions of sex workers as "only of the body" by privileging the intellectualism that academia will bring them over bodily labor. Self-identified high-class interviewees enter academia as a means of making sex work and intellectual work more confluent, to "further activism." They thus use discourses of mind/body confluence to talk about their reasons for entering academia, discourses that embodiment scholars often analyze as transgressing Cartesian dualisms. I call this discursive reflection "confluent embodiment."

The Working-Class Promise And Fragmented Embodiment

Three years ago, I held a focus group in my apartment for people who were current or

former sex workers in higher education. Six current and former sex workers were in attendance, including myself: Jamie, Jenna, Doc, Samantha, and Bailey.

Jenna is, unlike the self-perception I cling to for myself, the kind of foul-mouthed woman who resembles a nostalgic portrait of The Wild West, presenting a snapshot of contemporary America in the process. Abstracted from the politeness of academe, Jenna exposes the senseless repetition of professionalism—she is loud and swears like a sailor; she cares very little for rules. She encompasses the stark individualism of an American hero in all her rugged self-sufficiency—a working-class white woman who worked her way up to PhD student—couched in an unordinary landscape of contempt for the status quo. She managed to escape generational poverty, dancing as an exotic dancer to pay for her undergraduate and graduate education. She certainly pulled herself up by her bootstraps, never mind that said boots had ten-inch heels. White and working-class, Jenna is now pursuing a PhD in the social sciences.

Jamie, a white woman from a lower-class background, sits next to Jenna. Jamie and I met years prior to the focus group in the artificial satellite of a plastic city. Striking in her authenticity, Jamie is glossy yet sharp—she wears shorts that are too short and she can drink even the hardest professional under the table; years ago, we’d indulge the wildest of states, swaddled in boozy desert nights. Sewn-in to the fabric of Jamie’s identity are flecks of crassness acting as unique capacity for empathy—she is quick with an “inappropriate” comment but quicker with a deeply felt embrace. Five years after our debauched nights out, I am an expectant mother and Jamie, now cross-legged on my apartment floor, a grandmother. Jamie is seemingly far removed from the patterns of class sculpted out by American culture—she no longer pedals erotic wares in exchange for food and shelter. She is now a PhD student in the social sciences.

Next to Jamie, a petite woman with blue hair curls up inside the guts of my oversized love seat. The sparkle and violence of American culture lives in Bailey's biography, from the brutality of poverty to the spectacle of performing as a pornographic actress and exotic dancer. Growing up amongst this architecture, which includes a quick foray into dankest parts of America's most conservative political and religious movements, Bailey is now a PhD student in the humanities.

Samantha joins our focus group by phone. If the body is, as Baudrillard (2010) says, "a transparent form, a lightness" (24), Samantha is its embodiment. Though she exists as a disembodied voice over the phone, Samantha and I have met several times in our overlapping capacities as sex worker rights advocates. What I noticed first about Samantha was her bodily movements—deliberate as the lexicon in which she describes her multifaceted identities as PhD student, as mother, as woman of color from a lower-class background, and as a former sex worker. Samantha does not appear fooled by the nostalgic promises of the American Dream. She is a PhD student in the social sciences.

And finally, there is Doc. Doc sits on my hardwood floor, smoking a cigarette. Although she agreed to participate in the initial focus group, she later declined to be interviewed at length. Doc is an ephemeral character in the multi-vocal narrative I write here. A second-generation migrant Latina from a middle-class background, she has dark skin and black hair, both of which add allure to her pro-Domme persona. She is exotic in that decidedly American habit of fetishizing—and fearing—darkness. Doc is a PhD student in the social sciences.

When we begin our focus group, the extraterrestrial force of first-trimester pregnancy nausea cripples me. I hold onto the side of my chair as if on a circus ride.

"Whose dick do I have to suck to get a graduate assistantship around here?" Jenna jokes.

The playfulness of her question is flanked by its implication—that her intellect alone will not earn her an assistantship and she must rely on her sex work skills. Jamie sits next to Jenna and sips from a glass of wine; this is how whores do focus groups. The smell of alcohol pirouettes with my nausea. Jenna is first in the focus group to bring up her social class in talking about the promises of academia:

I wanted to be next to [intellectuals] in their ivory tower with [my] real world experience[...] [I come] from a working class and a severe, horrible, horrible background [and] sex work really provided me the opportunity [...] to speed up my progress [in school].

And though Jenna expresses that she is “not ashamed” of her sex work past, indeed, as she says, “proud,” she nonetheless hopes that academia will provide her with the opportunity to “move on to bigger and better things outside of [the sex industry].” Jenna thus dichotomizes intellectualism and the “real world,” even while acknowledging that sex work gave her the economic ability to pursue an advanced degree. Nevertheless, Jenna views academia as a distinctly separate space from sex work. She believes that while sex work afforded her the “opportunity” to progress in school, an advanced degree might help her progress onto “bigger and better things.” After a few more drinks, after the small, salutary shock of reflecting on her work in the sex industry, Jenna responds:

The more I do this interview, the more I realize how much sex work has just really contributed in a positive way to my life because I would not be in the same place in school [without it]. Like, I was suffering really, really bad, I needed a lot of help, and free time and school were a big part of my healing—just to be able to focus on myself like

that.

In Jenna's reflections, class status necessitated sex work and sex work provided her with educational opportunities she would not have had otherwise. And yet, she perceives the promises of education to be "better" than erotic labor. Jenna uses discourses of mind/body dualisms to critique academia as an "ivory tower" (distinct from the "real world") that is "not friendly to sex workers," as she says. But these discursive reflections also demonstrate a distinct appreciation for how sex work contributed to Jenna's pursuit of higher education. So while her discursive reflections draw from antiquated ideas about mind/body dualisms, her actual embodiment practices tell a different story—the fragmentation of her reflections demonstrate the performative aspects of her embodiment practices.

Seated in my apartment with a ballooning, pregnant belly, I wonder about the role of class status in the practice of fragmenting one's embodiment. Jamie sits on my living room floor, explaining how class status significantly contributes to her perception of the promise of academia. "'White trash' is what I used to be called," she says, "and now I'm a PhD candidate; now I'm somebody entering intellectual spaces in order to have my mind recognized." That sex work was an economic decision—whereas academia is primarily about garnering recognition as an intellectual—speaks to the fragmented embodiment practices in which Jamie consciously engages. As a single mother on the brink of homelessness, Jamie began laboring in both the illicit and licit sectors of the sex industry nearly twenty years ago. Her "survival sex work," as she understands it, is a decision made at the expense of gaining recognition as a thinking, intellectual being. Again, it is her discursive embodiment practices that demonstrate fragmentation, a kind of performative response to biopolitical constraints based on classical

dualisms. The mediation of class status in her perception of the promise of academia, like Jenna's, is intellectual recognition as distinct from, what both interviewees perceive to be, the hitherto emphasis on their bodies. Like Jenna, Jamie's class status initially necessitated her sex work; her sex work eventually became a means by which she accessed higher education—as she says, “[sex work] helped me make money [so I could] finish my undergrad and go to graduate school.” Like Jenna, Jamie's reflection shows that sex work was the economic means by which she accessed higher education.

Reflecting on academia as a means of leaving sex work is a major theme amongst interviewees with working-class backgrounds—interviewees speak of the world of the mind as their ticket out of sex work, either because of the economic or social capital they perceive higher education provides; I have these considerations in mind when I call Salvia almost a year after the initial focus group. A “friend of a friend,” I am less familiar with Salvia than some of my other interviewees and I've never met her in person. But I am instantly grateful for her “take no prisoners” approach to conversing.

“Hi! Is this Salvia?” I ask when she answers my call.

“Uh, yeah. Ask me a question,” she demands.

A working-class woman of color, Salvia, like Jenna and Jamie, practices fragmented embodiment in academia and uses the language of Cartesian dualisms to describe the promises she perceives academia affording:

I had a regular client [in the sex industry] who worked [at my university] and I saw him once when I was walking at school. I didn't want to deal with [him] because I try to keep it [my sex work and school work] separate. I like my body, and yes, I use my body for performance to make money, but when I'm in an academic setting, that's not the case. So

it's [my sex work] not something that needs to be at the forefront of other people's minds when I'm speaking [in academic settings]. I'm very shy when it comes to academia. It's very rare for me to talk in class, I get anxiety giving presentations, but I'm a completely different personality when I'm on stage. I choose to strip; I don't want to be stripped in [an academic] setting without my consent. I'm here [in academia] to learn.

For Salvia, the promise of academia is education is distinct from “the body” and even the “performance” of the body. Learning and fulfilling the promise of academia for Salvia can only take place if she consciously partitions her erotic and intellectual labor. Likewise, many of the working-class women I interview partition their sex work and intellectual work into separate spheres in order to describe what they perceive to be the promise of academia, which parallels issues of legitimation and validation. Like Bailey explains in the initial focus group, “the promise of academia is legitimacy.” Now a PhD student in the humanities, she explains:

So I guess being a sex worker motivated me into going into academia, and mostly because I wanted to use my knowledge and use my credentials to reduce or eliminate stigma that sex workers experience.

The initial promise of academia, for Bailey, was to make her sex work and intellectual work more confluent. But as she brings class status to bear on her perception of the promise of academia, there arises tension between the initial and the current promise of academia:

I grew up in the ghetto, you know what I mean? So I wouldn't even be here if I hadn't worked really, really hard. So I'm constantly aware of my status, you know, my class status even more than my former sex worker identity. So, I think those two things are

very closely linked. In fact, I have a bunch of [intellectual] talks on YouTube [...] and one commenter [on YouTube] went to great lengths to post pictures of me from my pornographic videos. It was an attempt to invalidate my legitimacy [as an academic] [...] So now, when I'm teaching, I have to think about how I'm dressed, not too sexy because I don't want to be seen as just a porn star.

Despite “not being ashamed,” as she says, of her former sex work, Bailey nonetheless draws from Cartesian discourse to articulate what she perceives to be the current promise of academia. For Bailey, academia offers “legitimacy,” or the ability for her to be more than “just a porn star.” For Bailey, the fulfillment of the promises of academia is predicated on her being able to successfully hide her prior sex work; she believes she must hide her former sex work to garner the fruits of intellectual labor. Her embodied practices, then, include fragmenting her erotic and intellectual labor as a means of surviving the biopolitical constraints that sit at the intersection of stigmatized sexual labor and poverty.

Like Bailey, whose experiences with poverty shaped her work in the sex industry as well as her perception of the promise of academia, Vivian Salt is a woman of color and working-class sex worker in academia who speaks of the promise of academia through discourses of fragmented embodiment; she is a Master's student in the social sciences. Vivian Salt explains:

When people [academics] know I'm a sex worker, I'm not viewed as an academic, I'm viewed as someone from [the sex work] community or I'm viewed as an activist who also does sex work, [and] there is all of a sudden that secondary assumption of ‘you're not as smart, you're not an academic, you're here as an outsider’ because we [academics] are really still the researchers, the ones holding knowledge. So I hide my sex work [in

academia] because the [intellectual] work I do [community organizing] is really important to me, especially as it relates to sex workers.

Vivian Salt believes that academia affords her the opportunity to do work that is important to her, particularly work that supports other sex workers. She draws from discourses of confluent embodiment by performing both mind and body labor in academia—but she nonetheless talks about the promises of academia in Cartesian dualisms, thus simultaneously practicing fragmented embodiment: “I have to ‘pass’ [as an intellectual] in academia,” she says. For Vivian Salt, the promise of academia is the ability to move beyond cultural assumptions about the intellectual inferiority of sex workers and “pass” as an intellectual, or perform as someone who “just studies sex workers” and isn’t “actually a sex worker” herself. It is interesting to note that when Vivian Salt uses discourses of fragmentation to reflect on her embodiment practices, it is in response to larger biopolitical constraints like poverty. When she practices confluent embodiment, it is always in response to reflections on the future. That is, she practices fragmented embodiment now in order to survive larger biopolitical constraints and eventually practice confluent embodiment—both are conscious performativities that simultaneously draw from and transgress classical dualisms.

Like Vivian Salt, Lucy is also privy to the aspects of American culture that Baudrillard calls “completely rotten with wealth, power...poverty and waste...” (2010: 24). When we speak on the phone almost an entire year after the focus group, I am compelled on by both postpartum depression and empathy to well up with tears as Lucy describes her lifelong economic hardships. Growing up working-class, the soft-spoken white woman with “crippling illness, heart problems, and a rare sleep disorder,” admits she has a certain degree of “internalized classism.” Now

pursuing her second Master's degree in the humanities, she hopes an advanced degree will assuage her economic hardships and her self-described inability to work "vanilla jobs."

"Forced out of economic reasons," Lucy says, "I started selling my panties with my college roommate as an undergrad." Now a phone sex operator and camgirl, she holds out hope that her experiences in the sex industry will positively influence her writing goals:

I really hope that my experiences as a sex worker give me an extra level of credibility in my writing, like if I write about a former sex worker, I know the lingo because of my job [...] But there's this view that I'm unfit to be in academia, which I don't understand.

Lucy believes that the promise of academia is a sort of confluent relationship between her experiences as a sex worker and as a writer, indeed, she believes her sex work experience might lend more credibility to her intellectual pursuits. Like Vivian Salt, Lucy practices confluent embodiment in her discussion of the promise of academia. However, she nonetheless perceives the promise of academia to exist outside of her purview, as evidenced her reflection on her own "unfitness." There is tension here, then, in the class-mediated perception of the promise of academia and the deeper, underlining fears concerning the ability to access those promises. For all intents and purposes, Lucy speaks of the promise of academia in the language of confluent embodiment. But her actual embodied practices reveal something more fragmented—in order to eventually use her erotic, bodily labor as a way of enhancing her intellectualism, she feels she must first grapple with her self-perception as "other" and thus she reflects on the promise of academia as first necessitating performances of fragmented embodiment.

Back in the focus group, Samantha speaks up from the increasingly uninhibited space of

my living room, the plumes of truth and reflection as intoxicating as the depth of emotion accompanying it. A woman of color, Samantha began working in the sex industry at the age of fifteen:

I was introduced to it [sex work] by a friend...she told me she met this guy who ended up being our pimp...So he [the pimp] hired me—I had a fake ID—and he said, ‘Don’t have sex with these guys. Go get money, shake your butt a little bit, and leave. No sex, no sexual contact, do not touch them, do not let them touch you. You just go, you take [the] money, and you come back,’ and that was it...At the time, I was still living at home with my parents...I think they had no clue, to be honest with you, I was very sneaky.

Of her sex work, Samantha explains:

I was sixteen when I took out ads in the newspaper [as an escort]... And I worked as a phone sex operator from home, in my parents’ home... The first time I actually had sex with a client I was eighteen, so I managed for three years to not have sex with a client...When I had sex with a client [for the first time] it was just like, ‘Well, whatever.’...It wasn’t like, ‘Oh my God, my life is over.’ It was just sex. It was nothing traumatic.

As an adult, Samantha says she wanted to pursue an advanced degree in order to help her learn more about herself and her experiences as an underage person in the sex industry:

I went into grad school to study sexuality [and] my overarching question was, ‘Is this victim narrative [of sex trafficking] real? Is my situation, one in which I never felt victimized, is that normal?’

For Samantha, the promise of academia is the ability to make her erotic labor and her intellectual labor more confluent—academia was the platform on which she could better understand her own sex work. Like Lucy, when Samantha articulates her own perceptions of the relationship between sex work and intellectualism, she transgresses Cartesian dualisms in her discursive practices. However, Samantha changed her area of focus from sex trafficking to broader issues in the social sciences “because of limited faculty support.” Samantha now speaks of her embodied practices as less confluent; in order to be “taken seriously,” as she says, she must “keep sex out of school [...] Men in academia fear a woman who’s sexually empowered.” Whereas Samantha once described the promise of academia in the language of confluent embodiment—intellectually framing her experiences as an underage person in the sex industry—she now practices fragmented embodiment in order to access the academic promise of intellectual legitimacy, or being “taken seriously.” For Samantha, being taken seriously means getting “some letters after [her] name.” That is to say, the promise of academia for Samantha is intellectual validation, which she speaks of in the language of Cartesian dualisms—she believes “letters” after her name are distinctly different from the fleshy experiences of sex work.

