

The Labour of Paying for Education: An Exploration of Student
Sex Work in Canada

by

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Abstract

This thesis contributes to a small body of research that examines student sex work in a Canadian context. By drawing on data gathered from semi-structured qualitative interviews with ten student sex workers, this thesis seeks to gain a nuanced understanding of students' experiences with sex work in Canada, and their use of university support services. Specifically, this study explores student sex workers' motivations for entering the sex industry, the benefits and challenges that they have encountered while working, whether they are accessing university support services and if and how they would benefit from the implementation of targeted support services in post-secondary institutions. The findings reveal that student sex workers in Canada have a variety of reasons for entering the sex industry, among which financial incentives, psychological benefits and flexibility appear to be paramount. Further, this research makes it evident that while student sex workers do have unique concerns that dissuade them from accessing university support services, many of their concerns reflect issues affecting all post-secondary students. In order to fill the gaps in existing service provision, this research seeks to provide suggestions as to how services could be implemented and adapted to better meet the needs of the student sex-working population.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In recent years, anecdotal reports of students, particularly young women, participating in different types of sex work to pay off debt and financially support themselves have been followed by a small number of academic studies (Roberts, Sanders, Myers & Smith, 2010; Motyl, 2013; Roberts, Bergstrom & La Rooy, 2007; Sinacore, Jaghori & Rezazadeh, 2014; Haegar & Deil-Amen, 2010; Roberts, Jones & Sanders, 2013; Sanders & Hardy, 2015). According to the World Health Organization (2019), sex work can be defined as the provision of sexual services for money or goods. The precise terms of the exchange are negotiated between the parties, but the premise is that there will be an exchange of sexual services for financial compensation (Cordero, 2015; Miller, 2011; Motyl, 2013).

Existing research on the topic of student sex work highlights that the forms of sex work that students have been reported engaging in are diverse, and include, but are not limited to, lap dancing, stripping, escorting, erotic massaging, webcamming and pornography (Haegar & Deil-Amen, 2010; Sinacore et al., 2014; Roberts et al., 2010; Koken, 2012; Sagar, Jones, Symons & Bowring, 2015). The phenomenon appears to be international, having been documented by studies as occurring in the United Kingdom (UK) (Roberts et al., 2007; Roberts et al., 2010; Roberts et al., 2013; Sanders & Hardy, 2015; Roberts, Golding, Towell, Reid & Woodford, 2000), France (Duvall Smith, 2006), Canada (Sinacore et al., 2014), the United States of America (USA) (Bernstein, 2007; Haegar & Deil-Amen, 2010; Motyl, 2013) and Australia (Lantz, 2005). In these countries, it has been estimated that approximately 2% of students fund their studies through sex work (Roberts et al., 2010). However, given the methodological difficulties that often present themselves in this form of research, it is difficult to obtain precise figures. For instance, the underground and stigmatized nature of sex work makes it challenging

to gather data on the prevalence and nature of student participation (Roberts et al., 2007). Additionally, Roberts et al. (2000) note that ‘student status’ is considered an attractive characteristic by clients of sex workers and as such, may be used as a marketing tool. Although existing studies reveal an awareness of the occurrence of student sex work in various parts of the world, only a minor body of research has explored students’ accounts of their engagement in, and experiences with sex work (see for instance Roberts et al., 2010; Roberts et al., 2007; Roberts et al., 2013). Moreover, there is a lack of research that has explored the experiences of student sex workers in Canada.

While students use a variety of different means to access clients, research shows that student sex work is being facilitated by the internet through a number of different websites and mobile applications where sex workers can create profiles and advertise their services (e.g. Tinder, FetLife, Craigslist, Snapchat, LeoList, Twitter) (Cordero, 2015; O’Doherty, 2015). Individuals looking to pay for sexual services or companionship can then contact sex workers through their profile (O’Doherty, 2015). The underground and anonymous nature of these websites allow individuals to circumvent the laws put into effect by Bill C-36, which prohibit the purchase of sexual services in Canada (Horlick, 2014). Further, the anonymity of these websites can help enable students to avoid some of the stigma associated with sex work (Koken, 2012). With the potential for stigma and discrimination to become debilitating in someone’s life, it does not come as a surprise that students want to keep their sex work a secret (Koken, 2012).

Student sex work has sparked interest and controversy in the media, with student sex workers being featured in movies and television series such as *The Girlfriend Experience* (Jacobs, Wagner & Soderbergh, 2009), *Fog of Sex: Stories from the Frontline of Student Sex Work* (Britten, Starkey & Morris, 2015) and *Secret Diary of a Call Girl* (MacRory, Foster &

Piper, 2007). To some extent, extensive media interest in this phenomenon of ‘student by day, sex worker by night’ is part of a broader cultural obsession with sex work. This obsession manifests in conflicting images of sex workers that “swing between the polarized images of the downtrodden, drug-addicted street ‘victim’, to the glamorous escort who tops up their professional earnings at night” (Sanders & Hardy, 2015, p.748). These polarized portrayals are reflective of the agent/victim binary which is ever-present within both historical and contemporary conceptions of sex work (Miller-Young, 2014; Sanders & Hardy, 2015; Vance, 1984). However, this binary leaves no room for alternative identities and fails to factor in the varied experiences of sex workers; one cannot assume that all sex workers experience their work in the same ways. While there is information that can be gathered from media portrayals of student sex work, and their reflection of the social, moral and legal underpinnings of sex work in Canada, this is not the focus of my research. Rather, recognizing that most of what is currently known about Canadian student sex work comes from anecdotal stories that have been filtered through the media, I am interested in exploring how Canadian student sex workers make sense of their own experiences. Drawing on data gathered from qualitative interviews with Canadian student sex workers, my thesis explores the lived experiences and perceptions of the participants.

The experiences of student sex workers are diverse, as are the characteristics of the students who engage in this form of work. However, while I acknowledge that sex work comes in a variety of forms, student sex work appears to be a gendered phenomenon. In particular, the available literature on this topic indicates that the vast majority of student sex workers identify as female, most of whom are seeking male-identified clients (Roberts et al., 2010; Motyl, 2013; Roberts et al., 2007; Sinacore et al., 2014; Haegar & Deil-Amen, 2010; Roberts et al., 2013; Sanders & Hardy, 2015). In light of this dynamic, my thesis focuses on the experiences of this

numerically dominant group. However, I recognize that other groups also make up a significant portion of the student sex worker population, necessitating more research in this area.

The purpose of this study is to contribute to a scarce body of research that examines student sex work in a Canadian context (Lavoie, Thibodeau, Gagné & Hébert, 2010; Motyl, 2013; Nayar, 2016; Sinacore et al., 2014). In particular, my research focuses on the following questions: why is sex work an attractive form of employment for women pursuing post-secondary education? What are the benefits and consequences (financial, psychosocial, etc.) that students have encountered through working in the sex industry? Are students accessing university support services while working in the sex industry (medical care, mental health support, information/resource offices, etc.)? Are student sex workers satisfied with the kinds of university support services available to them? Finally, would student sex workers in Canada benefit from the implementation of targeted support services in post-secondary institutions?

To achieve this aim, Chapter 2 outlines the existing literature on students' motivations for becoming sex workers, as well as their perceptions and experiences working in the sex industry (Haegar & Deil-Amen, 2010; Roberts et al., 2007; Roberts et al., 2010; Roberts et al., 2013; Sanders & Hardy, 2015). In this chapter, I analyze the changing legal, socio-cultural and economic landscape, including the neo-liberal marketization of post-secondary education, 'upscaling' of the sex industry, 'pornographication' of society, and legal regulation of sex work (Bill C-36) which have arguably had major impacts on the climate in which sex workers operate (Bernstein, 2007; Sanders, 2008; Sanders & Hardy, 2015). In addition, I also highlight how recent scholarship suggests that there is a lack of institutional awareness of student sex work, resulting in higher education staff members being ill-prepared to meet the needs of this population.

Chapter 3 describes the theoretical frameworks employed in this study. Specifically, I use Goffman's (1963) theory of stigma to analyze students' experiences with sex work and support services. Further, Nippert-Eng's (1996) boundary theory explains the ways in which students compartmentalize their work and personal lives as a means of stigma management. Borrowing from Beccaria's (1963) and Bentham's (1879) rational choice theory, I argue that students make rational choices to enter the sex industry using a cost-benefit analysis. Finally, Harding's (2004) feminist standpoint theory is used to stress that sex workers are the experts of their own lives and highlight the importance of centering this research on their experiential knowledge. To further nuance this theory, I used a postmodern feminist epistemology, as this paradigm recognizes the notion that multiple truths exist (Gonzalez, Biever & Gardner, 1994). The postmodern researcher accepts the idea that the experiences of student sex workers are diverse, and by acknowledging multiple views and perceptions, the researcher is in a better position to gain a thorough understanding of their experiential realities (Gonzalez et al., 1994).

In Chapter 4, I will detail the methodology used to gather and examine the data for this study. I will review recruitment strategies as well as interview questions and procedures. Following this, I detail the methods used to analyze the data gathered from the participants who were interviewed for this study (see Appendix A for detailed demographic information). Specifically, I discuss the process of transcribing, analyzing and coding based on reoccurring themes. Further, this chapter also includes a brief discussion of some of the ethical considerations that were carefully assessed before and during the research process to ensure the well-being and anonymity of participants.

The key findings that emerged from this data will be discussed in Chapter 5, Chapter 6, Chapter 7 and Chapter 8. For clarity, the findings have been grouped into broad themes. Due to

the limited scope of this study, all of the themes and sub-themes that may contribute to the answering of the research questions could not be included. However, the themes presented represent a good overview of the key issues expressed by the ten participants. To theoretically frame the corresponding analyses of these findings, I will be drawing on the theoretical frameworks discussed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 5 delves into the question: Why is sex work an attractive form of employment for students? By exploring this question with participants, I was able to gain an in-depth understanding of the range of reasons for which students are entering the sex industry during their post-secondary education. As will be discussed, the profitability of sex work, its psychological benefits, and the schedule flexibility that it offers appear to be among the primary factors that draw students into the sex industry, according to the sex workers interviewed for this study.

Chapter 6 examines the question: What risks and challenges have students encountered while engaging in sex work? This chapter will demonstrate that students are acutely aware of the risks and challenges associated with working in the sex industry. Specifically, students mentioned the risk of physical danger, as well as the potential to be exposed, and the impact that this could have on their interpersonal relationships. They also discussed having to work outside of sex work in order to secure career prospects and make enough money to thrive as a challenging aspect of working in the sex industry.

Chapter 7 explores students' experiences with accessing university support services. I seek to provide a succinct overview of the primary reasons for which students reported not accessing university support services. These reasons include a lack of awareness of existing services, anonymity concerns, deterrence resulting from the shortfalls of existing services, not

needing support services and students use of alternative, non-traditional supports, such as friends, co-workers and the digital sphere.

Finally, Chapter 8 explores the question of why support services in post-secondary institutions are important for student sex workers, and what services could benefit this population? Through this chapter, I seek to highlight that while many student sex workers are not accessing university support services, they do perceive them as important resources to have available. Further, also included in this chapter are student sex workers' suggestions and recommendations for support services that could be implemented to improve the health and well-being of the student sex-working population.

In Chapter 9, I provide concluding thoughts. I note that this study represents one snapshot of the lived realities of student sex workers as articulated by ten Canadian student sex workers. Here, I suggest that the results of this study can be used as a point of reference for future research endeavors – including research on students' use of the digital sphere as a means to access information on the sex industry and connect with other workers, students' transition, or lack thereof, out of sex work, and how services could be improved to increase the safety and well-being of student sex workers in Canada.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Background of Study

Student Sex Workers

Currently, there is a lack of information on post-secondary student sex work in a Canadian context (Sinacore et al., 2014; Lavoie et al., 2010). This dearth has been noted within the two existing studies that explore student sex work in Canada. Specifically, a study by Lavoie et al. (2010) that reported on the buying and selling of sexual services among secondary students in the province of Quebec found that within a sample of 815 high school students, 4% bought and 3% sold sex, with a higher number of females selling sex and more males buying sex. Given these percentages in high school and the sexual culture of university campuses, Lavoie et al. (2010) suggest that one can anticipate that there will be the same, if not higher percentages of university students selling and buying sex, requiring more studies to be performed on this subject. In accordance, a study by Sinacore et al. (2014) interviewed four Canadian female university students who were sex workers. To be eligible for the study, participants had to have engaged in sex work while enrolled as university students (Sinacore et al., 2014). Additionally, they were to have already exited sex work to ensure that the full range of their experiences, including their decisions to enter and leave the sex industry, could be explored (Sinacore et al., 2014). Although the authors of this study were able to identify several factors affecting students' choices to enter the sex industry, as well as some of the challenges students encountered as a result of their work, they concluded that there have been an insufficient number of studies in a Canadian context to draw definitive conclusions with regards to the experiences of student sex workers in Canada (Sinacore et al., 2014). As such, student sex work is an understudied phenomenon that warrants attention in a Canadian context.