Samantha’s statement reflects the sentiments of many of the working-class interviewees—in classical, dualistic discourse, they describe the so-called world of the mind as more valuable in terms of legitimacy and credibility than the so-called world of the body that defines erotic labor. The conscious practice of fragmented embodiment is thus a response to outside forces as opposed to the unconscious internalization of traditional and subjugating regimes of gender, sexuality, and mind/body dualisms.

For whatever reason, I keep coming back to the nostalgic memories of the initial focus

group, when everything felt pregnant with possibility. In my mind's eye, I cradle my pregnant belly. My colleagues and friends chat and laugh as my fetus rolls with the seethe of the sea. I remember, even in the fog of nostalgia, focusing in on a peculiar stereophonic fear—that the blossoming bud inside me would grow into a child, culturally conditioned to see me as lecherous, a child plagued by anti-prostitution narratives of the whore-as-unfit-mother, a child with anti-whore memories eventually invented in the spaces between music and insects and sparklers. Whimsy does not exist in these spaces of fear. I am a card-carrying member of the subhuman category of pervert. And perverts, according to Pat Califia (1996), make people uncomfortable, “partly because we’re different...and partly because we’re not so different” (237). From the invention of microwavable food to the slot machine, from red light boudoirs to the orgasmic nature of penetrating the moon with an erect American flag; our culture is saturated in the profane yet obscene in our pursuit of purity. Perversion, the spinal column of American culture, is unmistakably the stuff of memory, too. There is tension between memory and truth, perversion and purity, just as there arises tension between discourse and body...

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Floating on the surface of things, Noel and I meet in the comforting arms of a private performance—a bondage demonstration for the intellectual elite, a bourgeois crowd that is invested in the spectacle of sexuality. In this particularly plastic city, these kinds of spectacles are commonplace, attracting scholars of various shades interested in “seedy” sexual subcultures, if only from a tertiary, almost voyeuristic standpoint. Though my intellectual life often overlaps with my sex work, my sex-working performance at this particular sex club is perhaps its most obscene manifestation—I am surrounded by many intellectuals that I recognize, though I am recognized to them as barely more than a tied-up body.

Hogtied in the *chef-d'oeuvre* of a professional kink, Noel and I wiggle our little toes from beneath a masterwork of restriction—ropes, gags, and blindfolds. I first notice Noel's size as she bathes underneath her bondage—thin, almost conspicuously so, the luminous parts of her as festively elf-like as her stage name. When I embrace her, she disappears into the folds of my arms. I feel an almost ethical responsibility to protect her from the largeness of the world, despite the obvious egocentric implications of that desire. Though our lives are similar as sex workers, we also soulfully connect as students. Like many of the working-class interviewees involved in this study, Noel speaks of her pursuit of higher education as a means of escaping generational poverty and to acquire social and cultural capital:

I guess the story really starts in high school. I decided that in order to get anywhere in life, I had to get an education. I saw where my family came from and knew that we were really lower class and education was the only way out. I felt like [college] finally gave me a tool to increase my social capital, my cultural capital, my knowledge, and my street smarts and book smarts at the same time.

The promise of academia for Noel is social and cultural capital as well as knowledge, which she contrasts with her “street smarts.” Of entering the sex industry, Noel says:

I went to school full-time most of the time, when I could, and that's partially what led me to working in the [strip] clubs eventually. It was a financial decision... It was a pragmatic decision...just kind of a supplement.

When I catch up with my small-statured friend, now a graduate student, I cradle my newborn as Noel chain-smokes. I ask Noel about her decision to pursue graduate school. “Social capital and

legitimation,” she says, simply. “[Because] people think of academics as worthy.” Using the language of Cartesian dualisms—mind/body, worthy/unworthy—Noel adds:

It [academia] provides me extra social capital by increasing my network, but also the status of the people I’m associated with now are much more high on the legitimate level so when they vouch for me, other people believe them because they are bigger pillars in a bigger community, and they have social responsibilities and duties, and they’re trusted with those. People think of academics as high class, so it also increases my social capital [to have] access to knowledge.

Noel’s dichotomization of knowledge/mind work as “high class” and sex work/body work as “lower class” is further demonstrated in her perception of how sex work is handled in intellectual spaces:

It’s [sex work] not recognized as legitimate work or work experience or life experience in academia, and I think it [exposing my prior sex work] would count negatively towards me even though I’m in academia because these topics on sexuality are just too difficult to broach for some people... But then I’m like, oh well, if I don’t cover my butt and keep things [sex work] a secret, then I won’t be legitimate [in academia].

Noel’s discourse is performative—legitimation is not “real,” per se, so much as it is a conscious act of “covering her butt,” a necessary tool for navigating larger biopolitical constraints.. Noel’s discursive, embodied practices are purposefully fragmented in order to garner the promises of academia. As Noel inhales and exhales the sweet, toxic nectar of nicotine, I reflect on the different directions our lives have gone. I long for a cigarette—a consideration I would have

never thought twice about in my previous life—but I cannot risk the implications for my maternal fitness, whether real, perceived, or entirely imagined. My body is foreign, now, and in infinite service to another living thing. The way I move my body through the world changed, too, even just in the course of evolving from a pregnant interviewer to a nursing one.

As my body unfolds into the needs of a small child, I contact Anna. Anna is a white immigrant from a working-class background and her situation is somewhat complex—her graduate studies have been both negative and positive. Anna uses Cartesian discourse to illuminate her perception of the promise of academia. “I wanted to learn,” she says, “but academia is the world of the mind and sex work is the world of the body.” The promise of academia is to “learn,” but for Anna, that promise is in tension with “the body.” However, Anna recently changed graduate programs, seeking out a PhD program in the social sciences. “Now,” she says, “I can be myself.” That Anna’s perception of the promises of academia changed throughout the course of her graduate education—from first seeing academia and the body as dichotomies to expressing them both in confluent discourse—demonstrated the performative aspects of embodiment practices. Depending upon context, Anna practices either confluent or fragmented embodiment in intellectual spaces. I bring my child to my breast and acknowledge the fluid and ever-changing landscape of the body.

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When I Skype Lorilie, my infant girl is once again at my breast—her doctor has just suggested a diagnosis of “high needs,” one possible reason my child appears to nurse more than most. Every interaction, every pathology, every stretch mark and every compulsion feels lonelier and lonelier, though I cannot know at this precise moment just how lonely it is about to become.

Lorilie lights up a smoke, illuminating her beautiful black skin. Perched on the edge of

her seat, she is vibrant. She is European, but perhaps only by proxy—as an undocumented Nigerian immigrant, she grew up sharing a flat with six others in a major European city. She begins our interview by “blessing” my child; I am instantly in love. She continues on by citing the “racialization of poverty” to describe her class status and articulates her venture into sex work as equal parts rebellion, curiosity, and economic need:

I’ve wanted to be a sex worker for a very long time. I’ve been talking and joking about it to my sister since I was like fourteen years old. I remember being in school, and I would say to my sister, when we go to [university], we should be escorts... It’s something that I’ve wanted to do for a long time...I wanted to be able to buy the things I wanted and get away from my very strict religious household...[In that sense] sex work has been sexually liberating.

Interestingly, the promises of both academia and sex work, for Lorilie, centered on escaping the oppressive aspects of her religious family life. Both academia and sex work offer promises of freedom. “Even so,” Lorilie says, “university is for learning, sex work is for making money.” In her articulation of the promise of academia, she explains that “learning” and “making money” are dichotomous, particularly because she makes money from erotic labor. However, not all interviewees speak of the promise of academia in the language of fragmentation. In the following section, I explore the experiences of several sex workers in academia who speak of their intellectual work and sex work to be more confluent.

Economic Privilege And Confluent Embodiment

“Maybe I’m addicted to sex work,” Elle muses. Hieroglyphics of male follies roll with her body as she inhales a Winston; I reach for my Nicorette Gum—quitting smoking is easy, I’ve done it a thousand times. Elle and I dangle our legs in an innocuous hotel pool—if “landscapes [are] photography” and “women [are] the sexual scenario” (Baudrillard 2010: 27) Elle embodies the physicality of an effortless American woman, the sexual scenario played out on film but ultimately unattainable. I imagine she smokes Winstons as a kind of antidote to her biology, a touch of *vox populi*, the socialist’s fag, a balance to her preternatural beauty. Elle is white, upper-class, and her education is private and elite. I meet her at the Desiree Alliance Conference, a yearly conference organized by and for current and former sex workers and allies. “Class is really complicated,” Elle says, enunciating every letter. She continues:

I had a lot of frustration being upper class because I didn’t identify with its bourgeoisie values or sensibilities. [Sex work] helped me get away from all that... and academia [is] a means [by which] to have a voice.

If discourse of Cartesian dualisms and their performative properties frame the experiences of the working-class women I interview, it is interesting to draw comparison to the framing of Elle’s statement—the promise of academia, for Elle, is to strengthen her activist voice. Compared to the lower-class women I interview, Elle speaks of academia not as a means of escaping sex work, but as a means of enhancing her political clout within the sex industry as well as in academia. For Elle, the biopolitical constraints of poverty are removed and thus the way she speaks of sex work and academia are confluent. . Likewise, Annie uses discourses of confluence

to describe her perception of the promise of academia.

As a pornographer and sex worker for nearly three decades, as well as being a widely recognized artist and instructor, Annie did not need academia to enhance her social or cultural capital. She exists in a specialized niche wherein her age, race, gender, and sexuality intersect in ways that have been described, by art critics and the like, in the language of art rather than in the traditional discourse associated with the sex industry. Moreover, she is unique in her perception of the promise of academia: “Once, I got my PhD,” she says, “I no longer [held onto] a sex-worker identity.” Though she draws from Cartesian discourse in her perception that her sex work and her education do not exist simultaneously in her embodied practices, it is important to note that all of Annie’s art, education, and intellectual endeavors center on issues related to sex work. So while “sex worker” may not be an organizing force in her identity, Annie’s embodiment practices nonetheless demonstrate a confluence between erotic and intellectual labor. The discourse Annie uses to describe the promise of academia draws from Cartesian dualisms, much like working-class interviewees—she speaks of leaving her sex worker identity behind. But her actual embodied practices tell a different story—her intellectual and erotic labor are very much entwined—confluent—even though she is compelled to draw from dualistic discourse.

I am first exposed to Annie through explicit pornography during my first year of graduate school. In a room full of curious feminists, my academic colleague pops in one of Annie’s famed pornos while we sit on her salvaged couch and drink beer. In abbreviated Lycra, Annie’s mermaid propaganda glistens amongst mammoth seashells; the accessories of petite, young looking women flank her. I come face to face with her vulva in ways almost methodically medical.

In San Francisco six years later, I come face to face with her embodied flesh. Her

contours roar—she is a mountain of goddess proportion, draped in the colorful scarfs of an unapologetic harlot. On her back, she wears a set of violet angel wings. She could take flight at any moment. Annie, in part, represents a chorale of queers who’ve capitalized on artful exhibitionism, filthy creativity, and poverty made less crushing by way of smut pedaling; she sees herself—perhaps rightfully so—as a revolutionary. When she invites me into her car and insists we “go for a ride,” I can’t afford to be skeptical.

I am prevailed on to consider Annie’s life as one continuous film—her driving skills are emphatically humorous, almost endearing, like the rabid cartoon chasing his prey who only ever ends up knotted around a tree. After stampeding through lines of rush hour traffic in her fuel-efficient luxury vehicle, with a subsequent choir of angry horns and hollers, Annie naively wonders, “Are they honking because I’ve left my trunk open?”

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Deaf to the most plaintive strains of reason, Beatrix and I drive down the freeway at 100 miles an hour. She is tripping on acid while I drive, despite our being just 14 years old. From out of the sunroof, she discards her visor—the preferred accessory of 90s party girls. Of our Candy Kid- clan, I am the runt—chubby and timid, I am often saddled with the sobering task of escorting my friends around town. I am panged with jealousy for Beatrix—she is bright and engaging, confident, normatively beautiful, pale and tall, bleached blond; in paradoxical energy, her raspy voice seems a sort of voyeuristic invitation into the private adventures of adult life, adventures I am only privy to in the most tertiary, designated-driver kind of way.

Beatrix and I grew up together. In a neighborhood pierced by crushing silence and the endless banalities of bigotry, we learned about stigma early on. As youth, we let our underarm hair grow and refused all manner of normative sexuality. We regularly received death threats

because of our rebelliousness; little notes were often slipped into the creases of our metal lockers with instructions to “DIE FAG.”

When Beatrix and I rekindle our friendship in adulthood, our lives have followed similar trajectories in terms of sex work and higher education. An erotic dancer, cam girl, phone sex operator, and Master’s student, Beatrix argues that her sex work is not just economically—but sexually—fulfilling. Speaking to me by phone, she explains:

I love and appreciate the sex worker [rights] movement [and the] collective argument that sex work is work. But I think it’s [sex work] a part of my identity, too...I consider turning people on for money a huge part of my sexuality. I love being a cam girl. I get off [doing sex work]...it’s sexually satisfying to me. I feel like, because that goes against the primary framework of sex workers’ rights arguments, I’m a deviant in a deviant group. And like, OK, I’m a perv. I’m queer. But to me, sex work is inherently a queer identity.

Sex work, for Beatrix, is almost indistinguishable from her intellectualism. It is worth noting that Beatrix has experienced considerable economic hardship in her adult life, but is nonetheless comparatively economically privileged in terms of the class in which she was raised. So while her choices are constrained by the biopolitical impact of poverty as an adult, she nevertheless experiences a certain degree of class privilege in the discourses she uses to frame her experiences in both erotic and intellectual labor. Speaking of her overlapping erotic and intellectual labor, she states :

Intelligence is a commodity in the BDSM sex work scene [...] I usually mention my engagement with Foucault and BDSM as both theory and practice [with customers in sex

work]...my education is useful in PSO [phone sex operating].

Discourses of confluence, like discourses of fragmentation, are conscious responses to outside, biopolitical circumstance. Of course, Beatrix still navigates cultural terrain that still largely stigmatizes and criminalizes certain aspects of her erotic labor. And yet, her conscious decision to make her intellectual and erotic labor more confluent, a decision intimately tied to her class status, unveils a particularly interesting intersection of class and sexual marginalization—the discursive, embodied practices that interviewees draw from reflect class-specific strategies for surviving biopolitical constraint in pursuit of the promise of academia. For some, that means leaving sex work behind. For others, that means making the two worlds confluent.

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Traipsing through the academic halls at 3AM, I hold a lit cigarette in one hand, a bottle of champagne in the other, and a little baggie of euphoria in the breast pocket of my jacket. I have every intention of writing, of working on my thesis—an ethnography of a strip club. But instead I use this space of intellectualism for my own, physical indulgences. I point my moral compass in the direction of chaos and pleasure, hoping to unearth what the ghosts of Greek antiquity have always known—that the authentic pursuit of knowledge is deeply erotic.

Discussion

In this chapter, I looked at the “promise” of academia for current and former sex workers in higher education. The “promise” refers to the expectations that current and former sex workers

have or had for their schooling, including why they went into higher education. After first introducing interviewees from an initial focus group held prior to interviews, I analyze how each individual actor talks about her reasons for entering higher education and the costs and benefits she perceives there. I organized interviewees into groups based on their self-identifications in terms of race and class, paying particular attention to descriptors of class and race like “poor,” “social capital,” “social class,” “ethnic background,” and “race.” I find that self-identified lower-class interviewees, both women of color and white women, enter academia as a means of exiting sex work and garnering greater “legitimacy;” they draw from Cartesian discourse in order to frame their experiences, which engenders a fragmented embodiment practice. Fragmented embodiment entails responding to the biopolitical constraint of poverty and using discourses of Cartesian dualisms as a matter of survival. By consciously using discourse that draws from antiquated ideas about mind/body dualisms, self-identified lower-class interviewees are more empowered to access the fruits of intellectualism. These fragmented embodiment practices are “necessary to function in the everyday world” (Turner 2008: 522). Fragmented embodiment practices problematize Butler’s (Gender trouble) performative theory of “discourse [as] a stylized repetition of acts...” that are “internally discontinuous” (Butler 1990), I find, instead, that these discursive performativities, as expressed through reflective embodiment practices, are largely conscious responses to outside forces. Alternatively, I find that self-identified middle and high-class interviewees enter academia as a means of making sex work and intellectual work more confluent, or to “further [their] sex work activism.” Self-identified middle and high-class interviewees thus practice mind/body confluence that draw from discourses that transgresses traditional incarnates of Cartesian dualisms. That is, self-identified middle and high-class interviewees, because of both class and race privileges, used confluent, embodied discourses to

describe the promise of academia.

For the women I interviewed, the ways they navigate their intellectual landscapes are largely determined by their class status. And while higher education offers a certain degree of cultural and social capital, self-identified lower-class interviewees described its promise of financial stability as dubious at best; they nonetheless hold out hope that an advanced degree will help them exist the sex industry. Moreover, my interviewees spoke less about race as an organizing force in their perception of the promises that academia offers than I expected, particularly considering the plethora of critical research on female academics of color. However, given my small data sample, it is hard to generalize to the larger population based on my interviewees' testimonies. It is important to note, too, that all interviewees of color self-identified as lower-class.

CHAPTER 7: SUFFERING, AN INTERLUDE

Exposed to the threats and blows of the natural and social worlds

Needs, yearnings, and desires that do not get fulfilled

Subjected to the judgment of others,

the inescapable

coming of death

Anguish,

distress,

pain

And...

endurance

(Wacquant 2015: 4)

*

James buys the fishscale, an exercise in perverse philanthropy; my hustle of sensation is sweeter with a bit of bump, and nicer still when it's free.

He has his own place at the bar; sitting there for years, he turns into a vinyl cushion. Patrons sit on him when they ordered ten-dollar Bud Lights at this circus of flesh where I've worked for centuries and then, in all his suffering, James splits open from the little wounds in the vinyl and his guts get all yellowed from dropped cigarettes, burning there for years in the fabric of his stuff; *he is exposed to the threats and blows of the natural and social worlds...* And then there I am, The Whore, tasked with picking up these pieces, pieces from enduring blows, all while *subjected to the judgment of others...*

And the deaf man, my regular; I'm a sucker for the lost and lonely or perhaps it is he who is the sucker. He writes, "You're pretty" on napkins, over and over for like a decade. His glazed glass makes rivers of ink that stain his speaking bits, which is how, in the heat of summer nights, I find my way to Vivian, tonguing her next to the silk flame that spits out of a cheap fan in the dressing room.

And John, whom I call 'John' on account of his John Deer hat, and his staple mustard varnish stuff that seems to make coal in the spaces between his teeth, spits over and over into a clear plastic bottle and, sometimes, he cuts holes in his pockets and even offers an apology for doing so, never mind his goatish grin, believing, of course, that suffering is just a sequence of words.

And then there's Gary, the anti-intellectual politician. Hollowed out in the crevasses between vinegar and nostalgia, his flat crumbles under the weight of torpid desire. Angled paperweights sit on top of books with the dust of rolled papers exhaling stale and heavy scents. A fuzzy layer of goo stares lethargically from the stove, watching the indifferent musings of a television delivering its messages to no one at all. My schoolgirl skirt hiked high, knee-high socks against my flesh, I am just one element of some gross polymorphous performativity; symbols of naivety allow Gary to perform impossible masculinity. Removed from the complexities of my own sexual agency, agency that might expose masculinity for the fiction it is, my complexity is constrained in this performance. Our bodies are there, perhaps, but more importantly, we engage in the exchange of symbols. The fetish is with the symbol, not the thing itself, performances interacting with other performances; *needs, yearnings, and desires that do not get fulfilled* and for no other reason than they are, by design, impossible.

What I earn from performing oral sex on this man animates the core of academia's wild profit margin: if I can suck his dick without puking all over it, I'll be able to pay off my overdue library books; *endurance*.

And then there I am, standing side-by-side at the Walgreens checkout where my sex-working girlfriend whispers, "People who haven't cried after fucking a John aren't real hookers." I call her later, after fucking, crying.

In that inorganic politeness scripted into The American Way, the Walgreens clerk looks at us with a crooked smile. She cradles my vaginal cargo—sex sponge, tampons, makeup applicators, condoms, and several douches; whores know best the theatrical masterstroke of illusion, and I am about to sell sex to Lee while menstruating. Lee, numb from the waist down, emerges as a puppet of his own nostalgia; he seeks the image of sex but not sex itself; he seeks a sort of fake incarnation of all those addled memories in which he's sure he felt *something*.

Lee and I indulge the performative aspects of conjugality on a slab of rented mattress, affectless. Particles of sex sponge, tampons, and makeup applicators do little to mask my humanity. The normative criterion and knowability of sex, seemingly exposed through gender performativities, is meaningless when your job is to flirt with authenticity. And all I can think in this moment of fabricated climax is that no one has yet mentioned the Earth's pirouettes or its diminishing water today, not to mention *the inescapable coming of death*...

CHAPTER 8: DEVIANT BODIES AND DISCOURSES OF CONSTRAINT

This chapter will explore the ways twenty current and former sex workers in academia talk about the experiences that constrain their ability to be intellectuals and do intellectual work in academia. I will show that interviewees of color, as well as white interviewees who reject discourses of victimization in academia, frame their embodied constraint in discourse of hypersexuality and perpetration. These interviewees talk about feeling hypsersexualized and tagged as potential perpetrators of crime, unable to be redeemed in intellectual spaces.

Alternatively, less marginalized current and former sex workers in academia talk about their intellectual constraint in language that mirrors discourses of protection in mainstream society. I will show that the way sex workers in academia talk about intellectual constraint reflects the framing of prostitution in contemporary discourse, discourse that relies on the *performativities* of dualisms like victim/protection/redemption and criminal/perpetrator/hypersexual. But again, I will demonstrate how these performativities are constructed consciously; actors' embodied practices and the discourses they use to describe constraint are directly related to external, biopolitical forces.

The Victim: Discourses Of Protection And Redemption Narratives

Lulu is an enigma; her activist reputation, in some ways, precedes her. Fierce and unrelenting, she is also soft and giggly. Lulu is a white woman from a working-class background. As a youth, she was, as she describes it, sex-trafficked into the sex industry. As an adult, she works in the sex industry as an agential—that is, non-coerced—laborer, where she worked prior to entering academia and where she currently works. She is a Master's student in

the social sciences. Lulu appears to me in fragments—as a naked, pale white back concealed in the shadows of her dark hair, she exists within the fiber optic cables of social media—I’ve never met her in person. And yet, in our interview, she chooses to first share with me the details of her life, sex work, and commercial sexual exploitation. When I contact her from inside the bowels of my mother’s home, from the infinite gradation of beige for which these Midwest suburbs are known, I am suffering, rather deeply, from torrents of postpartum depression; Lulu’s kindness, however disembodied, is a welcomed amnesty. Under the relentless hammers of madness—the hallucinatory migraines and those incessant bouts of postpartum weeping—Lulu’s voice breathes life into me. Her giggly kindness, subtle and sanguine, somehow reminds me that all of this hormonal wreckage from the shipwreck of birth shall, too, pass.

Lulu is Beckett-like in her prophetic optimism: from the rubble of apocalyptic cruelty, she sprouts a lyric of forgiveness for the people who exploited her in the sex industry as a child:

People have all these assumptions about how trafficking happens, but those victim narratives don’t really fit my experience. I was excited [to be selling sex], I was a contributing member of the family, like a grown up! And then I went to this house [an illegal brothel in the Northern United States] where I had sex for the first time [for money], and all these women working there called their pimps ‘daddy’ and I thought, ‘Wow! Everyone has their dad drop them off at work!’

In spite of her father sex-trafficking her, Lulu currently works as a full-service provider in the sex industry. It is important to show how Lulu relates her situation as a sex-trafficking victim to how she navigates both sex work and academia. The way she talks about navigating this

landscape of “protection” is fascinatingly evident in all her accounts of sex work, the state, and academia:

When the cops tried to rescue me, they put me in foster care [and] my foster parents hated me so I got kicked out and was living on the street. Since I was doing sex work to support myself, my friends wouldn't let me stay with them [because] since I was underage, they could be convicted of sex-trafficking, a felony, so I had to do desperate sex work [...] I felt like I was being trafficked by the state, and when I got a social worker, they stole my money.

Compare Lulu's description of protection discourses and their relationship with state-sanction violence to her explanation of constraining protection discourses in academia:

I started [...] as a [Master's student], and it just didn't work out right away. Like the first day of school, there was like this pizza social thing, and one of the professors was an old [sex work] client of mine. Usually when I see old clients, it's cool, but he was like very uncool about it and he was like, 'Are you sure this [graduate school] is what you want to do with your life?' And I was like, 'I'm just trying to get an education.' And he was like, 'you know, I just don't think this is really the program for you.' I [felt] like this old rich white man [was] trying to tell me what I want, and I [felt] like that [was] actually a violation of the code of [school] ethics, and I think that probably, I'm in more of a position to know what I want and what my ideals are than he is.

Lulu believes that her former client and professor thought he knew better than she does what she “wants to do” with her life. Lulu describes her experiences in academia—as well as her

experiences with state-sanctioned violence— through protectionist discourses that seek to “save” her; she believes her former client-turned-professor wanted to “save” or “protect” her from academia, just like the state ostensibly sought to save her from the sex industry. But just as she articulates state violence through protectionist discourses, discourses that are inevitably harmful, Lulu similarly feels like her professor’s attempt to “protect” her did more harm than good.

I cried after that and I wrote a letter to the Chair of the department [...] All she [the Chair] said was, ‘oh, well honey, he [former client-turned professor] just wants the best for you.’

Lulu raises her voice a few octaves to demonstrate her perception of the Chair as paternalistically enforcing a kind of detrimental “protection” over her body. Holding my newborn close for the duration of our call, there is a paternalistic part of me, too, that wishes to wrap Lulu up in the same embrace in which I hold my child. I start to cry. Sometimes I don’t know whose side I’m on.

“These interviews just make me so sad,” I text Sam, the DeeJay at my former strip club, a longtime friend.

“Stop trying to save everyone,” he texts back.

*

In the initial focus group for this project, Jenna—a white, lower-class woman—identifies discourses of protection in academia, discourses predicated on “saving” sex workers:

I had a professor one time tell me, ‘Just because that [sex work] was something you did in your past...and just because you did that work doesn’t mean that’s who you are or that it has to define you.’ They [non-sex working academics] think you’re the broken child

and you're always going to be the broken child, so you're never going to get above that, even if you're in academia. Like you don't have any agency and like you're not going to stick up for yourself and they think they can just do whatever to you [...] Academics just assume I come from a broken home, the, 'I had no other choice but to do this, I don't enjoying doing this,' the typical stereotypes, like I have 'Daddy Issues,' drug problems, you know.

Jenna talks about how her professor saw her as a “broken child,” a victim of the sex industry who had “no other choice” but to labor in the sex industry and whose redemption could only be reached by disavowing her body work. It is this “protection” discourse that Jenna points to as one significant way that she feels constrained as an intellectual, particularly because, as she explains, the sex industry was never a source of oppression for her:

It [sex work] gave me the time that I needed and the money to pay for it [school]. In my personal situation, I would not have had many other options to get to the place [in academia] where I'm at [without sex work], and I think that caused some people [in academia] to really devalue [my sex work] because [they perceive that] I didn't work as hard or something like that, like I cheated my way up here [...] like I should've worked harder.

Jenna chooses to talk more about her constrained ability to be the intellectual she wants to be than of any negative aspect of her sex work. That is not to ignore the complex and often constraining elements of the sex industry, but it to say that when interviewees speak freely about their embodied practices, particularly their perception of constraint, they often point to

discourses of protection in academia. Nodding in agreement, Bailey—a white, working-class PhD student in the humanities, also describes her intellectual constraint in the language of protection:

My first year [of graduate school], I had two professors who felt quite proud of themselves because they saved me from my life choices [of doing sex work]. They also felt proud to have saved me from studying the sex industry [because] sex work [research] is fringe. It was their way of redeeming me.

Lulu, Jenna, and Bailey all use similar language to articulate their sense of constraint in academia—they all speak of their academic mentors as attempting to “save” them from their “past” by through the “redemption” of disavowing their erotic, bodily labor. Redemption for then, id predicated on Cartesian devaluations of bodily knowledge. In order to be seen as intellectuals, white interviewees believe they must allow themselves to be “saved.” It is interesting to note, though, that interviewees do not perceive the protectionist paths to redemption as synonymous with confluent embodiment. If the practice of confluent embodiment engages both the sensual and intellectual practices of the self, interviewees see redemption narratives as beholden to a Cartesian performance of the self where the body is devalued, even apologized for: “You only get that [intellectual] respect if you’re a redeemed sex worker,” as Salvia reiterates.

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When I travel to San Francisco to interview former sex worker Annie, I also decide to make a pornographic film. With my new, breastfeeding baby in tow, I spend my afternoons laboring over exposed vulvas and hot lights, aiding in the creation of what is later affectionately

titled “Fleur de Lezzie” (my insistence on “Happy Endgame: Beckett And Porn,” was apparently a close second). While filming, interviewing, and in rare moments, sleeping, I cannot help but be amused by the legality of my body and its functions—I am not permitted to breastfeed in the same spaces where women fuck each other on film, as one example.

Annie is a white, non-tenured professor from an economically disadvantaged background, though her class status now is considerably privileged. She entered the sex industry as a full-service provider and pornographer almost three decades ago and prior to entering academia. She rubs my newborn’s head with the softness of a woman who’s turned her bodily labor into an empire. In a seemingly unprovoked thought, Annie states:

You know, a lot of higher education is geared for people wanting to get out [of sex work]. We’ll teach you how to sell, we’ll teach you how to work on a computer and be a secretary, we’ll teach you how to make lace. I’d rather do prostitution any day than make lace.

In Annie’s understanding, discourses of protection are predicated on the biopolitical effort to “save” and “rehabilitate” sex workers more generally. Her reference to “lace” is a critique of documented efforts to eradicate the sex industry by forcing incarcerated sex workers to learn new trades like laboring in textile sweatshops (Moore 2016). In Annie’s understanding, larger social programs like “rehab sweatshops” are built on the cultural assumption that sex workers are in need of “redemption.” Annie argues that discourses of protection are engendered from institutions of higher education where more value is placed on intellectualism than on bodily labor. Annie’s statements are not unlike Lucy’s, who I call from inside the bordello-like atmosphere of my San Francisco hotel, cigarette in hand. I feverishly research the effects of

cigarette smoke on breast milk, and find that the occasional indulgence is harmless. My body, now, hangs in the balance between harm and pleasure.

Lucy is a white American from a lower-class background who entered the sex industry prior to academia. She is working on her second Master's degree. Lucy begins our conversation by talking about her interpretation of academia:

They [academics] don't seem to really know what they're arguing about. They just know that prostitution is bad; therefore, anyone who says they're a sex worker and not crying about it and trying to get out of it, really they must be bad too.