Neo-Liberal Marketization

The economics, structures and purpose of universities have undergone a vast transformation in the past two decades, particularly in the Western world (Roberts et al., 2007; Roberts et al., 2010; Brents & Sanders, 2010; Sanders & Hardy, 2015). This transformation is evident through how a large number of governments (for instance Canada, Australia, France and the UK) now draw on neo-liberal ideologies as the driving force behind the reshaping of the higher education sector (Roberts et al., 2013; Brents & Sanders, 2010; Sanders & Hardy, 2015). This new ideological system has been adopted as a way of shifting all or part of the cost of higher education onto individuals and families, and away from the public (Sanders & Hardy, 2015; Roberts et al., 2013). In Canada, the neo-liberal market approach for the provision of higher education has meant that the reduction of state support for students either directly, or through the withdrawal of subsidies in universities, requires that the short-fall needs to be made up in some way by the individual/family (Lynch, 2006; Sinacore et al., 2014). One of the most concerning fallouts of these rapid and radical changes is in who will go to university. Ample research already exists on the lack of access for working-class individuals to higher education (Lynch, 2006). Working-class students consider higher education to be a costly venture (Lynch, 2006). Therefore, many will have the financial costs as well as ways to divert debt at the forefront of their minds.

In correlation with changes to the higher education sector, reports that chart the increasing student presence in the provision of sexual services have appeared somewhat regularly (Roberts et al., 2013). While there may have always been some student presence in the sex industry prior to the restructuring of higher education, one can hypothesize that the growing impoverishment of the student population has gone hand in hand with a growth in the number of

student sex workers (Sanders & Hardy, 2015). Additionally, the rising number of students participating in sex work can be credited to a substantial growth in the provision of commercial sexual services across North America. This growth has taken place as part of a shift from “a relational to a recreational model of sexual behaviour, a reconfiguration of erotic life in which the pursuit of sexual intimacy is not hindered but facilitated by its location in the marketplace” (Bernstein, 2001, p.397).

Motivations

Based on the available literature, the major argument for explaining student participation in sex work implicates economic necessity, as is the case for non-student sex workers (Roberts et al., 2010; Sinacore et al., 2014; Haegar & Deil-Amen, 2010). According to the 2011 Canadian University Survey Consortium study (which involved 25 universities and over 8,500 students), 56% of undergraduate students in Canada work, and the average number of hours worked per week is 18 (Prairie Research Associates, 2011). However, nearly 18% of students surveyed for this study reported working more than 30 hours weekly (Prairie Research Associates, 2011). Changes in grant structures, stringent eligibility requirements for governmental income support programs and rising tuition fees among post-secondary institutions have increased the average debt among students (Roberts et al., 2007; Roberts et al., 2010). Pitting economic pressure and the need for education against each other sets a tough cycle in motion that results in some students looking for ways to earn money quickly, such as by joining the sex industry (Betzer, Kohler & Schlemm, 2015). The short-term gain of such work brings in more money (often cash-in-hand work), allows for more schedule flexibility, independence, and enables students to have more time to devote to their studies compared with the poorly paid jobs that are typically

available to students (Roberts et al., 2010; Betzer et al., 2015, Sinacore et al., 2014; Haegar & Deil-Amen, 2010).

Flexible Work Hours

Schedule and time constraints make it challenging for students to acquire employment and meet their academic requirements during their post-secondary education (Sinacore et al., 2014; Haeger & Deil-Amen, 2010). As such, flexible hours have been noted as an important motivation for students joining the sex industry in numerous studies (Sanders & Hardy, 2015; Sinacore et al., 2014; Haeger & Deil-Amen, 2010). For example, this is highlighted through Sanders and Hardy's (2015) qualitative accounts of students working in the stripping sector of the sex industry in the UK. In this study, Sanders and Hardy (2015) note that a key reason cited by the student sex workers that were interviewed was that the flexibility of sex work enabled them to acquire a work-life balance that allowed them to fulfil the requirements of their post-secondary degrees and maintain a consistent source of income. This is exemplified by Eerikka, a Finnish dancer interviewed for this study who was studying for a master's degree at the time she began stripping (Sanders & Hardy, 2015). She said that she liked dancing because "I can't think of any other job that I could do that would allow me to study, because there is none." (Sanders & Hardy, 2015, p.755). In accordance with Sanders and Hardy's (2015) findings, the student sex workers that Sinacore et al. (2014) spoke to for their study also commented on the flexibility that the sex industry offers its employees. In this study, the students interviewed indicated that sex work enabled them to have more time to study and that the flexible hours allowed them to adjust their schedules to make space for exams and other academic activities (Sinacore et al., 2014). For example, one sex worker interviewed, Rose, stated "I do feel it's very specific to my time in school, actually, and maybe right out of school. It's really helpful to just be able to make your

own schedule in your work. Then you can just work around it.” (Sinacore et al., 2014, p.50).

These studies illustrate that for some students, the flexibility offered by the sex industry helps students achieve a well-balanced work-life schedule.

Profit Margins

As with its flexible hours, students are also drawn to the sex industry because of its high profit margins (Sinacore et al., 2014; Sanders & Hardy 2015; Roberts et al., 2007; Roberts et al., 2013; Haeger & Deil-Amen, 2010). In contrast with the jobs that are typically available to students, sex work enables students to maximize their incomes within a shorter period of time. A study by Roberts et al. (2007) provides evidence of students’ participation in sex work and its association with high profit margins. This study notes that the economic necessities of student life now mean that a high proportion of all students, both full- and part-time, must work to support their studies and living expenses, as well as to manage their debt (Roberts et al., 2007). Unfortunately, working takes up substantial periods of time that would otherwise be available for study, and minimum wage barely provides students with enough income to meet their needs (Roberts et al., 2007). As such, the profit margins of sex work make it a very appealing form of employment, especially for students. Roberts et al.’s (2007) conclusions are supported by Betzer et al.’s (2015) study which provided evidence that students who were working in the sex industry received significantly less financial support in comparison with other students. In particular, they received less financial support in total and also had lower rates of scholarships (Betzer et al., 2015). However, the profit margins of sex work enabled these students to make enough money to pay for their schooling and living expenses without their work having a negative impact on their attendance at school or their grades (Betzer et al., 2015).

Psychosocial Benefits

Although many studies (see for instance Sanders & Hardy 2015; Roberts et al., 2007; Roberts et al., 2013; Haeger & Deil-Amen, 2010) make note of the financial motivations that draw students into the sex industry, there is a lack of studies which look at other motivations, such as psychosocial benefits, which draw students into the sex industry. For example, to my knowledge, only one academic study to date analyzes the psychosocial benefits associated with students' participation in the sex industry. In this study, when asked about the psychosocial factors that influenced their decisions to enter, and stay in the sex trade, participants spoke of the development of friendships and support networks, feelings of empowerment and a sense of independence (Sinacore et al., 2014). The psychosocial benefits of sex work are worth further exploration, especially given that students are at a high risk of facing stigma, discrimination and isolation as a result of their participation in the sex industry (Sinacore et al., 2014; Roberts et al., 2013).

International Students

Finally, when performing research on students' motivations for entering the sex industry, international students' involvement in the sex industry was a recurring subject. While on exchange, international students are faced with various institutional barriers which can prevent them from being able to acquire employment and make enough money to pay tuition fees and the costs of living (Lantz, 2003, 2005; Cusick, Roberts & Paton, 2009). In particular, while the cost of the degree is a major hurdle for international students, other reasons they may choose to work in the sex industry is because their visas prevent them from working more than twenty hours a week during any semester, language barriers may prevent them from being able to acquire employment, and it is a lucrative industry which does not require pre-requisite work experience

(Kostas, 2006; Lantz, 2005; Cusick et al., 2009). As such, many international students may use the informal and illegal economy to support themselves while obtaining an education (Lantz, 2005).

Occupying a Student Status

Although there are many factors, as described above, that draw students into the sex industry, sex work-related stigma and the emotional and sexual demands of the labour itself present students with unique difficulties (Koken, 2012; Haegar & Deil-Amen, 2010; Lantz, 2005; Sagar, Jones, Symons, Bowring & Roberts). For example, numerous studies have revealed that many students fear disclosure of their sex work to classmates, professors, friends and family (Haegar & Deil-Amen, 2010; Lantz, 2005; Robin, 2018). Given the stigmatized nature of sex work, students who are “outed” or choose to disclose their sex worker status may be at risk of being stereotyped by their peers (Lantz, 2005). This presents students with an unfavourable position wherein they may be inhibited from developing a social support network at school (Haegar & Deil-Amen, 2010). Furthermore, research has illustrated that students who face significant stereotyping in a post-secondary environment are more likely to drop out than their peers (Osborne & Walker, 2006). Additionally, the combined burden of keeping their work lives a secret, and fear of being “outed” can cause a high amount of stress (Haegar & Deil-Amen, 2010; Sagar, Jones, Symons, Bowring & Roberts, 2015; Robin, 2018). Indeed, participants in Sinacore et al.’s (2014) study revealed that freedom from secrets, and being able to talk freely about their place of employment was a major benefit to leaving sex work.

Aside from stigmatization and discrimination, the available research reports that student sex workers are at an increased risk of victimization (Haeger & Deil-Amen, 2010). A sex worker, Rose, in Sinacore et al.’s (2014) study in particular spoke about the risks associated with

sex work, pointing out that by virtue of being “sexualized” or “hyper-sexualized”, the work makes women susceptible to acts of violence. While it is not inherently exploitative, sex work is frequently premised on financial and power inequalities which may be further entrenched by the young age and relative lack of power of students (Sinacore et al., 2014). As such, it is to be expected that such a phenomenon, while creating opportunities for degrees of agency, might also engender degrees of vulnerability (Sinacore et al., 2014).

Additionally, the conclusions that Sinacore et al. (2014) drew through their study demonstrated that working in the sex trade may compromise students’ career development by inhibiting their ability to build their resumes in ways consistent with their future aspirations. One of the sex workers interviewed for this study in particular, Lily, expressed that she did not want to be “35 and doing this job” (Sinacore et al., 2014, p.2). She was aware of the gaps in her resume and her lack of experience in work outside the sex industry (Sinacore et al., 2014). The idea of a future career outside the sex industry propelled her to look for jobs in order to build her resume (Sinacore et al., 2014).

Contradicting Perceptions of Sex Workers

While the presence of female university students working in the sex trade is a growing phenomenon, the idea of students working in the sex industry remains contradictory with common perceptions of university life (Sinacore & Lech, 2011). In particular, students are commonly perceived as living a life of indulgence and revelry with few cares and responsibilities (The Student Lifestyle, 2008). Students are often recognized as a group of individuals who drink, party, and live a life free of the responsibilities that accompany adulthood, such as working, and paying bills (The Student Lifestyle, 2008). As such, the reality that many students are plagued with debt as a result of rising tuition costs and changing grant structures and thus struggle to

make enough money to support themselves runs contrary to popular perceptions of student life (Roberts et al., 2007).

Furthermore, conceptions of student sex workers also conflict with the stereotypes that exist regarding sex workers that are not students (Bernstein, 2001). Stereotypes of women who work in the sex industry are common. Specifically, the typical popular image of a sex worker is of a runaway, drug addict, delinquent, or of a victim forced into the sex industry by coercion or desperation (Flowers, 1998). Thus, students, who are frequently conceptualized as educated, intelligent and future-oriented contradict stereotypical notions of sex workers (Sinacore et al., 2014; The Student Lifestyle, 2008). The differences in public perceptions of sex workers versus student sex workers are also reflected in the disparity between how student sex workers view themselves (as respectable women) and how they view other women who work in the sex industry (Haegar & Deil-Amen, 2010). In particular, research demonstrates that student sex workers often identify themselves through their education and corresponding career aspirations to differentiate themselves from “other” sex workers (Haeger & Deil-Amen, 2010; Koken, 2012; Roberts et al., 2010, Sinacore et al., 2014). Additionally, they highlight the temporality of their work in the sex industry (Sinacore et al., 2014). Student sex workers often understand their labour in the sex trade as a method to supplement their income while obtaining an education; a temporary and transitional form of employment (Sanders, 2005a).