Lucy believes that in order to redeem one's self as a current or former sex worker in academia, you have to "cry about" your experiences there. Her statement points to the perception of many white sex workers in academia that their intellectual abilities are constrained because of discourses of protection and redemption. White interviewees believe that in order to move beyond cultural perceptions of sex workers as only *of the body*, they must accept a redemption narrative framework—"crying" about their experiences in the sex industry or otherwise positioning themselves as a victim. After interviewing Lucy, I hand off my sleepy newborn to my partner who reaches for his second glass of wine—our bodily realities are remarkably different, I think. Even while conducting interviews, my body is always on call.

The Perpetrator: Discourses Of Hypersexuality

Interviewees describe both discourses of protection and discourses of perpetration as constraining their ability to practice confluent embodiment. However, if discourses of protection

seek to “save” current and former sex workers in academia through the disavowal of their bodily labor, discourses of sexual perpetration and hypersexuality position sex workers as necessarily incapable of disavowing their bodily labor. “Once a whore always a whore,” as Samantha says. Referencing several prominent sex workers of color in her analysis of sex workers who are unable to move beyond their erotic identities, Samantha is herself a woman of color. She lives in the Southwestern United States and is from a lower-class background; based on contemporary, federal definitions of “sex-trafficking,” Samantha is legally defined as a “sex-trafficking survivor.” Reflecting on the constraints in academia that prevent her from fully practicing embodiment, she says, “There are more opportunities given to sex-working academics who renounce their sex work.” And yet, Samantha does not believe redemption narratives work the same for her as they do for her white peers. Instead, she describes her intellectual constraint in the language of hypsersexuality to define her experiences in academia:

I don’t know if it’s that they’re [my academic peers and mentors] afraid I’m going to try to sell them sex, if they’re afraid that I’m going to start talking about my personal life in the past, I mean, I’m not quite sure what it is, but they [academics] have this distinct discomfort when it comes to me. They’re like, ‘Oh, oh, hold on, she’s a former sex worker, let me open my door and turn on all the lights in here, let me make sure there’s another professor.’ [...] I don’t know, it’s just weird. I’m not sure what they’re thinking, and maybe they’re having inappropriate thoughts and they’re like, ‘Well, I can’t control myself, it’s the beast within.’ It’s just stupid. It’s so stupid that there’s a distinct change that happens when [academic peers] find out about my prior sex work [...] I become *just* a whore.

Samantha describes her experiences in academia in the language of hypersexuality. She believes her academic colleagues might not be able to “control” their “beastly” urges in her presence. Samantha furthermore uses the language of Cartesian dualism to articulate her experiences—she believes that her academic colleagues perceive her to be only *of the body*—“just a whore.” Like other interviewees of color, Samantha perceives her former sex work to contribute to her hypersexualization and, subsequently, to contribute to her perception that academic peers view her as intellectually inferior. She says:

I’ve had those experiences where professors who shut their door for their male students will keep it wide open and inch closer to the door as we’re talking...like I’m trying to sell them sex...It’s like they’re thinking, ‘Oh, oh, hold on, she’s a former sex worker, let me open my door and turn on all the lights in here, let me make sure there’s another professor. I [also] think that they [my peers] have some sort of filter in terms of sexualization of [sex workers], which I’ve encountered. I actually had that interaction... [my peer] would look at me and just stare at me during class and when I asked him about it, he said, ‘Oh, so I heard you were a sex worker.’ The sexualization of [sex workers] and the assumptions, I think, can be very problematic [and] I think that professors [who] are uncomfortable with my sex work think it is a level of promiscuity—that, ‘oh, well, this person just wants to have sex, and they [my professors] want me [Samantha] to get involved in this scandal with them.’ [...] [Academics] definitely have an assumption that if you look a certain way, if you engage in sex work, you can’t possibly be smart. Or if you’re smart, you couldn’t possibly have sold your body because smart people don’t do that. Or your choices in life are limited. You know, excuse my language [...] we’re [sex workers] not just giving head for A’s. We’re actually working for our grades.

For interviewees of color, their sense of constraint operates at the intersection of classical dualisms and stereotypes about the sexuality of women of color. Operating within an already racist, biopolitical structure that paints women of color as sexual “freaks,” whether they explicitly perform erotic labor or not, interviewees of color use the language of hypersexuality to frame the way they talk about constraints on their embodiment practices in academia. Samantha continues:

Who is in control of academia when we think about it, who is in control? It’s not the powerful strong women who influence us positively throughout our lives. It’s still an old boy’s club...So, to answer your question, no. [Academia] hasn’t given me any sort of political clout or any social clout or anything like that [...] I think people make assumptions about my sexual character or sexual interests or sexual desire or sexual prowess because of [my former sex work], I think it’s just shortsighted, but in academia, you see a lot of hypocrites.

To explore hypersexuality further, I attend the Desiree Alliance Conference. An empire of The Self, Las Vegas beckons. It is July in the Mojave; while the neon bleeds from sheer heat exhaustion, the Joshua Trees burst with little white flowers, a strange exuberance in this morbidly obese temperature. I catch up with my old friend, Vivian Salt. She is a mixed race woman living, working, and studying on the East Coast of the United States. A graduate student in public policy, Vivian Salt moonlights as a pro sub/Domme switch and full provider. She is from a working-class background and began laboring in the sex industry while she was an undergraduate student. She and I sit at the Desiree Alliance hotel bar, illuminated by cheap fake

candles, drinking through the early summer afternoons. Women in gold lame gowns and sparkly stuff on their nipples shuffle past us in various stages of intoxication.

I recall meeting Vivian Salt on the East Coast, years before our Desiree conversation. The pillars of her quaint apartment were made only of books—social theory, mostly queer literature; I recall my instant attraction to her articulateness. As students of the malady and children of the universe, we got high and held hands and ate expensive pasta with the blood money of commercial sex.

Years later at the Desiree Alliance Conference, we eventually achieve our desired state of inebriation and go for a swim. Lamenting the plethora of water in this place of drought, whispers of ventilation come from inside the pool's pumps as our intellectual and sexual interests blur together with a bit of heat exhaustion—needles, pain, submission, Foucault... Vivian Salt has little ink splats tattooed onto the nape of her dark, olive neck. Working as a pro-sub and full service sex worker for the duration of her undergraduate and graduate education, she explains that her education is “fucking expensive;” she has “no idea how anyone else [who is not a sex worker] pays for it.” Before the orgy—that explosive bodily knot ripe with acknowledgement of the fiction of space and spirit— she and I talk more about the constraints of academia. Vivian Salt explains how discourses of hypersexuality work their way into her academic experiences:

Even with the most enlightened academic [...] there's added layers to the way they [academics] see me... and there is a lot of fetishization of sex work there [in intellectual spaces] and the perception that I am hypersexual [...] which has to do with the value that we place on different skills, and the assumptions about the skills [of] sex workers [...] an assumption that our skills revolve around fucking [sex] and nothing else [...] I felt, what

can only be considered [as], micro-aggressions [in the classroom]. They [non-sex working professors and peers] didn't say anything to my face about my being a sex worker, but there was all sorts of bullshit I felt like I had to deal with because I was shamelessly out about the [sex] work I did [...] I critiqued the growing obsession with trauma and redemption narratives [...] and the [micro-aggressive] responses I got from [non-sex working professors and peers] literally gave me PTSD.

Vivian Salt uses the language of hypersexuality to define her sense of constraint in intellectual spaces. Unlike white interviewees, Vivian Salt does not talk about discourses of protection as they relate to her own experiences in academia. Rather, her embodiment practices in intellectual spaces are framed by the perception that she is hypersexual, or unable to disavow her bodily labor. She continues:

I think that there's definitely an element of sexualization [in academia for sex-working academics] and still being seen primarily as a sexual being, and any [intellectual] contribution is still going to have to go through that lens of you are a hypersexual woman, like you are not pure, you're engaging in this [sex work], you're engaging in this type of [sex work] culture, you support the patriarchy, etc. Or like you're comfortable enough in your sexuality with men and so they think that means they can say anything to you. [...] When I walk into a space as a student, I'm a student first. But in a lot of these other spaces, like contributing to research projects or sitting on panels, I think that then, I become a sex worker first [...] and as a student, I wasn't hypersexualized because I was a student first. In other spaces, no matter how long I've been an activist, I come in as an activist first and they assume I'm not a sex worker, but the second that [my sex work]

gets dropped, especially if they don't know my academic credentials, I definitely feel very much both hypersexualized and very much intellectually undermined.

Vivian Salt describes the embodied constraint of hypersexuality in the language of Cartesian dualisms—she believes her academic peers see her as only *of the body*. She also believes that when she is perceived as only of the body, her intellectual peers do not perceive her to have sexual boundaries. The workings of discourses of hypersexuality construct a sense of Vivian Salt's ability to do intellectual work—when she feels as though her sex work is hypersexualized or fetishized, she feels less able to be an intellectual on her own terms. Her embodied reflections, though, problematize the belief that Cartesian constraints act upon marginalized bodies without actors' mindfulness.

In the pool, the conference's collection of sex workers, academics, and allies seem to lose more and more pieces of clothing as the night progresses. By the end of my interview with Vivian Salt, everyone is naked; Vivian Salt offers a final extrapolation on her perception of discourses of hypersexuality in intellectual spaces:

Especially when academics find out that I've been working for a while, there's this assumption of being kind of dead inside—being hypersexual but also like nothing would ever offend me, nothing would ever hurt me, because I just don't feel anything anymore. Like if I'm not traumatized by my work, I'm clearly just like dead [...] and the only way to escape that is by playing the victim.

Unlike other interviewees of color, Vivian Salt acknowledges that she can “escape” discourses of hypersexuality by “playing the victim.” As the only interviewee of color with considerable “light

skin” privilege, her ability to practice confluent embodiment through the performance of “victim” is incongruent with the experiences of other interviewees of color.

Almost four years after the Desiree Alliance Conference and after giving birth to my daughter, I interview Salvia. Salvia is a woman of color from a lower/middle-class background. She is a Master’s student and sex worker on the East Coast of the United States. She began working as a sex worker as an undergraduate student; she is currently finishing her undergraduate degree. Salvia also uses hypersexuality—what she calls “sexual deviancy”—to define her intellectual constraint in academia:

[B]eing open about doing certain types of sex work kind of opens the doors, whether I want it to or not, to a certain degree of violence. So it’s just like, why should I not protect myself?... [I]f I’m walking through the [academic] world as a sex worker of color, it opens me to violence from heterosexual men who see my sexual deviancy, if you will, as an invitation for them to do what they want with me—access to my mind, access to my body, access to my sexuality—and when they get denied that access, because sex work is all about consent, when they get denied that access, the reactions are so aggressive [...] And you [could] get assaulted in an office of your professor or at the home of one of your classmates [...] It sounds very negative, but it’s true [...] a man who rapes has more respect than a woman who [does] sex work.

Salvia’s statement engages larger conversations about biopolitics and the way marginalized people practice embodiment in intellectual spaces. She believes her ethnic identity is related to larger, biopolitical power over her body, which is exacerbated by knowledge of her erotic labor. She thus practices a contextual form of fragmented embodiment as a means of survival—in order

to protect herself from the biopolitical powers that deem female-identified bodies of color as hypersexual, insatiably sexual, and unable to resist sexual advances, Salvia “protects” herself. It is interesting that Salvia’s discourse of “protection” is unlike those described by white interviewees—“protecting” herself does not mean disavowing her bodily labor, but rather, exercising power over how and when she reveals her participation in the sex industry to her academic colleagues.

For white interviewees who reject the victim narratives that disavow their bodily labor, they, too, talk about intellectual constraint in the language of hypersexuality. Noel, for example, is a white working-class white woman in a PhD program. She likewise speaks of her perception of hypersexuality as potentially ruinous for others:

I don’t want to make people [in academia] feel uncomfortable by not being a victim. And I shouldn’t have to be like, ‘hey, I’m a former sex worker, don’t be afraid that I’m going to fuck you or your girlfriend or everyone in the department, I’m not trying to hit on you, and please don’t think about me naked, I’m not trying to give you a lap dance, now.’ [...] People [in academia] immediately think you’re a prostitute and you’re banging people. If you say you’re an unapologetic sex worker, they [academics] just think [...] you’re just banging 24/7 and having sex and that that’s the extent of who you are [...] it makes me feel sexually uncomfortable and reinforces this male hierarchy over females because [academics] subordinate you to a person who just sold your body.

Noel is an endearing personality, a woman who always speaks candidly and packs a great deal of meaning into every sentence. There is a lot to unpack in her above sentiments; first, she believes that performing a victimized embodiment in academia as a current or former sex worker makes

academic colleagues more “comfortable.” In Noel’s refusal to make herself into a victim, though, she subsequently talks about her constraint in academia as one of hypersexualization. She fears that her unabashed practice of embodiment as both intellectual and sex worker positions her as only of the body; she believes her academic peers only think of her as “banging 27/7” and that that’s the “extent” of who she is as a person. Like Noel, Lulu is a white American from a working-class background who is unapologetic about her sex work in intellectual spaces. She talks about intellectual constraint in two ways—first, she uses the discourses of protection to frame her experiences. Then, she uses discourses of perpetration:

At first, I had a committee chair who was really concerned that I couldn’t be a sex worker, really I could be a former long-ago-in-the-past sex worker, and that had to be really believable to everybody including her, and I should be very ashamed, and I don’t know [...] But then they [my department] saw me on TV because of some organizing that I did with other sex workers. And so then they [the director of the program] sent me this email [...] and said, you’re violating the [school’s] code of ethics by doing things with the population that you’re not qualified to work with. And I was like, I’m not doing anything to anybody [...] I *am* that vulnerable population [...] And they [insisted I was] violating the code of ethics, which meant that they could open [a case file] and not let me graduate.

Lulu believes that because she did not express remorse for her sex work, she was subsequently painted as a perpetrator. Though Lulu does not explicitly use the language of hypersexuality in the same way as interviewees of color, she nonetheless talks about her intellectual constraint in the language of perpetration. Likewise, Jamie—a white American from a background of abject

poverty who is currently a PhD student studying ecology—articulates her perception of academia’s constraints:

It is a definite possibility that I will engage in sex work even after getting my PhD [...] Living wages in academia only exist for the very few highly competitive tenure-track positions and working as a part-time instructor or adjunct will not cover my monthly expenses [or] pay down my student loans.

So while Jamie’s discourse of constraint appears to center on issues of economics, she nonetheless talks about sexual objectification in academia as sitting at the intersection of class status and perception of sexual availability:

I had this professor who I knew and respected [...] And one day, all the sudden, he just stopped and looked at me—looked at my tits, looked at my face, looked at my tits again—and said, ‘That’s great that you can analyze things from a middle-class perspective, but it’s too bad you’re still a welfare case.’

Constraint in academia for Jamie sits at the intersection of class status and perceptions of her body as an available object of consumption in intellectual spaces. She feels constrained in academia’s lack of return on its promises—it may not, after all, afford her a ticket out of sex work—and also constrained in her body—that she mentions the “male gaze” in academia as significantly constraining her experience there demonstrates a distinct departure from the sex-worker-as-victim framework. Jamie is unabashedly and unapologetically open about her sex work and subsequently reflects on her constrained embodiment in academia in discourse that echoes hypersexuality. Indeed, several white interviewees who refused redemption narratives

spoke of being constrained by the male gaze in academia and perceptions that they are always sexually available—or even “literally consumed.” For example, Lena, a white, working-class graduate student who is pursuing her second Master’s degree, was “outed for some amateur porn and erotic photos” at her undergraduate university. She describes her experience with, as she describes, “the Madonna/Whore Dichotomy” in intellectual spaces:

I was outed by the school newspaper. I was in one of my poses [printed without consent], naked, on the cover of this magazine [...] I was literally consumed by my academic peers. I think [what I experienced being “outed” without consent] has to do with academics thinking women can’t do both at once, like you can’t expect to be getting your PhD and also be a sex worker at the same time. It’s like you can’t have your cake and eat it too or something. It’s like [academia] is a more virtuous path than sex work, which is why you have to be a victim to get respect. It probably goes back to the Madonna/whore dichotomy.