Social and Cultural Acceptance of Sexual Consumption

There have been significant changes in the social and cultural acceptance of sexual consumption in Western societies (Roberts et al., 2013; McNair, 2002; Sanders & Hardy, 2015). In particular, the organization and marketing of the sex industry is such that ‘sex’ as a product is now sold alongside mainstream industries (Sanders & Hardy, 2015; McNair, 2002). The

presence of strip clubs alongside ‘ordinary’ leisure venues has become part of corporate entertainment and mass consumption (Roberts et al., 2013). Further, sexual imagery now permeates every aspect of culture (McNair, 2002). The mainstreaming of sexual commerce suggests that significant changes are taking place in terms of the acceptability of sex work as a legitimate and perhaps mainstream labour option for some groups, such as students (Sanders & Hardy, 2015). In addition, societal interest in stories which discuss the experiences and relationship between students and the sex industry have also revealed a growing social interest, and possible acceptance of student sex work. Indeed, the real-life story of Brooke Magnanti, who wrote the Belle de Jour memoirs based on her experiences of escorting ‘high-end’ clients whilst completing a PhD exemplifies this (Sanders & Hardy, 2015; Magnanti, 2018). Magnanti published her experiences as a call girl within the books *The Intimate Adventures of a London Call Girl* and *The Further Adventures of a London Call Girl* (Magnanti, 2018). These two books were UK top 10 best-sellers in the nonfiction hardback and nonfiction paperback lists (Magnanti, 2018). The popularity of these books highlights societal interest in the phenomenon of student sex work (Sanders & Hardy, 2015).

Mainstreaming the Sex Industry

Roberts et al. (2013) argue that the social and cultural acceptance of sex work stems in part from a process of ‘upscaling’ in which corporate styles of marketing and business presentation have been adopted by sex businesses. ‘Upscaling’ involves shifting away from working-class contexts towards middle-class contexts, whereby sex businesses are attempting to dispel ideas of “the seedy backstreet strip joint with neon signs, or the negative stereotypes of drugs and abuse that are attached to street prostitution” (Sanders & Hardy, 2015, p.760; McNair, 2002). By doing so, these businesses seek to sell sex work as a luxurious form of employment,

and a desirable leisure activity for the middle-class (Sanders & Hardy, 2015; McNair, 2002). Indeed, it is the middle classes, as Bernstein (2007) points out, that are increasingly the purchasers and providers of sexual services, as experiencing desire becomes a realistic lifestyle option, as well as a means through which income can be made.

Furthermore, the rise in the social and cultural acceptance of sexual consumption, and its effects on the sex industry can be seen through what Brian McNair (1996) terms the ‘pornographication’ of society. The ‘pornographication’ of society is “a process evident in both art and popular culture where the iconography of pornography has become commonplace, and thus so has a widespread fascination with sex” (Attwood, 2006, p.82). McNair’s (1996) conceptualization of this process is a useful one because of its attempt to contextualize recent developments in sexual representation and suggest how these connect to wider cultural shifts taking place in Western societies. Through his work, McNair (2002) points to the media in particular as a force that has drastically impacted the ‘pornographication’ of society. Specifically, partly clothed, or in poses denoting their sexual availability, pornographic images of women are everywhere (commercials, newspapers, the sides of buses, YouTube, etc.) (Attwood, 2002, 2006; McNair, 2002; Plummer, 2003). These sexualized images of women are being used to advertise anything and everything and have led to an increased ‘respectability’ in how people view sexual services as leisure and also as work (Attwood, 2006; McNair, 2002; Bernstein, 2007; Brents & Sanders, 2010).

Bill C-36

As the sale of sex has become more mainstream, there has also been social ambivalence with respect to policy implementation regarding how sex work in Canada should be regulated (Nayar, 2016). Sex work and its legal regulation has long been the subject of much debate in

Canada. Prostitution-related activities have been prohibited in Canadian laws for well over two-hundred years (Walkowitz, 1983). Frances Shaver, a sociologist whose research focuses on sex work in Canada, has found vagrancy provisions recorded as far back as 1759 (Walkowitz, 1983). However, the first Canadian provisions to mention ‘prostitution’ specifically, were passed in 1839, allowing police to apprehend a ‘common prostitute’ or ‘nightwalker’ when, if found in a public place at night, was unable to give a satisfactory account of herself (Valverde, 1985). Since these initial provisions, several new legislations governing sex work have been enacted, amended and repealed in order to respond to, and adapt to changes in society.

Although legislation governing sex work has always been a hotly debated topic in society, the subject received renewed interest with the 2013 landmark decision of *Canada v Bedford* (Horlick, 2014; Casavant & Valiquet, 2014). In *Bedford*, the Supreme Court of Canada held that certain provisions of the *Criminal Code of Canada* relating to the communication and engagement of prostitution violated sections of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (Horlick, 2014; *Canada v Bedford*, 2013). After the *Bedford* ruling, Parliament was allotted one year to revise the sex work legislation (Horlick, 2014; *Canada v Bedford*, 2013). In response, Parliament enacted Bill C-36 in November 2014, as the new legislation governing sex work in Canada (*Canada v Bedford*, 2013). For the first time in Canadian history, Bill C-36, also known as *The Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act*, criminalizes sex work by criminalizing the purchase of sexual services (Casavant & Valiquet, 2014; *Canada v Bedford*, 2013). The objectives of Bill C-36 focus on eradicating the demand for sex work, which legislators understand as risky, harmful and exploitative (Horlick, 2014). This bill thus advances an understanding of sex workers as in need of protection, but also deserving of punishment in some circumstances (Krüsi et al., 2014). Although Bill C-36 was considered a victory by some,

many sex workers, activists and scholars argue that Bill C-36 itself perpetuates similar harms and constitutional violations as previous legislation, and thus invalidates any progress the Bedford ruling made in securing equality and safe working conditions for sex workers (Campbell, 2015; Ka Hon Chu & Glass, 2013; Krüsi et al., 2014; Sanders, Hubbard & Scoular, 2016). However, on the contrary, other feminist organizations support Bill C-36, viewing it as beneficial in improving the lives of sex workers and eliminating the sex industry, which they understand to be harmful (Sleightholm, 2013; CAEFS, 2008; Boutilier & Maccharles, 2004). These tensions between liberal and conservative attitudes towards sex work provide context for the lack of institutional support for student sex workers.

Institutional Perspective

As background to this study, I performed a search of the internet to find out how post-secondary institutions manage students who are involved in the sex industry. Through this search, I uncovered several newspaper and blog articles which highlighted a small number of cases in which students have faced disciplinary action with respect to their involvement in the sex industry (see for instance Mullin, 2015; Sagar, Jones, Symons & Bowring, 2015; Fenton, 2015; Mirror, 2015). However, it is unclear whether such institutional responses are motivated by intolerance of deviance or concern over these students' "well-being" (Cusick et al., 2009). Furthermore, through this search, I was also able to conclude that with respect to student sex workers, academic discussion is often presented from a maternalistic perspective (Cusick et al., 2009; Sagar, Jones, Symons & Bowring, 2015; Mullin, 2015). In particular, most post-secondary institutions focus solely on hardship and the tuition fee system as explanations for students' involvement in sex work (Roberts et al., 2007; Mirror, 2015). In doing so, they neglect to acknowledge students' agency, and other possible reasons for which they may have joined the

sex industry. Alternative interpretations of sex work as potentially empowering and a positive experience for both parties are seldom mentioned.

To my knowledge, there are only two existing academic studies which address student sex work from an institutional perspective (see Sagar, Jones, Symons, Bowring & Roberts, 2015; Cusick et al., 2009). In Sagar, Jones, Symons, Bowring and Roberts's (2015) study, the authors made use of existing data that was collected for *The Student Sex Work Project* to investigate how student sex work is dealt with in the higher education environment in Wales. While there are clearly important differences between types of sex work (stripping, erotic massage, sugar dating, etc.), the authors were particularly interested in institutional responses towards all forms of sex work, given that these can all lead to institutional scrutiny and elicit concerns about the university's reputation (Sagar, Jones, Symons, Bowring & Roberts, 2015). Through an analysis of the data collected for *The Student Sex Work Project*, the authors were able to conclude that although the post-secondary institutions in Wales did not explicitly ostracize student sex workers, these institutions were concerned that student involvement in the sex industry could bring the reputation of the university into disrepute (Sagar, Jones, Symons, Bowring & Roberts, 2015). Furthermore, the universities had no specific formal processes in place that staff could carry out if a student were to disclose working in the sex industry (Sagar, Jones, Symons, Bowring & Roberts, 2015).

In addition, in their study, Cusick et al. (2009) sent Freedom of Information requests to 326 post-secondary institutions in the UK, which asked whether the institution had any policies on staff or student involvement in commercial sex. Of the 326 institutions that were written to, 236 responded, providing a substantial response rate (Cusick et al., 2009). While the study showed that none of the institutions where data was gathered had policies related to student sex

work in place, approximately a fifth of those who responded suggested that matters relating to student sex work may be covered by other policies and codes of conduct (disciplinary regulation, misconduct codes, bringing the institution into disrepute, etc.) (Cusick et al., 2009). These findings were irrespective of the legality of the selling of sex in the UK, and the anti-bullying and harassment policies in place that support individual privacy (Cusick et al., 2009). As such, the authors concluded the following:

Although no institution had a policy on staff/student involvement in commercial sex, all of these responses implied that the institution concerned viewed such involvement with 'taken for granted' disapproval. It is also clear [...] that staff/student participation in commercial sex is widely perceived as some kind of institutional threat (Cusick et al., 2009, p.191).

Based on the results of these two studies, it is evident that there are currently no specific provisions or policies in place regarding student sex work at any of the universities where data was collected, a situation which Cusick et al. (2009) suggest is likely to be mirrored throughout the UK. Likewise, given the scarcity of research in this area, the authors would suggest that the lack of institutional accountability for student sex workers is likely to travel far beyond the UK, across Europe and further afield (Cusick et al., 2009; Sagar, Jones, Symons, Bowring & Roberts, 2015). A lack of institutional accountability has proven to be problematic, as it results in staff members being ill-prepared to support student sex workers. These two studies illustrate that a substantial number of higher education staff have experienced student disclosures of engagement in the sex industry (Sagar, Jones, Symons, Bowring & Roberts, 2015; Cusick et al., 2009). However, in light of the lack of guidance for staff in this area, it is not surprising to find that in these studies, few higher education staff members felt able to offer advice or support to students on issues around sex work, despite being able to identify a number of needs, which included

sexual health, safety and general student well-being support (Cusick et al., 2009; Sagar, Jones, Symons, Bowring & Roberts, 2015).

In addition, although not the main focus of their study, Sinacore et al. (2014) alluded to the implications of student sex work for university counsellors in their study on sex work in Canada. In particular, Sinacore et al. (2014) highlighted the importance of university faculty members (professors, counsellors, administrative staff, etc.) being cognizant of the fact that students are working in the sex industry, and ensuring that there are adequate services in place to support this population. Specifically, Sinacore et al. (2014) emphasized that faculty members need to understand the potential risks of sex work (violence, STIs, psychological impacts) as well as the potential benefits of sex work in order to develop strategies to increase students' safety and meet their health needs. Given the stigma attached to sex work, faculty members may be among the few people outside of the sex industry to whom the client has reported their involvement in the sex industry (Sinacore et al., 2014). As such, they need to have the resources to advocate for student sex workers and ensure that these students can access other services on campus without stigma.

Support Services

There is a lack of information regarding student sex workers' use of support services both on and off campus. To my knowledge, only one study to date has addressed this topic: *The Student Sex Work Project* (Sagar, Jones, Symons & Bowring, 2015). The *Student Sex Work Project* is a large-scale, three-year research project which was conducted on student sex work in the UK, in which 6773 respondents from the higher education student population participated (Sagar, Jones, Symons & Bowring, 2015). The research project was started to produce relevant empirical evidence on student sex work that would have the ability to inform the development of

policies and protocols in all higher education institutions in the UK and beyond (Sagar, Jones, Symons & Bowring, 2015). In this research project, respondents were asked to indicate from a range of student support services whether or not they ever made use of these services (Sagar, Jones, Symons & Bowring, 2015). The results of this section showed that respondents who worked in the sex industry had accessed counselling services in university more often in comparison with students who did not work in the sex industry (Sagar, Jones, Symons & Bowring, 2015). In addition, respondents were also asked whether they were in need of more support, and if so, what type of support (Sagar, Jones, Symons & Bowring, 2015). The need for support was expressed more by those engaged in direct sex work as compared to those engaged in indirect sex work (Sagar, Jones, Symons & Bowring, 2015). According to Sagar, Jones, Symons and Bowring (2015), 'direct' sex work refers to the sale of sexual services that involves contact with a client, such as street-based sex work. 'Indirect' sex work is classified as sexual services that do not necessarily involve direct intimate contact with a client per se, but may focus on emotional and psychological labour, including webcamming, phone sex or erotic dancing (Sagar, Jones, Symons & Bowring, 2015). However, distinctions between indirect and direct sex work, although once clear, have increasingly become blurred. Among those who expressed a need for more support, online services and information was the most requested type of service provision, and this was indicated by 21% of respondents (Sagar, Jones, Symons & Bowring, 2015). Health services were second most popular (mentioned by 17.7%) and outreach workers came third (13.3%) (Sagar, Jones, Symons & Bowring, 2015). As such, given the complexities of sex work, post-secondary institutions should ensure that appropriate support is available and that existing services are fully equipped to meet the needs of students who are engaged in the sex industry and wanting to access support.