I am reminded of bell hooks’s (2008) essay “Consuming the ‘Other,’” in which she poetically explains how “othered” and “hypersexualized” bodies are “consumed” through media, through discourse, and through the biopolitical erasure of particular bodies all together. That Lena speaks of her experience in academia as synonymous with being digested is quite telling—by refusing a victim framework, or The Madonna’s “virtuous” path of intellectualism, Lena feels she was subsequently constrained by outside forces that “literally consumed” her.

To better understand the hypersexualization of sex workers in academia, I meet Lola under a sparkling European city. The technological miracles of the twenty-first century, miracles like Skype, bring me face-to-face with my interviewees. Lola spins me around, computer in hand, to

show off several distant twinkling structures. Contemporary culture's lust for light manifests as a loutish molestation, an eyesore of immense proportion, on structures conceived centuries ago. I remark that the whole clammy history of Europe, all those ghosts of great revolutions, gave-in to the spectacle of contemporary culture. Lola giggles.

Lola is a white, American undergraduate abroad studying in the humanities. She dons a tight fitting, spaghetti-strap top that says, "Be Nice To Sex Workers!" with a young, hip haircut and unruly underarm hair. Lola began working as an erotic dancer in the Northeastern United States "before [she] was twenty-years-old" and recently began escorting as a "sugarbaby" in Europe.

"I was a virgin the whole time I was stripping!" she says with pride. "I only recently lost my virginity, just a month before I started escorting!"

I am somewhat envious of Lola's youthful charm and bright-eyed articulation of the sex industry. Comparatively, I feel ancient. When I meet Lola, I've just discovered my pregnancy. The middle and working-class clientele I consider now in my sex work life seem ostentatious compared to hers, like dumb brutes running around, their boorish histories not more than a sum of erections, or the pursuit thereof: "I want to make you my pregnant slut slave," says one. I consider fetish work, including the various fetishes associated with breast milk. But it all feels so... vulgar.

Alternatively, Lola appears very much confident in her identity as sex worker, which is perhaps why I am surprised to learn that she feels restricted in academia. "These other students don't know what it's like to work," she says. "They wouldn't understand my sex work and they would sexualize me." In fact, Lola describes her intellectual constraint through discourses of hypersexuality:

I think some of my male professors know I am a sex worker because they seem very interested in me in a sexual way. I feel like they already sexualize me, and if they knew for sure I'm a sex worker, they would probably be more likely to sexualize me [...] it [being a sex worker] just makes you more sexually available in the eyes of others [...] Although I could see myself having sex with one of my professors.

Lola's understanding of sexual objectification is distinctly different from interviewees of color. While interviewees of color uses discourses of hypersexuality and sometimes, fears of violence, to frame their intellectual constraint, thus feeling like they are delegitimized by Cartesian dualisms that devalue the body, Lola alternatively feels like her own sexual objectification would not necessarily diminish her ability to be an intellectual. Indeed, the "male gaze" of academia is not necessarily oppressive for Lola in ways that interviewees of color and less economically privileged interviewees describe it—she feels confident she could engage in a consensual and erotic relationship with professors who sexualize her. Because of her racial privilege, the sexual objectification inherent in discourses of hypersexualization does not necessarily constrict her practice/s of embodiment. That she feels she can exercise sexual agency even within a landscape of constraints speaks to Lola's ability to practice fluid and contextual embodiment—she is more or less guarded about her erotic labor in intellectual spaces depending upon the context. And the larger biopolitical context in which she operates is one that privileges white bodies—the sexual objectification of her body is not as loaded with potential violence as it is for interviewees of color. Lena's analysis adds to this—though she perceives herself to have been "literally consumed" by her academic peers, her class privilege affords her a certain degree of sexual autonomy even within constraining boundaries put forth by the male gaze:

It's almost inevitable that you start to develop this student/teacher bond or whatever you may start to develop some sort of sexual or romanticized kind of feelings just because of the power dynamic that's there [in academia] and the power structure.

While all interviewees mentioned some degree of sexualization/objectification in academia as current or former sex workers, only white women speak of the power dynamics as potentially erotic, while women of color describe the power relations as potentially violent.

*

I walk through the toneless hush of these academic halls, my embodiment not more than the patter of two lonely heels on cool, inoffensive tile; I feel a thorny insistence in the depths of these silences that give me a moment of pause. His office is blue-grey like the hallways that lead to it; the same color as his beard and of his eyes and the same color as the pen he uses to mark mistakes on my paper. He orders honey lattes from me each morning and insists we're friends; I am his student and his barista. When he asks to see me in his office, I cheerfully oblige and when he asks I close his door, I express no reservations. When he says, "I want to discuss your work," I nod sheepishly. When he says, "No. Your *other* work" I feel my body slink away from its head and heart into a world devoid of feeling. He means to hire me as a hooker, he sees me as always *working*.

Discussion

In this chapter, I explored interviewees' sense of constraint on their ability to be an

intellectual and do intellectual work. I find that Cartesian dualisms explain the way interviewees feel constrained; they often speak of constraint as being seen as “only of the body,” or what other scholars refer to as self-concealment or disembodiment (Leder, 1990; Aalten 2007). However, there were differences in how interviewees deployed narratives of constraint. I find that women of color are more likely to describe their sense of constraint in the language of hypersexuality and perpetration while white women are more likely to define their sense of constraint as synonymous with a lack of intellectual agency, and often by using language that reflects larger discourses of protection. Women of color and white women all express fears of bodily violence in intellectual spaces like sexual harassment. However, white sex-working academics are more likely to talk about constraint in academia in the language of protection—they talk about their intellect being constrained by outside forces that require them to disavow their sex work in order to be “redeemed.”

Although discourses of hypersexualization, perpetration, and protection are not necessarily unique to the embodied practices of current and former sex workers, what *is* unique is that the embodied practices of sex workers in academia are framed within popular, anti-prostitution feminist discourse that positions sex workers as either sexual deviants/ perpetrators or victims in need of protection. That discourses of protection serve to constrain even the most privileged sex workers—white, economically advantaged sex workers in higher education—might help to unveil the problematic application of these discourses to sex workers in society more generally. Furthermore, the partitioning off of sex workers into categories of “good” and “bad” based on an intersection of demographics, including race and class, can tell feminist scholars a great deal about the harmful effects of simplifying narratives associated with Cartesian dualisms of “good” and “bad” girl, “victim” and “criminal.”

CHAPTER 9: STRUCTURED, *OR THE CRAPAUD OF CANNERY ROW*,

AN INTERLUDE

Cognition

a situated activity

Growing out of a tangled dance of body, mind, activity,

and world

We begin to retrieve the tacit knowledge enfolded in cultural and social practices

(Wacquant 2015: 4)

*

I slip the hallucinogens under my tongue and the desert clay becomes an enormous elephant in a headdress; my cognition *grows from a tangled dance of body, mind, activity, and world...*

“There is a wisdom that is woe; but there is a woe that is madness,” I think.

Foucault is a one-eyed bouncer guarding The Glitter Gulch. He looks at me with his one eye and says, “LSD is like sex with a stranger.”

A thirty-foot cowboy gallops by on an ultraviolet bronco, self-flagellating with a glass lasso; he squeezes air out of little pockets in his neon lungs. The cowboy is a great, wheezing capitalist; these are the neon capillaries of The American Dream.

My mouth curls inside itself.

The free market sure smells like formaldehyde.

This is how you die in the desert— drugs and dehydration.

There is a man wearing rim glasses on the edge of his nose. He whispers in my ear,
“There is what is drunk in the mornings, and for a long while that was beer.”

He is breathing down my neck.

“In Cannery Row,” he says, “a character would profess that ‘there’s nothing like that first taste of beer,’ but I have often needed, at the moment of waking, Russian vodka.”

Black feathers stick out of his head; he pulls from a 40 in a paper bag.

“There is what is drunk with meals,” he says, “and in the afternoons, that stretch between them.”

He raises his container, a toast.

“There is wine some nights, along with spirits, and after that beer is pleasant again — for then beer makes one thirsty. There is what is drunk at the end of the night, at the moment when the day begins anew” (Debord 2009).

He laughs and then turns into vapor, escapes through the crates of a Las Vegas sewer.

The vines on the casino floor pulse with neon blood; the light or maybe the blood who knows which but it floods the body parts of consumption.

Someone rolls a 6-1.

In *creatio ex nihilo* (Baudrillard 1981) rich men gamble with performances of womanhood while little kids slosh through the city’s underground tunnels; they have glossy-eyes and dirty fingernails; *we begin to retrieve the tacit knowledge enfolded in cultural and social practices...*

Up!

Pops!

The!

Devil!

CHAPTER 10: EMBODIED RESISTENCE

In this chapter I explore how sex workers in academia talk about the ways they resist intellectual constraints academia. I show how more marginalized sex workers often remain “closeted” about their erotic labor in intellectual spaces while less marginalized sex workers resist constraints by being explicitly “out” about their erotic labor in spaces of intellectualism. By looking for sensitizing concepts of reflexive embodiment, I find that fragmented embodiment as a practice of resistance is conscious and an agential response to what Butler (1990) calls “coherent identification,” or social expectations for appropriate gender performativities. . In other words, interviewees demonstrate a conscious decision to practice mind/body divergence in their discourse and embodied practices, but they do so as a response to outside expectations. By practicing fragmented embodiment, interviewees make “ripples of resistance” within academia (O’Connor 2001: 94). Alternatively, less marginalized sex workers resist constraints by coming “out” about their sex work; their practices of resistance demonstrate a performance of confluent embodiment, or the conscious decision to resist antiquated dualisms in academia by bringing their erotic labor to bear on their intellectual lives

Closeted, Fragmented Embodied Resistance

Like other sexually marginalized groups, I find that sex workers in academia do not always come “out of the closet,” for various reasons, about their erotic labor. In the following section, I look at how closeted sex-working academics talk about their embodied practices of resistance. In this chapter, I look at the discourse interviewees use to talk about resisting constraints in academia. . Whether or not the sex-working academics I interview disclose their erotic labor to

academic colleagues seems dependent upon their fear of intellectual constraint, as outlined in previous chapters. For example, in my interview with Vivian Salt, who is working-class, mixed race, Asian/ white and currently a Master's student in the social sciences, she states:

I'm not going to go into any details [about my sex work in intellectual spaces] because I don't need any of your [academics'] projections about my sex life [...] So that is a big determinant, like whether or not I would reveal [my sex work] to someone in academia. [...] Coming out to students is so much harder than coming out to professors, and I do so much more selectively for these reasons.

In spite of Vivian Salt's fear of "projections" by other intellectuals, she does indeed "come out" about her erotic labor to a "select" few academics. She thus practices confluent embodiment contextually, and moreover uses words like "determinant," "reveal," and "selectively," and discourses of agency to articulate how and when she decides to make her sex work and intellectual work confluent. Vivian Salt believes the "power to reveal" her erotic labor in intellectual spaces is hers alone, thus practicing agency in ways that problematize both anti-prostitution discourse as well as intellectual articulations of "disembodiment"—for all intents and purposes, Vivian Salt separates her mind and body in particular contexts, but she does so mindfully.

Likewise, in my interview with Salvia, a lower-middle class woman of color who is currently a Master's student in the social sciences, she expands on many of Vivian Salt's observations. Salvia says:

Unless you're completely open [about your erotic labor] in academia—which I wish I was brave enough to do, and that's a choice—unless you are someone who is completely

open with being a sex worker and being an academic student, then by being closeted, when someone else finds that out, they have that power in their hand, and then they can choose whether they say anything to anyone or not. And the power should always be in my hands. I should decide who gets to know and who gets to participate in it [knowledge of my sex work] outside of the club [...] it's really nice to feel sexless in academia, or at least in my program, as opposed to when I'm at work [doing sex work], and I'm as femme as you can get. Which is nice, I like that balance.

Like Vivian Salt, Salvia believes the “power to reveal” her erotic labor in intellectual spaces should always be in her hands, and way she ensures this is by remaining “in the closet” about her erotic labor. Though this practice of fragmented embodiment, she is able to retain a sense of power and craft her intellectual self based on that position of power. Practicing fragmented embodiment, then, is empowering for Salvia, even though she points to confluent practices of embodiment as “brave,” something she “wishes” she could do. That Salvia consciously partitions her mind and body labor in order to resist the constraints of academia problematizes scholarly framework on the negative consequences of internalizing Cartesian dualisms. It is indeed a strategy of resistance, as Salvia further articulates:

I've gotten into arguments with coworkers [other sex workers] who get annoyed that I'm not open about being a stripper in academic life. I'm like, do you even understand the consequences of what me being open about certain aspects of my life could do to me [in academia]? It has nothing to do with being ashamed. It [sex work] is a threat [in academia].

For sex workers in academia, practicing fragment embodiment is one major way they exercise agency and control over their intellectual lives. And as some interviewees allude to, the process of selectively “coming out” is a powerfully embodied experience. For example, Noel— a working-class white woman who began working in the sex industry prior to academia and is now a PhD student in the social sciences—states:

In reality, I think it’s just the expectation of future stigma is why I’m hesitant to reveal things [...] it’s kind of like coming out as gay—that should be my decision to discuss with other people, like please keep my confidence, and I’ll do the same for you. It’s all a calculation of cost/benefit.

Like Vivian Salt and Salvia, Noel practices fragmented embodiment in academia as a subtle form of resistance. She addresses the larger biopolitics of social stigma surrounding the sex industry—stigma that inevitably prevents practices of confluent embodiment for many sex workers—and expresses agency in her declaration that the “decision” of exposing her erotic labor should be hers. While Vivian Salt, Salvia, and Noel all talk about their decision to remain mostly closeted in the language of Cartesian dualisms—they believe their academic colleagues will perceive them to be only *of the body* if they reveal their erotic labor— they nonetheless speak of the decision to “come out” as solely theirs, a “calculation of cost/benefit.” They are thus able to craft themselves as intellectuals on their own terms. Taking back control, having the power of exposure is a subtle form of resistance. And for closeted interviewees, they are indeed selective about who they share their erotic labor with. In fact, many interviewees speak of the empowering aspects of revealing their erotic labor to a select few intellectuals, intellectuals that interviewees perceive to be either equally marginalized or sympathetic to issues of sex work. For

example, Lorilie talks about her calculated decision to reveal her sex work to just one academic peer. Lorilie is a Nigerian, undocumented immigrant living in Europe. She is from a working-class background and entered the sex industry as an undergraduate student three years ago where she is currently studying in the humanities; she is a full provider. Lorilie recalls her decision to expose her sex work to an HIV-positive Pakistani colleague:

Recently, I was in the library with [an academic colleague], who I've only recently become friends with, and we were in the library reading late [...] and [we] just got into a really long conversation, and he was telling me about...he's Pakistani, and he comes from quite a strict household [...] so there's like a lot of pressure and expectation, and he's gay, and he's also HIV positive. But when we sat down and talked, he almost just magically opened up to me. He felt like I was someone who could understand him and that he could trust. Without having known him that well, I felt the same way as well, and I ended up telling him about my being a sex worker, and he received it really positively.