Online Platforms

The variety of ways in which students engage in the sex economy has developed considerably over the past couple of years. This can be evidenced by looking at the growing number of online platforms which facilitate sex work. There are thousands of websites dedicated, in one way or another, to buying and selling intimate services (Sharp & Earle, 2012; Hughes, 2004). These websites and the internet as a whole have made it easier for indoor sex workers to work anonymously, to conduct one's business with minimal interference from the criminal justice system, and to reap greater profits by pitching oneself to more specialized clientele, and avoiding the costs associated with third-party management (Sanders, 2005b; Bernstein, 2007; Lane, 2000; Quinn & Forsyth, 2005).

The profits of working independently have been noted by sex workers as a key reason for choosing to advertise their services on the internet (Bernstein, 2007; Sanders, 2005b). This is emphasized in a study by Bernstein (2007), which explores how the emergence of new communication technologies has transformed the meaning and experience of sexual commerce for sex workers and their customers. In her study, Bernstein (2007) notes that several of her interviewees discussed the ways in which new technologies have revolutionized their practice. One interviewee in particular, Amanda, recounted how after her brief stint working in a Berkeley brothel in which she was consistently 'passed up' by the predominantly working-class clientele in favour of "younger, bustier, blonde women", she decided to give sex work another try when a friend suggested to her that she could advertise on the internet and work out of her own space (Bernstein, 2007, p.479).

In addition, by advertising through specialty websites, sex workers can cater their advertisements towards clients who bear an interest in their specific physical characteristics (e.g.

fat women, older women, Asian women, students), or in the precise sexual services for which they can offer expertise (e.g. sadomasochism, erotic massage, role play) (Bernstein, 2007). Furthermore, recent studies suggest that the ‘student status’ of the women working in the sex industry is seen as attractive and highly desirable because it reflects their youth, their sexualized identity and education level (Bernstein, 2007; Roberts et al., 2007). Therefore, this status enables students to command higher wages than older sex workers (Roberts et al., 2007; Moffat & Peters, 2004).

Moreover, as has been noted in a small number of academic studies, the internet has enabled sexual commerce to thrive not only by increasing clients’ access to information but also by facilitating community and camaraderie amongst individuals who might otherwise be perceived (and perceive themselves) as engaging in discreditable activity (Lane, 2000; Sharp & Earle, 2012). This is exemplified by the online forums “LetsTalkSugar”, a virtual space where sugar babies can post questions, concerns, and connect with other sugar babies, and “SAAFE: Support and Advice for Escorts”, a forum dedicated to escorts in the UK. Free from the unavoidable stigma and judgment entrenched within sex work, these forums allow sugar babies and UK escorts to communicate with peers with similar lived experiences to their own, hidden behind the relative anonymity of the internet (Dobson, 2014).

Sugar Dating

Another form of online platform which has become very popular among the student population in recent years is sugar daddy dating websites (Nayar, 2017; Motyl, 2013). According to Nayar (2017) and Motyl’s (2013) shared definition, a sugar daddy dating website is a website which allows individuals to create dating profiles that declare how much money they are seeking per meeting in exchange for their company. Individuals seeking sugar babies can then contact

them through their profile. A ‘sugar daddy’, or less frequently, ‘sugar mommy’, is typically an older, wealthy individual who is willing to exchange some form of financial compensation for intimacy, and the company of a younger, attractive companion (Nayar, 2017; Motyl, 2013). This companion is a ‘sugar baby’ (Nayar, 2017; Motyl, 2013). Sugar dating is currently being facilitated by the internet through over twenty sugar dating websites (Cordero, 2015). There are a variety of sites that people can choose from; some websites are free, and some websites require a subscription to access its services (Cordero, 2015). Perhaps the site with the highest profile, SeekingArrangement.com (2018), describes itself as, “the leading Sugar Daddy dating site where over 10 million members fuel mutually beneficial relationships on their terms”. On this site, sugar daddies have to pay a monthly fee to be on the website and sugar babies can access the website for free in search of a benefactor (Cordero, 2015). The website places emphasis on mutually beneficial relationships, which reportedly begin with both sides being honest about what they expect and can offer in a relationship (Motyl, 2012). As a result of the focus on relationships, dating, and a mutually beneficial arrangement within sugar dating, many sugar babies do not consider their work to be a form of sex work (Nayar, 2017). However, cultivating feelings of intimacy, connection, and mutual satisfaction are increasingly central features of sexual services, such as the ‘girlfriend experience’, which mimics or fosters the emotional intimacy of a loving relationship along with satisfying physical sexual needs (Bernstein, 2007; Sanders, 2008; Zelizer, 2011; Sharp & Earle, 2012; Hughes, 2004). Moreover, distinctions between sex work and sugar dating obscure similarities in the economic conditions under which women turn to both as individualized strategies for, among other things, survival, pleasure and social mobility.

The literature presented here amply demonstrates the social, legal and economic context in which student sex work and intimacy labour are occurring. It also demonstrates the limitations of existing studies and the absence of Canadian-focused research. As such, in hopes of filling present gaps in the literature, I am interested in exploring the lived realities of student sex workers in Canada and their use of university support services. In Chapter 3, I will discuss the empirical component of this study that enabled me to gain insight into the phenomenon of student sex work in Canada.

Chapter 3: Methodology

My research employed a single-method approach consisting of qualitative interviews. Through these interviews, I sought to gain a nuanced understanding of student sex workers' experiences with sex work in Canada, and their use of university support services. Interviews were chosen as a data collection method as opposed to more quantitative approaches, such as questionnaires, because the goal was to develop a better qualitative understanding of the varying experiences and perspectives of the interviewees, as well as the meaning they made of their experiences (Knox & Burkard, 2009). Additionally, interviews provide researchers with the opportunity to take note of the nuances of human verbal communication (Wiles, Rosenberg & Kearns, 2005). These nuances, although subtle, provide much insight into the emotional state and meaning of the answers the interviewees provide (e.g. stutters, sighs, pauses, laughter, etc.) (Wiles et al., 2005).

Recruitment of Interviewees

After approval was secured from the Carleton University Research Ethics Board, I sent my letter of invitation (see Appendix B), along with my recruitment poster (see Appendix C) to various academic departments within Carleton University (e.g. the Institute of Women's and Gender Studies, the School of Social Work, the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, the Department of Law and Legal Studies, etc.) for distribution within their mailing lists, and for advertisement on their bulletin boards. Additionally, I contacted organizations on campus, such as the Womxn's Center, the Carleton University Students' Association and the Gender and Sexuality Resource Center, to request their assistance in circulating my recruitment materials to their service-users. Finally, I advertised my recruitment poster (see Appendix C) on my personal Facebook page, as well as in various Facebook Carleton University Social Groups (e.g. Social

Work Class of 2017, Carleton University Bachelor of Social Work Students, etc.) and Sex Worker Rights Organization groups (e.g. POWER: Prostitutes of Ottawa, Gatineau, Work, Educate, Resist). The share settings of my social media posts were set in such a way that if anyone saw my post and wanted to share it with their networks, they could.

Individuals who were interested in participating, or who had questions or concerns regarding the study were asked to contact the researcher via e-mail for more information. The receipt of an e-mail from someone interested in participating was met with a response suggesting a suitable time for the interview, and asking whether the participant would prefer conducting the interview over Skype or in person. After each interview, interviewees were asked to pass on information from the study (letter of invitation and recruitment poster) to other possible participants.

In addition to recruitment efforts made through Carleton and social media, snowball sampling was also used. Snowball sampling occurs when someone recommends or refers potential participants who they think could provide rich information about their lived experiences and positively contribute to the study (Patton, 2015). Notably, one downfall of snowball sampling is that it can introduce biases into the data due to the social referral mechanism; individuals are more likely to nominate others who they know well, and who may have similar views to them (Bungay, Oliffe & Atchinson, 2016). However, the social referral process allows the researcher to reach populations that are difficult to sample when using other sampling methods (Goodman, 1961). Potential research participants often want to identify a common person that both the participant and researcher know in order “to check the researcher’s credibility and trustworthiness” (Liamputtong, 2008, p.9). Therefore, snowball sampling can prove to be an extremely useful sampling method when trying to access marginalized and/or

stigmatized populations. I had informed a fellow graduate student that I was trying to recruit student sex workers, and she asked someone she knew if they would be interested in partaking in my study. This individual voluntarily contacted me directly through my student e-mail account to discuss the nuances of the interview process, including confidentiality concerns before scheduling an interview. Additionally, one of my participants sent my recruitment materials to a fellow sex worker, and friend of hers, who also contacted me directly through my Carleton e-mail account to schedule an interview. As such, snowball sampling proved to be useful as a recruitment method for this study and enabled me to acquire a greater number of participants, and thus a more in-depth understanding of student sex work.

Sample

To be eligible for the study, participants had to have identified as a woman while they were engaging in sex work, be a minimum of 18 years old, speak fluent English, and have been simultaneously working in the sex industry while also enrolled at an accredited post-secondary institution in Canada. For this study, I intended on interviewing ten student sex workers, and was able to meet this goal through rigorous circulation of my recruitment materials. However, consistent with research, there were significant methodological challenges recruiting participants for this study, resulting in the recruitment process taking longer than anticipated (Roberts et al., 2007; Sinacore et al., 2014). The difficulty in collecting data from student sex workers may reflect their fear of losing anonymity and being ‘outed’, and the stigma associated with working in the sex industry (Goffman, 1963; Shaver, 2005). Additionally, the criminality of certain acts associated with sex work (e.g. advertising the sale of sexual services) and mistrust of the motivations of researchers may also contribute to reluctance amongst sex workers to participate in research studies (Casavant & Valiquet, 2014).

Two of the participants interviewed for this study were recruited through social media, two of the participants were recruited through snowball sampling, and six of the participants were recruited through the distribution of my recruitment materials by faculties and on-campus organizations. The sample size of the study was relatively small, however, the sample size was comparable to that of similar studies (see for instance Sinacore et al., 2014 and Lavoie et al., 2010). Small sample size, in addition to limitations of snowball sampling makes it difficult to generalize the results. However, the study served to highlight issues for future consideration both in research and in social policy development.

All of the research participants interviewed for this study identified as women while they were engaging in sex work. Participants' ages varied from age 19 to 33. All participants had worked in the sex industry while enrolled at an accredited post-secondary institution in Canada, however six participants no longer worked in the sex industry. Types of sex work engaged in by participants included, but were not limited to escorting, sugar dating, webcamming, exotic dancing, erotic massage, and selling used panties. Of the ten participants interviewed for this study, nine disclosed having varying levels of student debt or needing to repay their parents money that was borrowed to pay for the costs associated with university.

Data Collection

Interview Questions

My interview questions (see Appendix D) focused on four broad areas of interest. The first area of interest is why sex work is an attractive form of employment for women pursuing post-secondary education. Questions pertinent to this area explored students' reasons for entering the sex industry. The second area of interest to this study is how students participating in sex work understand the benefits and consequences (financial, psychosocial, etc.) that they have

encountered through working in the sex industry. This line of questioning considered the pros and cons of working in the sex industry while studying at a post-secondary institution. The third area of questions was used to determine if student sex workers were accessing university support services while working in the sex industry (medical care, mental health support, information/resource offices, etc.). By asking these questions, the researcher sought to gain a better understanding of whether or not existing services are adequately addressing the needs of student sex workers. Finally, the fourth topic of inquiry investigated what support services (if any) student sex workers would benefit from having access to within post-secondary institutions. This topic of inquiry allowed students to identify the gaps in existing services and suggest services that may increase student sex workers' well-being. Interviewees were encouraged throughout the interview to bring up themes that were not included in the research questions and to offer any insights or questions worth further examination. Time was also left at the end of the interview for participants to share anything of importance to them with regards to their sex work experiences.

Interview Procedure

Although all participants were given the opportunity to have their interview take place in-person or via Skype, more than half (6) of the interviews took place via Skype. Given the potentially contentious nature of the subject matter, this was likely because virtual interviews can afford participants more anonymity and enable participants to be more open with less fear of judgement (Hill, Thompson & Williams, 1997; Hill et al., 2005). In-person interviews took place in locations that were suitable for interviewees; they were conducted in private rooms at Carleton University. Interviews ranged from 46 to 107 minutes in length. At the beginning of each interview, participants were briefed on the consent form (see Appendix E) and purposes of the

study. At this stage, interviewees were given the opportunity to ask questions, express concerns and had to consent orally (see Appendix F) and by signing the consent form (see Appendix E) (for in person interviews) prior to beginning the interview.

The interviews were semi-structured, beginning with questions related to the basic demographic information of the participant, leading into overarching topics of inquiry (i.e. research questions) (see Appendix D: Q1, Q2, Q3 & Q4). Each topic of inquiry encompassed several questions which were used to gain a deeper understanding of the individual's experiences. Throughout the interview, follow-up questions were employed to elucidate certain concepts and themes that emerged through the interview and that were particularly relevant to the research questions. Although I had pre-determined the order of the questions, oftentimes they were not asked in any specific order, and instead came up naturally in the flow of conversation (Berg, 2004). While some interviews drew to a natural close after all topics had been discussed, others were time limited. Despite the variation in interview length, principle questions were discussed with each participant. During the interview, the researcher took occasional notes on ideas to further discuss with the participant. At the end of each interview, the researcher thanked interviewees for their participation and re-iterated the value of their contribution.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews throughout the period of July 31st to October 11th, 2018. For this research project, semi-structured interviews were deemed the most appropriate choice as they provided interviewees with some flexibility in directing the interviews towards what they felt was most important (Hill et al., 1997; Knox & Burkard, 2009). Moreover, it allowed me to pursue natural conversation if the participants appeared to be providing unanticipated information that could be of value to the study (Arksey & Knight, 1999;

Seidman, 1991). As such, my interview guide (see Appendix D) served as a general guideline and the question wording and sequence was handled flexibly. In addition, the semi-structured format of my interviews provided me with leeway to add, reformulate or drop questions (e.g. to explore unexpected themes and responses). This method excels at drawing out the lived experience of the interviewees, however, it also allows the interviewer to maintain the central focus of the study (Kvale, 1996; Harrell & Bradley, 2009). Maintaining the central focus of the study ensured some consistent questions, which enabled me to draw cross-comparisons in the way student sex workers presented their experiences of their working situations and conditions (Kvale, 1996).

However, the use of semi-structured interviews has disadvantages as well. The flexibility of this research method can result in interviews being too heavily focused on off-topic subjects, or subjects that are ultimately not relevant to the research (Rabionet, 2011). Additionally, in order to generate unbiased, neutral questions that allow interviewees to discuss or elaborate on topics of importance to them, semi-structured interview guides may be overly general, or broad (Bryman, 2012). This may inhibit the researcher's ability to gain information related to their subject of inquiry (Bryman, 2012). In the interests of counteracting this potential limitation, the researcher was careful to develop structured questions in an open-ended way so as to effectively address the research questions while not limiting interviewees to any pre-defined responses.

Data Analysis

Primary Coding

Despite the diversity of qualitative methods, the subsequent analysis is generally based on a common set of principles (Saldaña, 2012). Once I had completed my qualitative semi-structured interviews, interview recordings were fully transcribed by the researcher, which, while time-consuming, can generate further ideas and concepts to pursue in the research. There are

different ways of formatting transcriptions, according to the method of analysis used. It is often recommended that transcripts should adhere to what is said in the interview, word for word, and also how it is said, in order to avoid misinterpretation during the analysis (Bryman, 2012). Therefore, for the purposes of my research, I chose to include indications of pauses, response/non-response tokens and laughter.

After my interviews had been transcribed, I began my analysis with an open-coding process using NVivo software, which required me to read and re-read my transcripts several times to become familiar with my data, and to take note of recurring themes (Burnard, 1991). Descriptive analysis was employed, meaning that a passage of qualitative data was coded using a phrase or heading that described what was in the passage (van der Helm, 2016). This was thought to be the most effective method of analysis for this data because it allows for the inclusion of a wide range of analytic options, and various new insights (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In trying to stay as close as possible to the original language used by my participants, I used *in vivo* codes for my descriptive analysis (Saldaña, 2012). Given that I have knowledge of the terminology used by student sex workers (such as ‘sugar dating’, ‘camming’ and the online mediums used to access clients), *in vivo* codes, which use participants’ own terms, were deemed appropriate and enabled the researcher to preserve participants’ meaning (Tracy, 2013). Many of my initial codes were later modified or grouped in the coding process, but my initial coding served to begin the process of categorizing and analyzing the data (Saldaña, 2012). Throughout the initial coding process, I used the constant comparative method to compare the data applicable to each code, and to modify a code definition to fit new data when necessary (Tracy, 2013).

Secondary Analysis

Once my primary coding was complete, I began the secondary analysis of my data; critically examining my descriptive codes in order to categorize them into more general themes and theoretical concepts (Saldaña, 2012). The themes and theoretical concepts were then organized into the research question headings. Therefore, I shifted from descriptive to analytical coding to understand how the data attended to the research questions I posed (Saldaña, 2012). All groupings were then re-evaluated to ensure that all data in the assemblage fit the research question heading. Some groupings were re-organized, amalgamated or further divided. Themes that did not contribute to answering any of the research questions, or aid in the interpretation of other themes, were put to the side for future research. Finally, themes in each research question were reorganized into an essay outline for each results section. As the results section was written, the researcher went through each data grouping, further organizing and eliminating information and identifying suitable quotes. Quotes and examples that were reported in the results section were those that reflected the view of a range of participants (Burnard, 1991).

Ethical Considerations

Sensitive Topics and Psychological Stress

Given the potential social and emotional risks that may result from student sex workers' participation in my study, and the information they disclosed, I took precautions to ensure their well-being. Before each interview, an oral consent script (see Appendix F) was read to the interviewee, including a standard overview of the study with the potential risks and benefits of participation. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the interview at any point with no questions asked. If they wished to terminate the interview, participants had the option to withdraw any data already collected. Additionally, participants were told that they had

the right to withdraw the data that they provided at any time, up to January 1st, 2019 by letting myself or my research supervisor know. If they chose to withdraw, all the information they provided would be destroyed. They were also informed of their right to skip any interview questions that they did not feel comfortable answering. After the interview, participants were offered a resource information sheet with a list of contact information for free confidential support in Canada, should the participants suffer any kind of emotional or psychological stress following the interview.

Confidentiality

Although individual participants may be protected by anonymity, it cannot be claimed for certain that any social research study will be devoid of possible risk to them. Therefore, as part of the ethical protocol for the research and to minimize the potential for harm to participants, measures to protect my participants' identities were taken. For instance, consistent with the confidentiality agreement, all interviews were recorded in audio format only; no video recording was conducted. This audio-recording was used for transcription purposes only, and once the interviews had been transcribed and verified, the audio-recording was destroyed. Each participant was given a pseudonym, and the transcripts were labelled with this code name. Interview transcripts were also altered to remove identifying information (e.g. place of employment, job title and program of study). Furthermore, my participants were told that they could request that certain responses or identifying details not be included in the final project. As part of the interview process, I also asked participants if there was anything else (such as allowing their faces to be hidden during a Skype interview, or meeting off-campus) that I could do to ensure their anonymity. In addition, all research data, including audio-recordings and my notes were encrypted on a password protected USB key. Any hard copies of data (e.g.

handwritten notes or USB keys) were kept in a locked cabinet at Carleton University that was only accessible to the researcher and the research supervisor.

Other Considerations

Interview participants were each offered a \$15 amazon.ca gift card to thank them for their participation in my research study. The issue of incentives can sometimes be contentious, as it could be argued that some participants may feel pressured to take part in the research study because of their financial needs (Grant & Sugarman, 2004). However, this is dependent on circumstances, and as Grant and Sugarman (2004) have suggested, the use of incentives becomes problematic only in situations such as those where the incentive is sufficiently large to overcome individual aversions to participation. In the current research study, the amount offered was relatively small, and many participants expressed a personal interest in the study topic and were keen to participate.

While this chapter has served to detail the methodological practices employed in this study to ensure the credibility and reliability of this research, the following chapter will discuss the theories that frame the research findings and corresponding analyses.

Chapter 4: Theoretical Framework

Goffman's Theory of Stigma

I will draw, in part, from Erving Goffman's (1963) theory on stigma to deconstruct the impact of stigma on participants' experiences with sex work and their use of support services both on and off campus. Sociologist Erving Goffman (1963) was one of the first academics to explore the concept of stigma. He defined stigma as a social attribute or mark that separates individuals from others based on socially given judgments, and that reduces an individual "from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discredited one" (Goffman, 1963, p.4). Stigma is about discrediting and marking people as 'other' – as being, in some significant way, 'not like us' (Goffman, 1963). According to Goffman (1963), there are two types of stigma that individuals can encounter: enacted stigma and felt stigma. Enacted stigma refers to individuals' experiences of unfair treatment by others, and being actively discriminated against (Goffman, 1963). Felt stigma or internal stigmatization, on the other hand, refers to the shame and expectation of discrimination that prevents people from talking about their experiences and stops them from seeking help or support (Goffman, 1963). Studies that include primary research with sex workers have highlighted that sex workers who are known or identifiable experience high levels of enacted stigma, whereas those who are not known or identifiable as sex workers actively experience felt stigma (Tomura, 2009; Ross, 2010). An understanding of both types of stigma is important to understanding the different ways that stigma can be experienced by student sex workers.

Further, students' desires to avoid enacted stigma is a critical factor that must be considered when analyzing their choices to disclose or conceal their involvement in the sex industry and access support services. Specifically, sex workers navigate interactions with service

providers, family, friends, and other individuals with uncertainty over who can be trusted with the knowledge of their occupation (Tomura, 2009). As such, common among sex workers is having to make a choice regarding to whom knowledge of involvement in the sex industry will be disclosed; what Goffman (1963) terms a type of information management technique. These techniques are used across a spectrum of interactions, ranging from public to private encounters and are used by sex workers to control the spread of information about their involvement in sex work (Goffman, 1963). Most often, techniques range from complete concealment (not telling anyone) to selective disclosure (telling only those whom sex workers trust) (Goffman, 1963). While not always stated explicitly, the participants' interviewed for this study frequently made the immanent link between the stigma that surrounds the sex industry and information management techniques.

The consequences of stigmatization are far-reaching, and are a clear indication of why participants may use information management techniques. Stigma has been shown to have a negative impact on self-concept and identity formation, resulting in degrees of social exclusion that range from difficulty to engage in normal social interactions because of secrecy or shame, to complete discrediting or exclusion by others (Corrigan & Matthews, 2003; Link & Phelan, 2006; Livingston & Boyd, 2010). Additionally, studies have shown that it is negatively associated with self-esteem (Benoit, Jansson, Smith & Flagg, 2017), feelings of disempowerment (Dodsworth, 2014; Sallmann, 2010), an array of physical and mental health problems (Green, Davis, Karshmer, Marsh & Straight, 2005), as well as a reluctance to use health services (Link & Phelan, 2001; Pescosolido, Martin, Lang & Olafsdottir, 2008). These impacts are significant, and will be taken into consideration in my analysis of student sex workers' desire to conceal their work and remain anonymous, particularly in the context of support services.

Stigma is very much part of the collective reality faced by sex workers in Canada (Pheterson, 1993, 1996; Queen, 2001; Scambler, 2007; Blissbomb, 2010; Tomura, 2009; Thompson & Harred, 1992; Sallmann, 2010; Koken, 2012; Bruckert & Hannem, 2013), and as Weitzer (2010) notes, although experienced in varying intensities, stigma “colors all sex work” (p.30). This is caused in part by societal misconceptions that paint sex work as inherently degrading, dangerous, not real work and coercive, and sex workers themselves as dirty, immoral and deviant (Bruckert & Chabot, 2010). For students in particular, stigma can have a range of negative impacts on their experiences in post-secondary institutions. In particular, research has illustrated the impact of stigma on educational outcomes and on persistence in post-secondary. For instance, Osborne and Walker (2006) found that students who face significant stereotyping in the college environment are more likely to drop out than their peers. Additionally, a great deal of literature has focused on the importance of being engaged and building social ties within the campus community (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Vanwesenbeeck, 2005). In trying to prevent themselves from being exposed to the stigma associated with sex work by concealing parts of their identity, student sex workers’ may also prevent themselves from building meaningful relationships with members of the campus community (Haeger & Deil-Amen, 2010). In this sense, I argue that student sex workers may face unique challenges as a result of the stigma caused by their participation in sex work.

Boundary Theory

In addition to Goffman’s (1963) stigma theory, boundary theory will be used to explain the compartmentalization of student sex workers’ work and personal lives. While early scholarship about boundaries focused primarily on work–family boundaries, recent scholarship has moved to a more inclusive notion of work–life management (Blithe, 2015; Kirby, 2006;

Clark, 2000; Kirby et al., 2003). Boundary theory evolved from the sociological work of Nippert-Eng (1996), and focuses on the ways that people create, maintain, or change boundaries in an effort to both separate and connect different aspects of their lives (Ashforth, Kreiner & Fugate, 2000; Zerubavel, 1991). It concerns the cognitive, physical, and/or behavioral boundaries existing between an individual's work and other domains of their lives that define the two entities as distinct from one another (Ashforth et al., 2000, Hall & Richter, 1988; Nippert-Eng, 1996). Two key concepts associated with boundary management are integration and segmentation. Integration and segmentation are the terms used to describe the ways in which individuals conceptualize and juxtapose home and work; they refer to the degree that aspects of one domain (e.g. work) are kept separate from the other domain (e.g. home) (Nippert-Eng, 1996; Ashforth et al., 2000). At full integration, there is no distinction between what is home and what is work, and the individual thinks and acts the same with all social partners (e.g. spouse, colleagues, friends) (Nippert-Eng, 1996). At the other end of the spectrum, at full segmentation, the boundary between roles is distinct, with minimal conceptual, physical, or temporal overlap (Nippert-Eng, 1996). Full segmentation may also include strict boundaries between the economic processes in market and intimate domains. Although monetary transfers coexist with intimate relations in many ways, Viviana Zelizer (2011) argues that "people incessantly match different forms of payment to their various intimate relations. What is more, they take great care to mark boundaries between social relations and their corresponding forms of payment" (p.189). With regards to student sex work in particular, I contend that accepting payment through monetary compensation may enable students to draw clear boundaries between sex work as a form of employment and other kinds of intimacy that take place in their lives.