Lorilie typically practices fragmented embodiment as a means of survival, indeed she says she does not have the “privilege” of coming out of the closet. “Shame would be the biggest thing [keeping me from coming out],” she says. Lorilie nonetheless practices confluent embodiment in particular contexts with academic colleagues who she perceives to be equally disenfranchised, colleagues for whom trust and openness come naturally, almost “magical.” This “oppression consciousness” extends beyond issues of criminalized identities for a conception of oppressed embodiment and resistance (Chowdhury 2006; Jackson 2013). That is, Lorilie understands her connection to her colleague to be rooted in a similar *bodily* reality as opposed to a shared experience with criminalization.

In my interview with Lucy, she is initially hesitant to discuss her intimate, academic friendships with me. Lucy is a white American from a lower-class background who entered the sex industry prior to academia. She is working on her second Master's degree in the Pacific Northwest. Sometimes, the complexity and intimacy of friendship can be the most difficult aspect of the self to reveal. I am naked, sprawled out on a king-sized bed with my newborn at my breast and the phone to my ear. Revealing this to Lucy makes her laugh; I am suddenly vulnerable, exposed, and embodied. In response, she begins discussing her embodied practices in academia:

One friend in college I told [about my sex work], she [was] having a lot of financial difficulties, and I remember she actually had a really nice voice, and she's very edgy, like she was always talking about sex, very open about everything, and so when she told me she was having all these troubles, like she was really struggling, I was like, 'hey, don't be offended, but I make twenty dollars an hour minimum doing this, and you can make up to one hundred dollars an hour if you are really good at it—just to give you an option, no pressure, just I think you'd be good at it, do what you want,' [...] at the time, she was working as a waitress at Waffle House. And we kind of commiserated on like how did we get from there to here, how did we get to this point in our lives when we are both at this really prestigious top-ten research university and have to resort to this?

For Lucy, being “selective” about who she chooses to expose her erotic labor to is an embodied practice of resistance—it allows her to form friendships and intimacies with likeminded people, people who can “commiserate” with her about having to “resort” to sex work. And given the social stigma of erotic labor, “Friendships take on political meaning [for sex workers] as

criminalized workers come together to find relief from isolation and stigma” (Jackson, forthcoming: 120). And yet, for interviewees who practice contextual confluent embodiment, their decision to reveal their erotic labor and form friendships is often painted in the language of the body, not criminalization. Lucy describes her friend’s voice, a woman who was “always talking about sex,” while Lorilie describes her friend’s ethnicity and HIV status. Both Lucy and Lorilie decided to practice confluent embodiment with academic colleagues who shared similar bodily experiences to their sex work. And yet, Vivian Salt recalls revealing her sex work—and thus practicing confluent embodiment—to an academic colleague with a similar criminalized identity:

The person I got closest to in my [graduate] program—we were able to have the most genuine relationship [because] she paid her way through school selling drugs and was totally brilliant, really wonderful, lovely person, good friend, and both of us, it was just like [...] we became significant parts of each other’s lives [because] we understood perfectly this underground economy.

For Vivian Salt, who practices confluent embodiment selectively, her decision to reveal her erotic labor in this particular context was engendered from a sense that she and her academic colleague shared a similar experience and understanding of the “underground economy.” Unlike Lucy and Lorilie, Vivian Salt’s experiences more closely relate to an “oppression consciousness” bound by criminalization status as opposed to a shared status as a sexually marginalized body. Other interviewees likewise practice confluent and fragmented embodiment contextually, and thus craft more subtle “ripples of resistance within [academic] organizations” (O’Connor 2001: 94). Noel adds:

When I'm hanging out with the sex work crew, I feel at home. When I'm at a Desiree Alliance Conference, I feel at home. I don't have to be bashful about all the strange and dark things that I'm interested in [...] It's a free community, and I feel like in a weird way, I feel that sex work communities offer intellectual liberties you don't find in other places because it's like if you can entertain this idea, I'm sure you've thought about a lot of other different things.

Noel speaks of "sex work communities" as spaces wherein she may craft an intellectual identity that has more "liberties" and "freedom" than academia itself. By engaging in sex work communities, Noel transgresses the Cartesian dualisms that would otherwise feel constraining.

*

Years after the infamous Desiree Alliance Conference orgy, I call my friend Dominique. My daughter, now a year old, whinnies in the background; her father and I are now separated. The father of my child now lives with another woman and, in an act of impulsive mania, I tattoo "C'est drôle la vie" on my inner arm. *Life is funny*. Even in my privileged role as researcher, Dominique offers me comfort— financial and emotional support during my transition into former sex worker-turned single mother, and I express profound gratefulness for my sex worker community and the spaces of resistance we make together. Dominique is a white, tenured PhD in the humanities. She is a former sex worker, having worked in the legal sector of the sex industry as a stripper for several years. She entered the sex industry when she was a graduate student. Dominique is primarily closeted about her former sex work in intellectual spaces, but in our interview she recalls a formative interaction with colleagues during an academic meeting:

We were reading this study on the sex industry and I just felt like I couldn't hide it [my former sex work] anymore [...] and it was very clear to me that I was outing myself [...] I had never been open about that [my former sex work] with my [academic] colleagues [...] but I was talking to them, and I just felt very weird because we're talking about [sex work] and we're talking about my expertise as somebody who studies sex work and yet, I'm not supposed to bring in my own experience [as a former sex worker]? It just felt dishonest to me [...] I just kept thinking, this is my [sex worker] community. These are my [sex worker] friends. We have a right to speak to our experiences. So I did.

For Dominique, contextually revealing her prior sex work to a group of academic colleagues made space for her to be more honest about her experiences. Exercising her “right” to “speak,” she practices confluent embodiment as an act of resistance. “Making space,” even while largely in the closet about their erotic labor, means that interviewees carve out space in academia by agentially choosing which forms of embodiment they practice. Sometimes, practicing fragmented embodiment allows interviewees more space, while in other contexts, confluent embodiment does. But in either case, making space as a sexually marginalized academic “resist[s] and respond[s] to hierarchical and numerically male dominated structures of academia” (O'Connor 2001: 86). As Dominique says, “[C]an academia look different? I would hope so. I hope I am part of that change.”

Not all interviewees are “closeted” about their erotic labor in intellectual spaces. In the next section, I explore how current and former sex workers in academia practice embodied resistance when they are blatantly “out of the closet” about their current or former sex work.

Out And Confluent Embodied Resistance

“Let me find the professor who was a sex worker and proud of it,” Samantha says over the phone. “I’m still looking; I have no idea. I have no idea who this person is, if they exist, maybe they don’t, I don’t know.”

Some interviewees are surprised to learn, when we speak, that there are enough of “us” to form a data sample. “You mean there’s other hos in academia out there?!” asks Fawn during our telephone interview. In fact, many of the sex workers in academia I interview are completely “out” about their sex work in intellectual spaces. For some interviewees, they talk about simply being “out” as one form of embodied resistance. Even for Vivian Salt, who is not entirely “out” about her sex work in academia, she nonetheless believes that being “out” is an act of “normalization [of sex work]; an act of resilience and resistance.” Like Jenna—a white American and current sex worker from a working-class background pursuing a PhD in the social sciences—says, “Academics don’t really come in contact with sex working-academics [...] but when they do, they *have* to make sense of [us].” For Jenna, who practices confluent embodiment by being explicitly out about her sex work in intellectual spaces, she believes her embodiment practices are necessarily resistant—her academic peers are forced to “make sense” of people who transgress Cartesian dualisms.

Likewise, Lena—a white, middle-class woman pursuing a Master’s in the humanities who was unwittingly “outed” on the cover of school newspaper as a pornography actor in her undergraduate career—explains how she resists constraints in academia by moving beyond dichotomies of mind and body. By being explicitly “out” about her sex work in intellectual spaces, she says she practices resistance:

[I am a] person who is an intellectual and also very sexual. [I'm] rebelling against this strict academic world that doesn't take into account certain other real-world complexities [...] I also think that people on my campus, having more people know me personally, like on that personal level, it was probably harder to dehumanize me or shame [for my sex work] me because it's like they know me as a person already.

Despite not having the ability to practice fragmented embodiment, as she was outted without her consent in school, Lena nonetheless believes her practice of confluent embodiment resists the "strict academic world." Lena believes that by being an "out" sex worker, she not only makes her sex work and intellectualism more confluent, she also actively works against Cartesian dualisms all together. She speaks of herself as an intellectual in the language of confluent embodiment—her academic colleagues cannot "dehumanize" or "shame" her because they recognize her as a complete, complex, and embodied person. Moreover, Lena uses her status as an "out" sex-working academic to create sustainable political change on her campus.

Yeah, I did porn, guys, but guess what? There are feminist pornographers out there. So I decided to bring one [a feminist pornographer] to campus. I wanted to show that it's [sex work] not as much of a bad thing or whatever [...] The Feminist Club was the one that agreed to fund it [bringing the feminist pornographer to campus] even though they, the Feminist Group on campus, had anti-porn views.

Using her confluent embodiment to educate her academic peers through tangible resistance and change, Lena actively works against the mind/body dualisms that have traditionally framed intellectual spaces.

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Back in my living room, years before the weight of life seems to be taking its toll, Jenna sucks down the final remnants wine that seems to have made its way around my apartment for centuries.

“Academics don’t really know how to deal with my ‘ho’ talk,” she says, laughing.

“That’s why I always dress as slutty as possible at school!” Jamie says, and the room erupts with giggles. “It’s like resisting this negative identity that’s been forced on us!”

Jenna and Jamie, both white women from lower-class backgrounds, are also both explicitly “out” about their sex work in intellectual spaces. The playfulness with which they describe “ho” talk and “sluttiness” is one way that “out” sex-working academics reconcile being both intellectuals and sex workers; indeed, they claim a distinctly sex worker-friendly and sex-positive feminist standpoint in academia. For many of my twenty-interviewees, occupying space as both a sexual and intellectual agent is an act of confluent, embodied resistance.

“I feel like there’s this fear [in academia] of the kind of knowledge we [sex workers] bring,” Jamie says, twirling the contents of her glass in our initial focus group. “Academics are afraid of the bodily experiences we’ve had in sex work.”

I sit on the edge of my seat, clamoring to the rare moments in which I am not overtaken with pregnancy nausea. I ask my old friend to elaborate. She looks at the ceiling, pausing thoughtfully before responding:

I feel like [...] they [non-sex working academics] are not comfortable with their own sensuality and sexuality. Like they [non-sex working academics] are the gatekeepers of knowledge holding all this power and they’re like, ‘How dare you try to be in my intellectual space [...] when you [sex workers] have done something so shameful [sex

work].

When I ask Jamie if bodily realities are necessarily antithetical to intellectualism, she scoffs:

There's a lot of sexual overtones and interactions in academia that I think once you work in sex work, you're way more in tune with, so I think it's also a matter of being way more in tune with and aware of when you're being treated in a sexual manner.

Jamie believes she not only challenges lingering Cartesian dualisms of mind and body in academia, she wonders if they ever really existed. Being explicitly “out” about her erotic labor in intellectual spaces allows Jamie to feel like she is “in tune” with the sensual and sexual overtures in academia. Confluent practices of embodiment, for Jamie, allow her to see what she believes has always been true—eroticism and intellectualism are not, and have never truly been, dichotomies. Doc, who participates in the focus group but later declines to be interviewed at length, chimes in after a lengthy silence. Like a comic book hero, I seem to always imagine her in latex; I imagine her striking villains with paddles that leave heart-shaped welts all over their bodies. She comes in and out of my life the way magical people often do.

Doc explains that after being a part of public scandal, her non sex-working academic colleagues called her “a whore and a home wrecker.” Acknowledging her colleagues’ sentiments with a sense of pride, she throws her head back and laughs. “I don’t have a home!” she says. “*I’m* not married!” She interprets her colleagues’ sentiments to be rooted in Cartesian dualisms of “good” and “bad” girls that serve to shame and dehumanize sexually marginalized people. By refusing to internalize the Cartesian dualisms inherent in good girl/bad girl dichotomies, Doc practices confluent, embodied resistance. Doc repositions herself as an agent of her own choices,

occupying space as both a sexual and intellectual agent. Reclaiming the negative stereotypes of sex workers in contemporary culture allows Doc—an explicitly “out” sex-working academic—to construct her intellectualism on her own terms. Doc reclaims this particular experience in academia in an act of resistance; she engages in the “Cheeky public display of sexuality, [which] tweaks the moral sensibilities of respectable citizens [as a tactic] of fundamental civil liberty” (Chateauvert 2013: 48).

*

As a devoted dissenter, I like to think that I tweak the moral sensibilities of respectable citizens simply by carving out space for my body in places where I anticipate rejection. In my youthful exuberance, this translated into boastful testaments to my overlapping lives as hooker and as intellectual; I found inspiration at the bottom of bottomless pitchers of beer and in the decadent spaces of intellectualism that politely whispered, “you don’t belong here.” And while sweltering summer pool parties, flanked by intellectual tête-à-tête, encouraged my academic peers to hide under T-shirts and shorts, even while swimming so as not to draw too much attention to their bodies, I instead pursued exposure. Alongside intellectual pursuits I roped in my sexual or otherwise corporeal interests; I spoke of periods and heartaches and breakups and tie-me-ups. While I perceived other to submerge their bodily realities alongside their clothed skin, I saw myself as something heartier. And while these practices of resistance were certainly revolutionary at the time, I find that divorcing and dissertating and birthing and parenting have all made my body, simply, tired.

Discussion

In this chapter, I explored the strategies of resistance for twenty current and former sex workers in academia. I looked at how sex workers in academia talk about the ways they resist intellectual constraints there. I find that more marginalized sex workers often remain “closeted” about their erotic labor in intellectual spaces while less marginalized sex workers resist constraints by being explicitly “out” about their erotic labor in spaces of intellectualism. By looking for sensitizing concepts of reflexive embodiment, I find that fragmented embodiment as a practice of resistance is conscious and an agential response to outside forces. In other words, interviewees demonstrate again a conscious decision to practice mind/body divergence, but they do not describe their practices in the language of “disembodiment.” Instead, they make “ripples of resistance” within academia even as they are not able to make their intellectual and erotic labor confluent. Closeted sex workers in academia see resistance as controlling who sees them as sex workers. They keep their sex work secret and form community around their stigmatized identity while remaining “in the closet” about their erotic labor.

Alternatively, I find that less marginalized sex workers resist constraints by coming “out” about their sex work; their practices of resistance, in many ways, transgress mind-body dualism, thus constituting a confluent embodiment. I find that current and former sex workers who are “out” about their erotic labor in intellectual spaces blur boundaries between the “good girl” and the “bad girl”—in fact, they demonstrate, perhaps, that this dichotomy never really existed— by being simultaneously *of the mind* and *of the body* in academic spaces. My interviewees who are “out” are able to participate in what Wacquant (2015) calls a “carnal historical sociology” (5), whether they explicitly study the sex industry or not, by “forcing academics to deal [with the

body],” as Jenna says.

For “closeted” sex-working academics, I find that their strategies of resistance are more subtly crafted. As such, the “out” sex-working academics are more able to engage in what O’Conner calls “subjective resistances,” whereas “closeted” sex-working academics are more likely to talk about resistance in other ways—forming community around other stigmatized identities, as one example.

CHAPTER 11: SKILLED AND SEDIMENTED, AN INTERLUDE

*Senses are implanted over time
through our engagement in the world
They are gradually deposited
in our body
They are the layered product of
History...
Endurance,
We are flowing
through
time
(Wacquant 2015:4)*

*

Promiscuous babble of blood pressure monitors and medical aspirators rise and fall with the chorus of compression tights yanked up the skin of a forgotten class. Rosary clutched tight, one testament of my matriarchs' entanglements with Indian boarding schools, my grandmother whispers, "I knew you'd do great things. We'll have a doctor in the family now." *This is the layered product of my collective, maternal history...*

And all those lineaments of hope were henceforth drawn over and over again, traced one by one until eventually I am a mother myself. *Flowing through time...* My dead grandmother holds my hand; I am exposed back to myself by a mirror in between my legs. But there is no baby there, just an elemental ritual of womanhood reflecting what my granny already knows—

that sometimes, babies die in birth. This sensorium memory is *deposited in my body*... Centuries pass before my newborn is brought back to life, singing the only melancholy libretto she knows; she is carried away by a sea of white coats. I am face-to-face with the bitter gargle of a mother's desperation.