These conceptualizations of work–life boundaries are useful to understanding the ways in which student sex workers’ separate their employment from other aspects of their lives. Further, boundary theory aligns with scholarship that suggests that, as a means of stigma management, sex workers often divide their social worlds (Goffman, 1963; Wolfe & Blithe, 2015). In doing so, sex workers adopt work–life management practices that serve to separate their work persona from their personal ‘self’ (Sanders, 2005a; Thompson, Harred & Burks, 2003; Tracy & Trethewey, 2005). As such, boundary theory can be used to explain the ways in which students’ move between their roles as sex workers, students, family members, friends and other identities while using boundaries to avoid spillover between competing responsibilities at work and in other areas of their lives.

Rational Choice Theory

I will also borrow from Beccaria’s (1963) and Bentham’s (1879) rational choice theory to examine how students’ choices to enter the sex industry are made in their own best interests. In rational choice theory, human beings are understood as rational beings who choose their rationalized behavior by using a cost benefit analysis; motivations for actions are universally grounded in individual self-interest and the desire to maximize pleasure and minimize pain (Beccaria, 1963; Bentham, 1879). Choices will therefore be made in such a way that will benefit the person the most. I argue here that students’ make a rational choice to enter the sex industry in order to survive economically while balancing school.

Nearly all research shows that economics lie at the heart of women’s decisions to enter into sex work (Haegar & Deil-Amen, 2010; Lantz, 2003, 2005; Miller, 2011; Roberts et al., 2007; Roberts et al., 2010; Roberts et al., 2013; Ross & Gomez-Ramirez, 2014; Sagar et al., 2015; Sanders & Hardy, 2015). Some feminists have argued that this is a signal that sex work

always arises from inequality and exploitation, for if they had other options, women would likely choose a different line of work (Farley, Baral, Kiremire & Sezgin, 1998; Farley & Kelly, 2000). This argument about agency essentially refers to women's free will to make decisions about their circumstances and how they use their bodies. What has come to be known as the choice argument strongly acknowledges that women can recognize the constraints they face by the structures around them (e.g. economic structures such as job opportunities, the costs of living, and oppressive conditions caused by poverty) (Phoenix, 2009; Nagel, 1997; Weeks, 2011). This perspective does not simply assert that women choose to work in the sex industry in the way that they may decide on another career. In fact, the routes through which women enter into sex work are varied. However, Chapkis (1997) explains how some women make an informed rational choice to work in sex work, rather than a free choice, which is only available to a few individuals in a society that is structured hierarchically by race, sex, class, and other intersections of a person's identity. Kesler (2002) summarizes that women may not be presented with a free choice, absent from constraints, but ultimately all women who make decisions about entering into employment do so within a particular set of constraints under the present patriarchal capitalist system. It is within these wider contexts of women making decisions about their circumstances that some theorists move away from the radical feminist perspective that reduces sex work to sexual exploitation and force, and instead recognizes that women make a rational choice to enter the sex industry (Kesler, 2002).

Feminist Standpoint Theory

In addition, feminist standpoint theory was also adopted as a theoretical framework for my study. Feminist standpoint theory emerged in the 1970s as a critical theory about relations between the production of knowledge and power (Harding, 2004). This theory challenges the

positivist epistemology that shaped the development of the social sciences (Harding, 2004). In particular, it challenges the positivist belief in objective knowledge that is independent from the researcher's socio-historical location (Harding, 2004). As a remedy for the potential limitations of a positivist epistemology, feminist standpoint research centers on individuals' lived experiences (Harding, 2004). In this study, it was used to recognize that sex workers are the experts on their own lives and experiences. This was crucial to my research because as an outsider to the sex work community, appreciating that members of researched communities are the experts "engenders respect – respect for knowledge, for insights, and for people's ability to make sense of their own lives" (Bruckert, 2014, p.317). In order to develop an understanding of feminist standpoint theory, it is important to clarify the two main theses upon which it is based: the thesis of situated-knowledge and the thesis of epistemic privilege (Intemann, 2010).

The situated-knowledge thesis asserts that in hierarchical societies, social location systematically influences people's knowledge base (Harding, 2012). Social location refers to a group's or individual's placement in society at a given time, based on their intersecting identity demographics, such as race, class, age and gender (Williams et al., 2016). Knowledge is thus "partial, local, and historically specific" (Sprague, 2005, p.41). Moreover, this thesis also rejects the idea of one essential "woman's experience" (Hesse-Biber, 2014). While common themes may link women's lives, their realities are diverse and shaped by a variety of factors. Therefore, women's experiences at the intersection of different systems of oppression can generate unique insights that contribute to "the collection of human knowledge" (Harding, 2004, p.9). Thus, the experiences of each student sex worker interviewed for this study are unique, and provide valuable contributions to understandings of student sex work in Canada.

Furthermore, the epistemic privilege thesis asserts that in order to survive, members of oppressed groups have developed a double consciousness—a heightened awareness of both the worldviews of dominant groups and their own worldview (Brooks, 2006). Feminist standpoint theory thus positions the experiences of oppressed groups as privileged and legitimate sources of knowledge (Brooks, 2006). Indeed, oppressed groups can reflect on their experiences to identify socially just and unjust practices, with the intent of advancing the just practices in society and mitigating the unjust ones (Hirsh, Olson & Harding, 1995).

The marginalization of women engaged in the sex industry is reinforced by the materialization of dominant ideologies of sex work and sex workers in the law, social services, research, and other institutions (Phillips, Casey & Leischner, 2011). Moreover, “the clandestine nature of the sex industry ensures that the vast majority of citizens both receive and propagate prostitution stigmas in the absence of any real empirical knowledge of, or contact with, the sex industry” (Phillips et al., 2011, p.40). In my study, using feminist standpoint theory allowed the heterogeneous voices of women in the sex industry to be privileged, thus enabling the construction of a rich understanding of student sex workers’ experiences with sex work in Canada. My intention was to bring sex workers from the margins to the centre of inquiry, and start my research off from their lived experiences to create knowledge that can benefit this community. By uncovering what participants perceive as harmful and helpful support services, service providers can integrate helpful practices in their work with sex workers and discard harmful ones.

To further nuance this theory, I used a postmodern feminist perspective. What is known as postmodern feminism is often associated with the work of Judith Butler (1990, 1993), and has been described as the move away from the singularity and objectivist principles that are highly

valued by modernism, towards a social consciousness of multiple belief systems and perspectives (Gonzalez et al., 1994). Postmodernists caution against the power of singular accounts that claim to offer a sole interpretation or explanation because many alternative accounts, descriptions, or meanings of 'reality' exist (Gonzalez et al., 1994). Additionally, radical feminist theories adhere to static binary oppositions, such as the agent/victim binary, which is based on constructed meanings about female sexuality and gender relations (Bell, 1987; Kesler, 2002; Tong, 1998). On the other hand, postmodern feminists acknowledge that sexuality and sexual activity are experienced in complex and contradictory ways and can serve simultaneously as sites of victimization and as sites of agency (Bell, 1987).

I argue that sex workers deserve more than the static identity of either agent/victim. Issues and meanings outside of these binaries rearticulate the diverse and complex experiences of sex workers that have been overlooked by modern feminist theory. In order to move beyond binary oppositions, postmodern feminists attempt to deconstruct the meaning of these binaries, in order to reveal complexities previously unseen. According to Jane Flax (1997):

Postmodern discourses are all deconstructive in that they seek to distance us from and make us skeptical about beliefs concerning truth, knowledge, power, the self, and language that are often taken for granted within and serve as legitimation for contemporary Western culture (p.41).

A large number of studies on sex workers have been coherent with a modernist feminist theoretical framework whereby the researcher, from their vantage point, has been considered to be in the best position to describe the phenomenon under study (e.g. sex workers as victims or agents) (Bell, 1987). Within a postmodern feminist framework, these views are challenged and the focus will turn to the student sex workers themselves who are considered as being in the best position to describe their experiences (Gonzalez et al., 1994). Postmodern feminist theory transforms the focus of the discussion from the identity of sex workers as agents and victims to a

discussion of these women as subjects. First person interviews with student sex workers reveals their subjectivity and the issues and concerns that they experience as employees in sex work.

Following this discussion on the theoretical underpinnings of this project, Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 will explore the key findings in the context of the social and economic climate examined in Chapter 2, and the theories discussed above.

Chapter 5: Sex Work as an Attractive Form of Employment for Students

This chapter will explore the conclusions drawn from this research project regarding the reasons for which students are choosing to enter the sex industry during their post-secondary education. While many aspects of the sex industry were noted by students as appealing, in this chapter, I put forth only the key themes expressed by the ten Canadian sex workers interviewed for this study. Specifically, I will be examining both the tangible (e.g. monetary) and abstract (e.g. psychological and flexibility) benefits that students reported having encountered as a result of working in the sex industry. While many of the findings in this chapter align with previous research on this subject, my study also presents unique findings, and areas worthy of further research.

Profitability

The profitability of sex work has been cited in numerous studies as a reason for which students engage in this form of labour (Sinacore et al., 2014; Sanders & Hardy 2015; Roberts et al., 2007; Roberts et al., 2013; Haeger & Deil-Amen, 2010). Tuition, school supplies and the costs of living away from home are all expenses that many students begin absorbing during university (Roberts et al., 2007). As Grace points out, money earned through sex work can help cover these expenses and alleviate the financial burden that university places on students, “it allows me as a student to pay for my books, to pay for my school supplies, it bought me this brand new MacBook I have”. Of these expenses, the price of textbooks in particular was brought up by several other participants as a significant cost that they had to assume in university. According to the Canadian Federation of Students, the average post-secondary student in Canada spends approximately \$500 to \$1,000 on textbooks and course materials each semester – with students in engineering and applied sciences usually dispensing the most money (Bascaramurty,

2011). While some students rent, buy second-hand or turn to legally questionable means online to save money, it is almost unavoidable for students to spend some money on textbooks (Bascaramurty, 2011). Lauren, for instance, pointed to the price of textbooks as a reason for entering the sex industry:

There came a point last year where I was like struggling because I started helping my parents, well more like my parents helping me pay for university, and I paid for my own textbooks, so I was kind of like screwed for money. So I was like I know how to make some quick money, so I started.

In addition to covering some of the costs associated with university, money earned through sex work can also help students manage their debt. Of the ten sex workers interviewed for this study, nine of them reported having some level of student debt, or needing to repay their parents money that was borrowed to pay for the costs associated with university. While the sample size for this study is relatively small, research indicates that Canada is indeed in the midst of a student debt crisis (OECD, 2015). The cost of post-secondary tuition has risen by approximately 40% over the past decade, and new estimates suggest that post-secondary student debt now totals over \$16 billion (Statistics Canada, 2016). With roughly 1.7 million students in the country, the average student debt is \$26,819 for a four-year bachelor's degree (Statistics Canada, 2016). Concerns of being able to repay this debt were raised by several participants, especially in light of research which suggests that there are increasing rates of precarious and low-paid, part-time employment for young people, and an increase in the cost of living (Canadian Labour Congress, 2016; Statistics Canada, 2016). Alex for instance, noted that "I was starting to think about eventually having to pay off my student loans and stuff and you know, thinking about capitalism and how oh shit, precarious work is a thing". Likewise, in her interview, Grace also discussed sex work in the context of student debt, stating that "I will be able to pay off my student loans after I'm done if I continue sex work". These examples

highlight participants' consideration of student debt in their decision to work within the sex industry.

Additionally, while discussing the profitability of sex work, many students emphasized its hourly wage, in comparison with Ontario's standard \$14/hour minimum wage as something that drew them to the industry (Loriggio, 2018). Participants noted that although \$14/hour is an improvement from the previous minimum wage of \$11.60/hour, it does not provide students with enough money to cover the costs of living. Anne concludes that "minimum wage is not enough, by any means, it's not enough. Even the way it is now". She goes on to say that "when I was in undergrad I had to work three part-time jobs to pay for school". These quotes not only demonstrate the difficulties that students are faced with when trying to afford basic necessities on a minimum wage salary. In fact, Anne also makes the important point that making minimum wage often requires students to work more than one job at a time just to survive. As a student, this means less time to dedicate to completing assignments and studying. As Grace puts it:

Say for example in the month of September I worked one day a week, and I'm making twice the amount of money I did when I was working, um, thirty hours a week at my retail job. So, yeah. So I would have to work, how many hours do I have to work to make the money I did? I would have to work almost full-time in order for me to make the money that I do right now, working one day a week, six hours a day. And six hours is a shift, meaning I come in, say I'm working my shift from three to nine, and I don't come earlier, I don't stay later. So, that's my shift, and I make more money now, within that time frame, one day a week than I do working almost full time.

In this sense, the profit margins of sex work, resulting from a higher hourly wage, enable students to work fewer hours a week, giving them time to achieve a healthy work, school, and life balance. This is important, as it highlights the improved quality of life that sex workers can obtain by working less, and making more money. As Jasmine notes, "I thought it was something that would be a really good way to balance school while making more than just minimum wage". Correspondingly, Anne points out that:

‘Cause, like okay you work a 5 hour shift minimum at the club, you maybe spend a couple hours getting ready, and like prepping and stuff and doing your transit over. Like assuming you have a decent night, again it balances out pretty evenly, you know you stay up that one night, you reset your sleep and then the rest of the week you have to do your schoolwork, and your readings and to go have a life and to have experiences outside of the classroom that complement the work you’re doing, right?

Likewise, Grace states that “my job also permits me to have enough money so I can study outside of schoolwork. Instead of working thirty hours a week, I can use those extra twenty-four hours I have to study for school”. From these quotes it is evident that the profit margins of sex work, which facilitate students’ ability to achieve a work-life balance, is a major motivating factor for students’ involvement within the sex industry.

These examples highlight the economic advantages to sex work according to the student sex workers interviewed for this study. Additionally, they also allude to the increased quality of life that the economic advantages of sex work can offer students; it is not simply about the money itself, but what that money and the work hours allow. Specifically, the positive ways in which the profit margins of sex work affect student sex workers work-life balance. Research indicates that achieving a good work-life balance is challenging for many people, but can be especially difficult for post-secondary students (Tan-Wilson & Stamp, 2015; Keil & Somerville, 2009). Balancing classes, coursework, extracurricular activities, finances, interpersonal relationships and other aspects of one’s life in an often new environment can put strain on students (Creed, French & Hood, 2015; Castledine, 2009). This can result in students having to establish priorities, and to reconsider the demands on their time. However, with the various costs associated with higher education, working while studying is a necessity for many students to cover living and academic expenses (Avdic & Gatrell, 2015; Lynch, 2006). Sex work offers a solution to this conundrum by allowing students to have flexible work schedules and still make

enough money to support themselves, thus giving students more time to dedicate to other aspects of their lives.

The results discussed in this section are supported by studies that indicate that the sex industry is an attractive and lucrative option for students to finance themselves during their post-secondary education, as it offers the quickest and highest rate of return (Bernstein, 2007; Haeger & Deil-Amen, 2010; Lantz, 2005; Miller, 2011; Roberts et al., 2007; Roberts et al., 2010; Sanders & Hardy, 2015). However, distinct from the results of the above named studies, in the current study, seven participants worked another job in addition to sex work. Despite the profitability of sex work, the majority of participants noted that the income was unreliable, and thus required them to have a consistent source of income outside of sex work to ensure coverage of their expenses. This will be further discussed in relation to students' perceptions of the challenges associated with sex work.

Psychological Benefits

In addition to the profit margins of sex work, participants also discussed the psychological benefits of sex work as a significant advantage to working in the sex industry. In particular, many participants mentioned an increase in their self-confidence, and feeling more desirable as a result of working in the sex industry. Rachel highlighted this point when discussing the benefits of sex work, "Like while doing it I felt great and normal, it made me more comfortable and gave me confidence in myself". Likewise, Grace also highlighted increased self-confidence as a benefit to sex work, "Um, you get a lot of, people really boost your confidence". These quotes are a good representation of the feelings expressed by all but one of the sex workers interviewed for this study, who did not comment on the psychological benefits of sex work. Notably, for all of these participants, personal validation from clients

appeared to be an important element of the process of increasing their self-confidence. This is significant, as it contrasts starkly with many abolitionist views of sex work as damaging (MacKinnon, 1989; Dworkin, 1983; Chapkis, 1997; Shrage, 1989). Moreover, the current research works to dispel the myth of young women in the sex industry as victimized and lacking self-esteem, and thus supports research which demonstrates a connection between increased self-esteem and sex work (Askew, 1999; Bouclin, 2006; Scull, 2015; Lucas, 2005; Downs, James & Cowan, 2006; Koken, 2012).

Similarly, participants spoke of feeling desirable, and attractive as a result of their work. Grace, for instance, noted that “You know, these men come in, they think you’re so beautiful, so incredible. You can say anything you want and they’ll think you’re like really intelligent”. This positive reinforcement was recognized by Grace as a factor relating to their increased self-esteem. Moreover, desirability as a benefit to sex work was emphasized by a participant who felt as though they did not fit within the “ideal” beauty standards. According to Western beauty standards, a proper body must be slim, white, young, and able-bodied (Collins, 2000). As a result of the promotion of Western beauty standards by the fashion industries, television, internet, etc. and the widespread audiences that these advertisements reach, Western beauty standards are ubiquitous (Collins, 2000). This can result in individuals feeling undesirable, or unattractive if they do not fulfill this standard. As Alex states:

And you know like, especially growing up as someone who was fat and black and like a girl and all these things. I always had a lot of things, I think most people experience this by not feeling desirable. Like you need to change yourself or that you can’t ever be desired because of the way you are. Um and so it was nice to be like actually there is a lot of men who have sex with me and pay to do it because they find me attractive. And I thought I could never be attractive or desirable to people, like as someone who was like fat or black or whatever so that was also kind of, that was an added benefit to it. It was an ego boost.

In this sense, Alex emphasizes that Western culture frequently excludes representations of racialized bodies in media portrayals of beauty standards (Strutton & Lumpkin, 1993). Historically, the images in the media reflecting beauty standards have emphasized the white standards of feminine beauty through the preference for light skinned models and actresses (Collins, 2000). Concurrently, the beauty standards portrayed in the media stress that thinness is an essential component of being beautiful, and maintains that anyone who does not fit this standard has something wrong with them (Rishere, 2017). As such, sex work has the potential to provide students, particularly those who may not identify with traditional beauty “ideals” with what is perhaps understood as a non-traditional source of morale (Adkins, 1995).

While this morale is directly related to the feelings of desirability that sex work offers, it can also be related to the employment success that individuals who do not identify with beauty “ideals” may not otherwise be able to achieve in “traditional” employment settings. In particular, a growing body of research suggests that “beauty” is a crucial aspect to success at work (Williams & Connell, 2010). Evidence of an attractiveness bias in workplace settings has been reported in a number of studies (e.g. Bull & Rumsey, 1988; Jackson, 1992; Dipboye, Arvey & Terpstra, 1977). Overall, what these studies suggest is that people who fit within “ideal” beauty specifications tend to fare better in a variety of workplace settings in terms of criteria such as performance evaluations (Drogosz & Levy, 1996), hiring recommendations (Cann, Siegfried & Pearce, 1981; Gilmore, Beehr & Love, 1986), predicted job success (Morrow, McElroy, Stamper & Wilson, 1990), and compensation levels (Frieze, Olson & Russell, 1991; Roszell, Kennedy & Grabb, 1989). However, the physical characteristics that may be understood as undesirable, and negatively impacting one’s success in many employment settings can set sex workers apart in the sex industry, and give them unique niches in which they can work. As such, sex work presents an

employment opportunity that offers social and economic mobility that may otherwise be unattainable to women who do not fit “ideal” beauty standards.

Furthermore, not only did participants note an increase in their self-confidence and feelings of desirability, they also highlighted valuing themselves more and having a higher assessment of their self-worth as a result of sex work. Grace stated that:

I find that it makes you value yourself more. I find that I value myself more in who I give my time to ever since I started. There are people who are actually, you know, lining up to give me money to hangout with me.

Likewise, Amelia said that “it feels nice to have someone think you’re like so pretty and so interesting that they’re willing to like pay for your company”. Through these statements, Grace and Amelia emphasize client’s appreciation of their time, in this instance demonstrated through financial compensation, as something that contributed to their overall feelings of increased self-worth.

In the context of the psychological benefits to sex work, empowerment was another concept that emerged in half of the participants’ interviews. It was raised in the context of being both empowered by one’s agency in sex work, and the financial independence that sex work offers students. Empowerment can be defined as:

The capacity of individuals, groups and/or communities to take control of their circumstances, exercise power and achieve their own goals, and the process by which, individually and collectively, they are able to help themselves and others to maximize the quality of their lives (Adams, 2008, p.xvi).

Sex work is often conceptualized in two contrasting ways; as a system of patriarchal domination over women, or as a job, much like any other, that can be a form of self-determination for women (Oselin & Weitzer, 2013; Weatherall & Priestley, 2011). In this study, several participants accentuated their agency within sex work as a source of their empowerment, especially in the context of prevailing discourse that frequently constructs sex workers as victims

(Gatrell, 2008). Jasmine draws attention to this when discussing her desire to enter the sex industry:

And I liked the idea, especially within the sex work industry, there is so much room in past/present of like male dominating/forcing and it not being remotely consensual, um on the worker's part, so it was kind of like an interesting thing for me to work in a way that like reclaimed that industry and reclaimed that work that was like completely consensually by me, for me, about me.

By engaging in sex work in a way that heightens workers' agency and counters society's pre-conceived notions of sex workers as powerless victims, Jasmine gives a good indication of their, along with three other participants', sentiments regarding why sex work may be conceptualized as empowering for workers.

Furthermore, the financial independence that sex work enables students to achieve also contributed to participants' feelings of empowerment. In addition to a lack of viable employment options for students, the small amount of money that students receive in loans, if eligible, is not sufficient to meet their financial needs (Sinacore et al., 2014). With money earned through sex work, participants reported being able to afford school and live comfortably. This sentiment was echoed by Grace, "you can work for a short amount of time and make a lot of money, um, I find it very empowering for a young women, especially in university". Not only does sex work contribute to students' ability to achieve financial independence, it also allows students to feel as though they have more control over the costs associated with post-secondary education, Morgan notes that "being able to actually have control over my income was really great. Like being able to know if I was going to hit the mark and be able to afford rent". In this regard, students appraise income control, and having a sense of financial security as empowering.

However, while sex work has the potential to be an empowering experience, Anne stressed that that is not necessarily always the case:

Um, it's a lot more complicated than people think it is. And I think even within feminist discourse, we think that something's going to be inherently exploitative or empowering and, I find a lot of the time we're afraid to say either. Like people who've been trafficking victims who have only seen the exploitative side of things, understandably will say no, there is no way that this can be empowering. Or no, like we need to protect everyone from sex work, like we need to protect sex workers from themselves and it's not sex work it's this, it's prostitution, it's trafficking. Whereas sex workers who are empowered are afraid to talk about the exploitative part of the industry or like the shitty aspects of it because there's already so much stigma and we don't want our professions to be taken away from us. We don't want like things to be driven further underground. We want people to be free to make their own choices, but we also do recognize that there is an exploitative side to it.

Through this quote, it becomes evident that while some participants described their experiences as empowering, sex work is neither inherently empowering, nor exploitative. Rather, it can depend on a variety of factors and the circumstances in which it is taking place. Similar to Anne, Jasmine also notes that:

I've thought about maybe risking my well-being and it taking a toll on me, but since I'm making up my own rules for this, I stop whenever I want. Like I've taken so many breaks since I've started, so it never really takes a toll on me. Um and I'm always comfortable with what I'm doing. So it doesn't hurt me emotionally.

Here, Jasmine describes her agency in sex work which could be understood as empowering. However, she also acknowledges the fact that while she is able to work in such a way that enables her to have agency and autonomy, this is not necessarily always the case for all sex workers. Specifically, she makes note of the potential negative impacts that sex work could have on her emotional health.

These quotes align with scholarship that calls for a reconciliation between the empowerment and exploitation dichotomy. Initially, research on sex work focused solely on two dichotomous positions regarding the relationship between the sale of sexuality and power (LaCombe, 1994). One view is that sex work is exploitative for women, represents female victimization, and supports male dominance (Barry, 1984, 1995; Dworkin, 1974; Collins, 1997;

LaCombe, 1994; MacKinnon, 1987, 1989). In opposition, the other view is that the sale of women's sexuality is empowering and allows women to capitalize on their desirable physical traits and social skills in order to receive economic gain (Bell, 1994; Chapkis, 1997; Delacoste & Alexander, 1998; Paglia, 1991). However, over time, researchers have developed a more comprehensive understanding of sex workers' experiences with exploitation and empowerment. It is now suggested that sex work exists along a continuum, and can encompass both exploitation and empowerment (Barton, 2002; Chancer, 1998; Chapkis, 1997; Delacoste & Alexander, 1998; Nagle, 1997; Overall, 1992; Weitzer, 2000; Miller-Young, 2014). This continuum is a useful framework to understanding the experiences of the student sex workers interviewed for this study.