We do not feel horror because we are haunted by a sphinx, we dream a sphinx in order to explain the horror that we feel," says Borges (1998); in postpartum, I regularly dream that water overtakes my newborn and me. You stop a horse that is bolting; you do not stop a mother's desperation. Duress born of the immensity of everything, I *suffer* through an erosive pathology after the re/birth of my child. The propinquity of violence and privation is the stuff of *la petite morte*. Which is to say, the orgasm that set sail the tiny sparks of my daughter's life as well as its inevitable impermanence is the stuff, the collective stuff, between the didactic and the pornographic.

Which is why I find myself back at the strip club.

Borges sips his whiskey next to me, playing with a pocketknife and bemoaning the sounds of a nearby accordion.

"People only like it because it's misrepresented as old," he says of the accordion. "Old like a ghost. But dying is the most unimportant thing a person can do."

I excuse myself to drop a dollar in the toilet. A cultural ritual of former strippers, the dollar is an appeasement and a prayer to all those scaffolding apparitions, still steadfast in their hustle.

"Even Great Plains Ghosts gotta *endure*," I think.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

Findings

Famed sex worker and activist Margo St. James told Paul Krassner of *Rolling Stone* in 1974, “As a woman/whore, I feel equality will never be achieved until women’s sexuality ceases to be the source of our shame—until the men are forced to abandon their pussy patrols.” The “pussy patrol” that St. James spoke of was a reference to larger institutions of biopolitical power. Drawing from the Foucault’s (1978-79) biopolitical framework in which he historically analyzes how marginalized bodies become systemically policed and punished, I have asked sexually marginalized people to reflect on their own embodiment practices at the intersection of mind/body work. Approaching Cartesian dualisms as “discourse [that] creates subject positions...a stylized repetition of acts...” rather than as a testable theory, I find that the discourses interviewees use to reflect on their embodiment practices fall into two categories: fragmented and confluent (Butler 1990: 78). Unlike Butler, though, who argues that the bodily practices are “internally discontinuous,” I find that these discursive performativities, as expressed through reflective embodiment practices, are largely conscious. That is, I find that sex workers in academia perform fragmented and confluent embodiment as a conscious response to external biopolitics—in Butler’s language, both fragmented and confluent embodiment practices, as discursively analyzed, are two forms of drag. That is to say, sex workers in academia are not controlled by the internalization—and subsequent performance of/reflection on—disembodying discursive practices, but undergo complicated apprenticeships in which embodied practices/reflections are resultant upon particular biopolitical constraints, even when those practices and discourses mimic Cartesian dualisms.

I have accessed this unique tension between discourse and embodiment by simultaneously addressing my own biopolitical constraints as a newly singled-mother as well the fleshy, embodied experiences of being a sentient, sedimented, structured, situated, suffering, and skilled researcher. By juxtaposing this tension in my own life with the tension between the discursive and embodied practiced of interviewees, I problematize scholars' depictions of the "disembodied actor" (Leder, 1990; Aalten 2007; Fredrickson 1998) as well as more critical postmodern work that positions discursive practices as unconsciously internalized (Butler 1990). My findings speak to a larger problem within embodiment literature as well as to the shortcomings of critical analyses of discourse that actually end up ignoring structural constraints—as well as individual actors' agency— all together. I find instead that embodiment practices are conscious and tailored responses to biopolitical constraint.

It would seem, then, that the most important feminist task is to critique larger, biopolitical "pussy patrols" as opposed to any one individual actor's embodied performativities, even when said performativities appear to the "enlightened" scholar as the internalization of oppressive Cartesian dualisms. In fact, I find that there is no longer a distinct mind/body dualism in contemporary society; there is, instead, the performance of antiquated dualisms and as well as their incarnation through performative embodiment practices as a distinct tool for navigating biopolitical constraint.

In this study, I looked at the experiences of people who perform both erotic and intellectual labor—current and former sex workers in academia. Previous research finds that Cartesian dualisms of mind and body devalue the body in intellectual thought. Moreover, scholars argue that when already sexually marginalized people *expose* their bodies in spaces of intellectualism, they demonstrate diminished mental performance (Fredrickson 1998). As

Fredrickson's (1998) landmark study suggests, the internalization of gendered and heteronormative Cartesian dualisms leads to "self-objectification" whereby actors become "disembodied" by virtue of their inability to be simultaneously "of the body" and "of the mind" (Fredrickson 1998: 269-284). Conceptions of disembodiment are not homogenous, though. Others argue that the *absence* of the body—or self-concealment—is what defines disembodiment from embodiment (Leder, 1990). Aalten (2007), for example, argues that by denying her body in intellectual spaces, she practices a form of disembodiment. In either case, scholars agree that "disembodiment" occurs when individual actors cannot reconcile their intellectual and erotic realms.

Research on embodiment hitherto argues that particular groups of people are embodied while other groups are more susceptible to the disembodiment effects of internalized dualisms. And while some studies show how people practice and reflect on their own embodiment (Fourcade (2010), Lande 2007; Okely 2007; Crossley 2007), my research looked at how sexually marginalized people, specifically current and former sex workers, practiced embodiment and the discourses they use to reflect on these practices in intellectual spaces. In order to understand how sexually marginalized people like sex workers practice and reflect on embodiment in intellectual spaces, I examined:

- How current and former sex workers in academia talk about why they entered academia and how they talked about their expectations there.
- How current and former sex workers in academia talk about the experiences that constrain their ability to be intellectuals and do intellectual work in academia.
- How current and former sex workers in academia talk about the way they resist intellectual constraints in academia.

I found that conceptions of “disembodiment” and “self-concealment” are too simplistic to analyze the embodied practices of current and former sex workers in academia and, instead, that there are two forms of embodiment practices: fragmented and confluent embodiment. I found that individual actors practiced different forms of embodiment depending upon several factors. First, the discourses that interviewees used to frame their perception of the benefits of pursuing an advanced degree reflected embodiment practices more generally—both confluent, fragmented, and contextual—but did not necessarily reflect how interviewees later discussed their sense of constraint in academia or how they resisted constraint. I found that more economically privileged sex workers entered academia in order to make their body work and intellectual work more confluent. Even when more privileged interviewees looked upon academia favorably, they nevertheless expressed constraint in the language of Cartesian dualisms. Because all economically privileged interviewees were also white women, their perception of intellectual constraint was wrapped up in discourses of protection—they often stated that in order to be “taken seriously” as intellectuals, they had to disavow their bodily labor and accept “redemption” narratives in academia.

Alternatively, less economically privileged current and former sex workers in academia—both women of color and white women—spoke of the promises of academia in the language of Cartesian dualisms. Academia was often cited as interviewees’ ticket out of sex work, a means of garnering intellectual legitimacy after working in an industry that acquires little respect in mainstream culture. The actual experiences with constraint in academia for less economically privileged interviewees differed according to race—lower-class white women, just like their economically privileged white peers—spoke of their intellectual constraint in the

discourses of protection. White women, both economically privileged and disadvantaged, perceived non sex-working intellectual peers to want to “save” them from their sex work through redemption narratives. Alternatively, women of color talked about their intellectual constraint in the language of hypersexuality and perpetration. Women of color were more likely than white women to talk about constraint in concrete, material discourse, discourse that often connected perceptions of hypersexuality with the potential for sexual violence.

Finally, interviewees spoke of their ability to resist constraint in academia. After practicing reflexive embodiment by drawing upon their initial reasons for entering academia, their experiences there, and their perceptions of constraint, I looked at the resistance practices for twenty current and former sex workers in academia. I found that the practice of self-concealment—that is, remaining closeted about current or former sex work in intellectual spaces—is a conscious, embodied form of resistance as opposed to a subconscious internalization of gender norms. By remaining closeted and practicing fragmented embodiment, interviewees were able to form close bonds with other sexually marginalized academics as well as academics who shared similar criminalization statuses and create space within the confines of intellectual life. By mindfully practicing fragmented embodiment, interviewees responded to larger, cultural biopolitics—they understood, and were able to reflect on, larger regimes of gender and sexuality. In order to resist these regimes while still accessing the liberatory potential of education, some interviewees practiced fragmented embodiment.

Interviewees also practiced confluent embodiment by coming completely “out” as current or former sex workers in intellectual spaces. For these interviewees, the presence of body workers in academia “[forced] academics to deal with sex workers,” as Jenna argued. In this formation, resistance took the form of blatant challenges to Cartesian dualisms that devalue body

work in intellectual spaces. Not all interviewees practiced fragmented or confluent embodiment exclusively while resisting. Depending upon the desired outcome—to either subtly form community or to directly challenge Cartesian formations—interviewees selected different embodiment practices in different contexts.

By addressing Wacquant’s “Six S” formation of the embodied researcher as sentient, suffering, skilled, sedimented, situated, and structured (Wacquant 2015: 4). I have also accomplished two tasks: 1) I’ve drawn into question traditional academic frameworks that tend to leave out the body and processes of embodiment and 2) I have addressed my own ephemeral experiences in the world as an embodied subject. These two tasks work for a concept of both embodiment and research as a fluid and undeniably fleshy experience.

Larger Social And Sociological Relevance

In *Between The World And Me*, Ta-Nehisi Coates (2015) addresses “the body”—or what Foucault might call “the social body”—as a person of color in contemporary society. He contrasts his decidedly corporeal experiences on the hard streets of inner city Baltimore with his perceptions of education as a youth:

What did it mean to, as our elders told us, ‘grow up and be somebody’? And what precisely did this have to do with an education rendered as rote discipline? [...] Schools did not reveal truths, they concealed them [...] My understanding of the universe was physical and its moral arc bent toward chaos then concluded in a box.

Coates’s social critique is a powerful reminder that: 1) groups of people engage their bodies in different ways and 2) the larger, cultural validation or discretization of these localized, bodily

practices is interwoven into the fabric of white supremacist, capitalist patriarchy. That there is a current war on particular bodies—bodies marked as black, female, and trans*— is not insignificant; it reveals the strength of biopolitics to discipline, punish, and even erase entire groups of people whose bodily practices are deemed inferior. And one way our culture deems entire groups of people—and their bodies—to be inferior is by drawing into question their capacity for intellectual, rational thought. Whether policy makers mandate that pregnant women listen to their fetus's heartbeat before obtaining an abortion—as if women make choices about their bodies without fully comprehending the implications— or black children are culturally defined as necessarily suspicious—their bodies erased first, questions asked later—the connection between biopolitical force and intellectualism is clear: when bodies and intellect are deemed inferior, state sanctioned and culturally justified violence against those particular bodies becomes rationalized. Rationalized violence is not only evident in *how* society deems particular bodies incapable of intellectual thought, but in intellectual thought *itself*. When marginalized, discredited people feel largely left out of the curriculum and experience of education, we, as sociologists, must assume that education has failed us all. My research offers one piece of, what is sure to be a much larger solution to an enormous problem—how can we make education more egalitarian? My research shows that in order to work against biopolitical violence executed on particular bodies, the organizing force of Cartesian dualisms in schools must continue to be strenuously interrogated. My research also speaks to considerations about biopolitics and the self-perception of embodied practices in intellectual spaces for sexually marginalized people like sex workers. By looking at how sex workers perceive the promises of higher education, their sense of constraint there, and their strategies of resistance, I add to a larger body of literature that connects embodied practices and biopolitics with education.

Finally, by challenging traditional academic writing structures as a former sex worker in academia, I work against mainstream feminism that is often oriented towards a negative, “prerepresentational” philosophy (Bray and Colebrook 1998: 35-36). That is, much mainstream feminists critiques of culture are drawn from the imperative to negate and feminize the “social body,” whereas other movements in feminism, including the philosophies of feminist sex workers, seek to embrace the decidedly feminized experiences traditionally discredited in society, experiences like selling sex, giving birth, and indulging the madness of drugs and postpartum depression. In fact, while writing my dissertation, I struggled with the enormity of the physical world and couldn’t have negated those experiences in my research if I’d tried. That my moral arch is bent toward chaos and that I cannot negate those experiences are two ways I hope to be in service to the revelation of truth in higher education and also within academic writing.

Future Research

In Melissa Gira Grant’s (2014) exposé on movements to end sex-trafficking globally, she argues that something more sinister than philanthropic good-doing is afoot. By looking at both feminist discourses surrounding sex-trafficking and as well as various content analyses of media depiction of sex workers and victims of sex-trafficking, Gira Grant shows that the alleged “pornification” of culture begin “within the realm of the representational,” meaning our culture fetishizes female victimization as opposed to looking at the reality of the sex industry (22). Though it is important to rearticulate this representative realm, which was the goal of my dissertation, it is also important for research on the sex industry to continue looking deeper into

the relationship between changes in the labor market, including the privatization of education, and sex work in order to move beyond representation. For example, one interviewee, Fawn stated that “the adjunctification of higher education,” including low wages for adjunct instructors, has the potential to “literally perpetuate” her involvement in the sex industry. Likewise, another interviewee, Jamie, stated that “Austerity forces people into poverty and then criminalizes their potential paths out of it.”

Fawn and Jamie both expressed a larger concern for the relationship between the political economy, neoliberal changes to higher education, and their involvement in the sex industry. I hope to continue exploring these broader and political economy-oriented concerns in the future. Due to time and monetary restrictions throughout the inception, execution, and completion of my study, I was also unable to interrogate, from a more macro-level, the institution of education or perceptions of sensuality and intellectualism from the perspective of people who haven’t labored in the sex industry. In order to explore Cartesian dualisms of mind/body in the future, research should take into account how more mainstream academics both 1) understand the role of the body in education more generally and 2) how they feel about sex workers in academia as their peers and colleagues.

Moreover, my small data sample and relatively homogenous collection of interviewees (predominantly white) make my findings difficult to generalize to the larger population. With a larger pool of interviewees, which I hope to organize in the future, I will be able to include more questions and information about people who work illegally versus those who labor in the licit sex industry, as well as people who either define themselves as—or are defined by federal law as—victims of sex-trafficking. This will expand my analysis of Cartesian dualisms to the intersection of bodies, including coerced bodies, and the kinds of labor—licit, illicit, or forced—

in which individuals engage.

This study would also be greatly enhanced by an historical analysis of the long, intimate relationship between sex workers and intellectuals. Classical Greek texts suggest that many sex workers of the time like Aspasia, the sex worker thought to have influenced most of Socrates's writings, were greatly integrated into intellectual life. Teasing apart the changes that may have eventually caused contemporary Cartesian splits, especially as it would have impacted sex workers throughout history, is a future project I hope to take on.

In the future, I hope to build on this research by continuing to ask questions about who has access to knowledge in contemporary society and why, as well as the process by which certain groups of people come to be deemed intellectually inferior. I hope to continue working in my capacity as a public sociologist interested in praxis and critical pedagogy, as well as in the sex workers' rights movement. As the gulf between the "haves" and "have nots" grows in contemporary society, so too does the gulf between "intellectuals" and "lay people." Even the foci of study and area of concentration in higher education has become so specialized, with such incomprehensible jargon, that they very people who perform the role of "research subject" cannot understand what is being said about them in the data analysis. In my overlapping lives as academic and sex worker rights advocate and former sex worker, I hope to continue bridging the gulf between the elitist aspects of academia and the "real world" experiences that sexually marginalized people like sex workers speak to. I hope to build on emancipatory education as a researcher, instructor, and student in order to help facilitate what Paulo Freire called "the greatest humanistic and historical task of the oppressed:" to liberate ourselves.

APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT



TITLE OF STUDY: SEX WORK, SEX WORKERS, AND ACADEMIA: THE SOCIAL PRODUCTION OF (A)SEXUAL PLACES

INVESTIGATOR(S): Dr. Barbara G. Brents and Jenny Heineman

For questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Jenny Heineman at **402-578-6753**.

For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted, contact **the UNLV Office of Research Integrity – Human Subjects at 702-895-2794, toll free at 877-895-2794 or via email at IRB@unlv.edu**.

Purpose of the Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. You are invited to help us conduct a study of current and former sex workers who currently identify as academics. The information I will give you can help you make a good choice about joining or not joining the study. We hope that the information we collect will help understand the experiences of people in academia who have had experience in the sex industry.

You are invited to be part of this study because you said you have, at one point and time, worked as a sex worker and are currently a professor, assistant professor, adjunct professor, graduate student, or undergraduate student. This study is being conducted by researchers from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Dr. Barb Brents and Jenny Heineman.

Participants

You are being asked to participate in the study because you fit the following criteria: Over the age of 18, a current or former sex worker, and currently a professor, an assistant professor, an adjunct professor, a graduate student, or an undergraduate student at a university.

Procedures

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following: You will participate in a one-on-one interview in a public place--a coffee shop or restaurant of your choice. Interviews may also be conducted over the phone. The interview will last approximately one and a half to two hours, though you are free to conclude the interview at anytime for any

reason. We will ask questions about your experiences in academia and your experiences in the sex industry. If you consent, we may use some of your interview data in our research. **Your name will not be used at any time during this study and you do not need to tell us your real name or show us any identification at any time.** Because of the stigmatizing nature of this study, the researchers will ask you to pick an alias (a fake name) that we will use to refer to you. If you agree to an interview, we ask that you not use any identifying information about your academic institution. For example, we ask that you say “I attend a university in a large city” instead of “I attend the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.” To ensure confidentiality, please refer to other people by first names only and refer to places based on setting (again, like “high school in a large city” rather than the name of that business or facility). Moreover, we will ask if we can record your interview. You have the option of not being recorded. If you agree to being recorded, we will destroy the recording after transcribing the interview. Identifying information will not be linked to the transcriptions. Furthermore, all other information pertaining to the study will also be destroyed after the study’s completion. We will store all recordings and transcriptions in a locked file on Ms. Heineman’s personal computer, which is also password protected. You have the option of signing an informed consent. You may still participate in the research if you prefer not to sign an informed consent.

Since we are interested in interviewing people like yourself who have experience in the sex industry and academia, please feel free to refer any other individuals who have similar experiences to this study. We ask that you avoid forwarding recruitment information to email addresses associated with university or work emails.

Benefits of Participation

There will not be direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. However, we hope to learn more about how to better deal with the challenges that people like you face. We hope that greater knowledge about the experiences of sex workers in academia will add to the growing body of literature on space and place, marginalized sexualities in academia, and gender and sexuality studies. In addition, many people feel good about getting the chance to tell their story.

Risks of Participation

There are risks involved in all research studies. This study may include only minimal risks. The questions we will ask during the interview may be sensitive in nature and may cause you stress or discomfort. You may end the interview anytime for any reason. Because of the stigmatizing nature of the subject, social harm may occur from being associated with this study, though we will ensure your confidentiality to the extent allowed by law. There is always the potential for a privacy breach, though we don't anticipate that happening. To reduce these risks, we ask that you not use any identifying information for the duration of the interview.

Cost /Compensation

There will not be financial cost to you to participate in this study. The interview will take approximately one and a half-two hours of your time. You will not be compensated for your time.

Confidentiality

Privacy is provided as best possible by engaging in informal interviews, which may be discontinued at any time. Furthermore, collecting only demographic descriptors helps protect

privacy. Any identifying information you provide during the interview, i.e., former workplaces or names of schools attended, will be altered in final documents for publication. To ensure confidentiality, please refer to people by first names only and refer to places based on setting (like "high school in a large city") rather than the name of that business or facility. We will also ask you to pick an alias (fake name) so that no link can be made between you and your interview.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with UNLV. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

Participant Consent:

I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I have been able to ask questions about the research study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form has been given to me. I can choose to sign below or forgo signing an informed consent.

Signature, alias, or verbal consent of participant

Date

Audio/Video Taping:

I agree to be audio or video taped for the purpose of this research study.

Signature, alias, or verbal consent of participant

Date

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

***NOTE: Privacy is provided as best possible by engaging in informal interviews, which INTERVIEWEES MAY discontinue at any time. DURING THIS INTERVIEW, PLEASE REMEMBER THAT THE RESEARCHERS WILL ONLY COLLECT demographic descriptors. Any identifying information provided during the interview, i.e., former workplaces or names of schools attended, will be altered in final documents for publication. INTERVIEWEES MUST ONLY refer to THEMSELVES USING AN ALIAS AND TO OTHER people by first names ONLY. FURTHERMORE, INTERVIEWEES MUST ONLY REFER to places based on setting (like "high school in Las Vegas") rather than the name of that business or facility.**

This interview will utilize critical life story interviewing method, which is a fully open-ended method of interviewing (Payne 2011). All interviews will begin with the same lead-off question: "Can you please tell me about your experiences in academia as a current or former sex worker?" Questions specifically about gender, identity, the body, and stigma will be asked only in the form of probes and only after the participant introduces the topic(s) his/herself. Some possible probing questions may include:

Can you elaborate on how and/or why you perceive your experiences to be directly connected to your work in the sex industry?

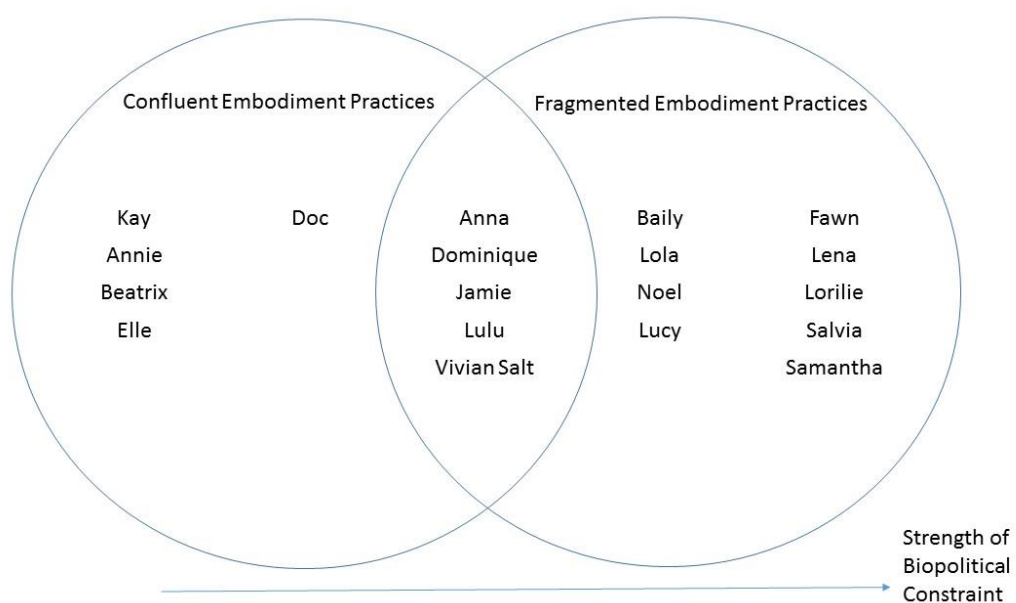
Can you be more specific about how you perceive your colleagues' response to the knowledge of your current or former work in the sex industry?

Have the responses of your colleagues (to your work in the sex industry) impacted the way you act in academic spaces?

If you have had negative experiences in academia, do you perceive these experiences to be connected to the stigma of working in the sex industry or something else?

APPENDIX C

Conscious, Embodied Practices And Biopolitical Constraint



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Education:

PhD University of Nevada-Las Vegas, Sociology, 2016

MA University of Nevada-Las Vegas, Sociology, 2011

BS University of Nebraska-Omaha, Sociology; Anthropology Emphasis; International Studies
Cognate, 2007

University of Amsterdam: Summer Institute on Sexuality, Culture, and Society, The
Netherlands, 2006

Palacky University: Exchange student, Czech Republic, 2005

Dissertation Title:

“Schoolgirls: Embodiment Practice Among Current And Former Sex Workers In Academia”

Committee Chair: Dr. Barbara Brents

My dissertation explores the meanings and experiences of current and former sex workers in academia. I find that social class is an important mediator in both how my interviewees experience their sex work, their academic selves, and their intellectual project. That is, sex workers with fewer resources see academia as a way up and out; they are, however more constrained by the material realities of poverty and the economic incentives of sex work. I ultimately argue for a new critical pedagogy informed, in part, by an emerging Sex Worker Standpoint.

Areas of Specialization:

Gender and Sexuality

Women's Studies/ Feminist Theory

Theory

Qualitative Research Methods

Honors, Awards and Acknowledgements:

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| 2014-2015 | UNLV Barrick Fellowship, \$15,000 Doctoral Research Fellowship |
| 2014 | UNLV Sociology Department, \$100 Public Sociologist Award, Las Vegas, NV |
| 2005-present | Alpha Kappa Delta Honors Society |
| 2013 | UNLV Disability Resource Center Teaching Award, awarded to instructors who improve the lives of students with disabilities |
| 2013 | Patricia Sastaunak Scholarship, UNLV financial scholarship |
| 2011 | Society for the Study of Social Problems, Thomas C. Hood Social Action Award, awarded to me as the president of the Sex Workers Outreach Project, Las Vegas, NV |
| 2011 | UNLV, Sociology Department, Outstanding Masters Graduate Student Paper of the Year |

- 2011 Awarded a competitive position at the Red Umbrella Project's
"Speak Up," workshop for labor activists, New York City, NY
- 2011 Awarded a competitive position at the Center for Health and
Gender Equity's annual training on global reproductive health
legislation, Washington, D.C.
- 2010 Nominated by SWOP-LV for a position at the World AIDS
Conference in 2012
- 2008 Pi Gamma Mu Honors Society

Research Experience:

- 2011-2015 Department of Justice Grant, The Center for Court Innovation, "Commercial
Sexual Exploitation of Children," with primary investigator Dr. Andrew Spivak
- 2013 Summer Urban Ethnography Clinic, "Southern Nevada Strong," with Brown
University ethnography scholar Dr. Gianpaolo Baiocchi
- 2010-2013 Presidential Grant, "Sexual Economy Project," with primary investigator Dr.
Barbara Brents
- 2010-2011 External Grant, USA Funds Scholarship
- 2008-10 UNLV Teaching and Research Assistant, Sociology Department
- 2008 Researcher, Adult Entertainment Expo, Las Vegas, NV
- 2005-08 UNO Teaching Assistant, Sociology Department

Peer-Reviewed Articles and Book Chapter Publications:

Dewey, Susan, SWOP New Orleans & Jenny Heineman. "Between Research and Activism—
Identifying Pathways to Inclusive Research." In *Ethical Research with Sex Workers:
Anthropological Approaches*. Springer Publishing. New York: NY. (2013)

Heineman, Jenny, Rachel MacFarlane and Barbara G. Brents. "Sex Industry and Sex Workers in Nevada." A Report Prepared for the Center for Democratic Culture, Leading Social Indicators in Nevada: Quality of Life in the Silver State. (2012)

Heineman, Jenny. "Sex Worker Outreach Project—Las Vegas" in *The society for the Study of Social Problems: Conflict, Social Action, and Change Division* Winter 2012 Newsletter. (2012)

Heineman, Jenny and Barbara Brents, Review of *Lydia's open door: Inside Mexico's most modern brothel*. In *Wagadu: A journal of transnational women's & gender studies*, Vol. 8, 1-4, (2011)

Accepted Manuscripts and Works in Progress:

Heineman, Jenny. "Sex Worker or Student? Legitimation, Master Status, and Resistance in Academia." In *Studies in Law, Politics, and Society*

Invited Presentations:

Invited Keynote Speaker: Sex Trafficking and Sex Work. Desiree Alliance Conference, a sex worker rights conference, 2013

Invited panelist on labor rights: Desiree Alliance Conference, a sex worker rights conference, 2013

Invited Presentation for the Session: "Research on Sex Worker Activism: Implications and Rewards," Pacific Sociological Association, Special Session, 2013

Invited Presentation for the session: Grassroots Women Activists, The Society for the Study of Social Problems, Special Session, 2012

Presentations:

"Institutional Ethnography and Sex Work," The Society for the Study of Social Problems, Institutional Ethnography and The Body, Chicago, IL, 2015

“The Sex Worker Outreach Project,” The Society for the Study of Social Problems, Special Session, 2011

“Performances of Gender and Intimacy,” American Sociological Association, Las Vegas, NV, 2011

“Space, Gender, and the Market for Sex: Gender Performativity Inside a Las Vegas Strip Club,” M.I.T.’s Graduate Consortium in Women’s Studies Conference, Boston, MA, 2011

“Virtual Intimacy,” Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction, Presented Virtually, 2009

“Sex Work and Feminism,” Panel Organizer, Midwest Sociological Society, St. Louis, MO, 2008

“Gender and Work,” Midwest Sociological Society, Chicago, IL, 2007

“Internet Sexualities,” Midwest Sociological Society, Chicago, IL, 2007

“Globalization and Sex Work,” Midwest Sociological Society, Chicago, IL, 2007

“Power Dynamics in Gendered Work Spaces,” Nebraska Undergraduate Sociological Symposium, Lincoln, NE, 2006

“Art and War: A Tocquevillian Analysis,” Hawaii International Conference on Social Sciences, Honolulu, HI, 2006

Media:

2013 The Discovery Channel, televised production on homelessness, assisted the crew with research and access, National

2012 National Geographic, televised production on needle exchange programs, assisted the crew with research and access, Las Vegas, NV

2011 Bitch Magazine, profiled on “The H-Word” as an activist sex worker:
<http://bitchmagazine.org/post/the-h-word-private-parts>, National

- 2011 Face to Face, local televised interview on the Commercial Exploitation of Children, Las Vegas, NV
- 2011 National Geographic, televised interview on prostitution, assisted the crew with research and access, International
- 2011 BBC's The World, radio interview on sexual commerce in Las Vegas, International
- 2010 Grotto Radio, radio interview for the International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers, Las Vegas, NV
- 2010 Sin City Speaks, radio interview for the International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers, Las Vegas, NV

Community Service:

- 2015- Chair: Conflict, Social Action, and Change Division, Society for the Study of Social Problems
- 2011- Committee Board Member, Society for the Study of Social Problems, Committee on Social Action
- 2012-2014 Board member, National Organization of Sex Workers Outreach Projects, US
- 2011-2014 Volunteer, Nevada Public Health Alliance for Syringe Access, Las Vegas, NV
- 2011-2014 Action Council Board Member, Center for Health and Gender Equity, Washington, D.C.
- 2010-2015 Co-Director, Sex Worker Outreach Project, Las Vegas, NV
- 2008-2015 Volunteer Coordinator, Desiree Alliance: a sex worker-led organization, International
- 2008- Member, Sociology for Women in Society, Las Vegas, NV
- 2011 Invited Guest Speaker, SlutWalk Las Vegas, Las Vegas, NV

- 2011 Red Umbrella Diaries—the Las Vegas edition, curator and performer, Las Vegas,
NV
- 2008 Volunteer, DUSK Project: a non-profit event for homeless youth,
Las Vegas, NV