Schedule Flexibility

In addition to the profit margins and psychological benefits, the schedule flexibility that sex work offers was emphasized by all participants in this study as a significant factor influencing their decision to both enter and stay in the sex industry. As Morgan highlights, "It was more just the flexibility of the job and just like needing something, like, really flexible". As a result of this flexibility, participants indicated that they had more time to study and that the flexible hours allowed them to adjust their schedules to make allowances for exams and other academic activities. None of the participants discussed any negative effects of sex work on their academic goals. As Jasmine puts it:

So it's like if that week you need to finish an assignment on Tuesday, you can be like okay although it sucks that I'm not going to be making money Tuesday night, I'm not like losing my job by not being able to work. Um, it's inconvenient for me, but okay I'll just work Wednesday night now and like there's no boss I have to go through and be like hey I'm switching my shift.

As well as having the flexibility to make minor scheduling adjustments in order to accommodate school, sex work also enables students to exit the industry for weeks, months and even years at a time to manage school and other life stressors, with few barriers to re-entering.

Jasmine highlights that:

You can make like a good chunk of money and then you can do your exams, or you can do whatever you will or as me, you can take an indefinite break and be uncertain of whether or not you're going to engage in it again, and there's no like serious repercussions for that. [...] You have to regain perhaps your clientele, you have to maybe get used to again what is happening within those sorts of circles but you haven't lost your edge.

In a similar vein, Anne states that:

So I was doing it and then one day I was talking to the DJ and I said oh what do I do if I need like a week off or something? They're like oh hey, you can just like disappear for six months if you want, like people just come and go as they please. [...] And I was like oh! Oh my god I can focus on homework okay!

As suggested by these quotes, it appears as though there is a disjunction between students' desire to succeed in school, and their ability to do so while managing a "traditional" job. Students want to be able to adjust their schedules, or minimize their work hours during busier periods in the academic year without having to ask employers, or have time off approved. Meanwhile, they still need to be able to pay for the basic necessities afforded through working. Therefore, sex work can present students with a solution to this dilemma by allowing them to have flexible work schedules wherein they can take time off when necessary for school-related tasks while still making enough money to support themselves.

In addition, many students find the timing of sex work convenient. Specifically, sex work often takes place in the evening and on the weekends at times when students would not otherwise be in class. Jasmine notes that:

And then thinking like it is often a night, or if it's not a night like you can set the schedule and you can make appointments so you can do it in between classes, or you can

do it when most people don't usually have classes, which is in the evenings, and on weekends.

Comparably, Amelia reiterated this by saying:

I know for me it was usually like in the evening. Like an 8 o'clock dinner, then like some cocktails and then back to the hotel kind of situation. So if you're a student, your latest possible class ends at 9pm, so it's like, you um, it's pretty flexible.

Additionally, if not in the evenings or on the weekends, students were also able to meet clients during the day when their school schedules permitted it. Lauren, in particular, stated that she often meets clients on her way to school, and in-between classes, "I have a very flexible schedule with like only having 1 or 2 classes a day, and then I pick when I meet people in between".

While the timing of sex work in relation to students' class schedules was emphasized by the majority of participants as beneficial, six students also brought up the way in which other-sex work related tasks fit into their existing schedule. Specifically, the ease with which they could answer messages and respond to calls from their phones almost anywhere, at any time. Alex points out that:

And I could message people while I was in class or something, like on the bus, you know what I mean? Like it was really flexible as well. You know like when I had time [...], I was able to just like fit it in, and it was relatively easy. As long as I had my phone I could do it basically.

Equivalently, Sarah highlights that "Like I found that because I'm getting a lot of messages, what I'll do is like I'll answer them all in like one and then wait until I'm free again, or if I am free I'll keep answering".

What these students appear to be alluding to is the way in which sex work fits neatly within their existing lifestyles. Not only does it suit their class schedule, but it is also something

they can perform upkeep for on the go when convenient, such as during periods of downtime between class, while commuting, etc.

As seen throughout this chapter, students identified a variety of benefits to working in the sex industry while enrolled as post-secondary students. While many of the benefits presented can be generalized as applicable to all sex workers, the students interviewed for this study were able to provide a nuanced understanding of how these benefits can be uniquely advantageous to them. For instance, the ways in which the profitability of sex work can be understood as beneficial within the context of the costs associated with post-secondary education, that sex work can provide students with financial independence, an independence that may otherwise be unachievable for most, and how sex work presents students with a form of employment that enables them to successfully balance their school-related responsibilities. Moreover, by virtue of being enrolled in a post-secondary institution, students have a better chance at thriving in the sex industry because they possess a sexualized ‘student’ status, which is reportedly highly desired by clients of sex workers (Roberts et al., 2007). This is also indicative of a certain level of privilege and social mobility that may not be afforded to other sex workers (Nayar, 2016). Although the benefits to working in the sex industry are substantial, the participants interviewed for this study also discussed the vulnerabilities associated with sex work. These vulnerabilities will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

Chapter 6: Risks and Challenges of Sex Work

While the Canadian student sex workers interviewed for this study were able to identify an array of benefits to working in the sex industry, they also identified several risks and challenges. In particular, physical danger was a reoccurring topic in my interviews. Participants recounted a number of instances in which they were concerned for their safety, witnessed violence, or experienced violence first-hand. The physical dangers associated with sex work present a very real concern to student sex workers, and are impacted by several factors, including the clients themselves, as well as the social and legal climate in which they operate. In addition to physical violence, students also identified the risk of being exposed, and having to keep their employment a secret, which often required them to lie to friends and family, as a challenging aspect of working in the sex industry. Consistent with scholarship, student sex workers did not want to disclose their work to friends and family, among others, because of the stigma associated with the industry (Lantz, 2005; Murphy, Dunk-West & Chonody, 2015). Finally, having to work outside of sex work in order to maintain a stable source of income and advance their resumes for future employment opportunities was also identified as a negative aspect of sex work. These themes will be explored in depth in the following paragraphs.

Physical Danger

Violence against workers is a serious issue consistently identified by research on the sex industry (Jeffrey & MacDonald, 2006; Lewis & Shaver, 2006; Cler-Cunningham, 2001; Benoit & Millar, 2001). Correspondingly, physical danger was raised by nine of the ten participants as a potential risk of engaging in sex work. The participant who did not discuss the physical dangers associated with sex work engaged in sex work solely via online mediums, suggesting that she was potentially at a lower risk of encountering physical danger. Types of physical dangers that

participants mentioned worrying about included, but were not limited to, sexual violence, kidnapping, murder and assault. These concerns were raised primarily in relation to the presence of other factors, such as aggression, isolation and male clients. Additionally, the legal state of sex work in Canada, and the stigma surrounding the sex industry also formed the discursive backdrop to students' experiences with physical danger.

While all students had methods of drawing boundaries with clients, they reported frequently having these boundaries pushed by aggressive clients, resulting in situations where their physical safety was threatened. Anne emphasizes this when discussing her experiences with sexual assault:

Certainly customers unfortunately uh, there have been times where they have really pushed the boundaries physically, like, whether it's okay they actually put their fingers up somewhere where they shouldn't have, after being told not to, or they attempted... either way.

Similarly, Lauren describes an aggressive client by stating that, "he would always try and grab my feet and lick my feet and I was like we didn't agree to this". These quotes highlight that aggressive clients contribute to both workers' perception of, and lived experiences with physical danger. Moreover, they correspond with existing studies on violence against sex workers in the USA, Canada, the UK, and Australia, which report that 40% to 82% of sex workers have been physically or sexually assaulted by an aggressive client (Valera, Sawyer & Schiraldi 2001; Raphael & Shapiro, 2004; Shannon et al., 2009; Semple et al., 2015).

Furthermore, isolation was also mentioned by participants as a factor that impacted their safety. Jasmine raises the topic of isolation in her discussion of travelling alone to meet clients:

And you're risking going somewhere, um and easiest, or not easiest sorry, like best case scenario they just never meet you and you're like oh crap, I've just wasted my time. Worst case scenario obviously, there is physical, sexual, some sort of violence when you're with them and maybe you don't come back.

Likewise, although performing sex work in her hometown, Lauren considers the factor of isolation when discussing meeting clients by herself in their cars “Mm, there’s always the chance that, I always run the risk that some guy is just going to drive away with me”. Equivalently, Rachel notes that “I was literally going at strangers’ houses alone and hoping I was going to come out with money”.

These three quotes highlight the relationship between physical danger and isolation. Specifically, workers perceived that they were putting themselves at risk of physical danger when meeting a client alone. Isolation is a risk factor for physical violence because when individuals are isolated, there is less of a chance that there will be environmental interventions such as friends or coworkers which can enable workers to seek support or help (Senn, 2018). Further, clients may feel more confident, or in a better position to take advantage of workers in isolated settings (Senn, 2018).

Additionally, the gender of clients also contributed to participants’ safety concerns. This was neatly summed up by Amelia, who stated that “It’s always risky to be alone with men in any situation”. Similarly, other participants noted that their fears about violence were about male violence in particular. Alex, for example, states “Especially when I was doing in person stuff. They were just kind of worried that like, what if he’s a murderer or something?”. Likewise, Lauren states that “Um, the only other things that really happen are guys trying to be too touchy”.

Participants’ emphasis on male violence conveys the fact that while the underground nature of the sex industry makes it difficult to draw conclusive statistics, research suggests that in Canada, the vast majority of people who pay for sexual services are men, and that most sex workers are women (Rotenberg, 2016; Benoit & Shumka, 2015). Moreover, through their

pronoun choice, participants are also expressing the results delivered through numerous studies which indicate that most violence against sex workers is a manifestation of gender inequality and discrimination directed at women by men (Penfold, Hunter, Campbell & Barham, 2004).

Furthermore, the legal state of sex work in Canada also invariably affected students' experiences with physical danger. As Anne puts it:

There's just so many factors involving stigma and the law and things that don't actually protect sex workers and things that don't hold customers accountable for their demands, right? Like how often do you see a customer getting charged for asking for a blow job? Like by the police. Versus dancers getting kicked out and put in jail for escorting out of clubs.

Likewise, Ella also draws on the criminalization of sex work by stating:

Brothels, illegal. So how are you supposed to, even back then it was illegal, so I think now you're only allowed two in an apartment but again, it doesn't make sense cause it's still illegal. The man comes, it's illegal. Back in the day it was completely illegal so obviously there was in house and out of house right? They still existed back then except you had to be diligent with who you invited over cause if you invited the wrong one over and he was a police officer you were in a lot of poop. And whoever's name is on that lease is in a lot of poop. Um, so it's uh, it was a lot of sketchiness that you had to go around.

In these quotes, Anne and Ella highlight the ways in which both the previous and current legislation governing sex work in Canada fail to protect sex workers and in fact can increase their chances of encountering physical danger. Current laws create opportunities for violence and physical danger where sex workers have to choose between safety and legality (Horlick, 2014). Specifically, Bill C-36, Canada's new legislation governing sex work, makes it an offence under the *Criminal Code of Canada* to purchase sexual services, communicate for that purpose and receive material benefit from sex work (Horlick, 2014). As a result of the fact that purchasing sex is illegal in Canada, the transaction between sex workers and clients is also illegal (Levy & Jakobsson, 2014). The problem with criminalizing any aspect of sex work is it creates, maintains and promotes an antagonism with police (Levy & Jakobsson, 2014). As such, even in conditions

where there is exploitation or where violence is being experienced, sex workers are likely to still avoid police (Grant, 2016). Furthermore, as Ella mentioned, two of the provisions encapsulated in Bill C-36, purchasing sexual services and receiving a material benefit from sex work, essentially make it illegal to run or operate out of a brothel, despite the fact that this is widely accepted as one of the safest ways to conduct sex work (Ross, Crisp, Månsson & Hawkes, 2012; Bell, 1994; Best, 1998; Gilfoyle, 1992; Walkowitz, 1983). The Bedford decision noted that brothels improve sex workers' safety by providing "proximity to others, familiarity with surroundings, security staff, closed-circuit television and other such monitoring that a permanent indoor location can facilitate" (Silliker, 2017, para.16; *Canada v Bedford*, 2013). As such, forcing sex workers to operate alone can create conditions of isolation where violence may be more likely to occur.

Finally, the stigma that surrounds the sex industry, while not always explicitly mentioned by the students interviewed for this study, undoubtedly also impacted their experiences with physical danger. This was highlighted by Anne, who mentioned in her interview, "it's the stigma that kills us, or it's the stigma that puts us in danger, right?". Through this quote, Anne alludes to the fact that globally, sex workers experience severe stigma and discrimination as a result of pervasive narratives of sex work as unpleasant and sex workers as disposable victims (Benoit et al., 2017; Koken et al., 2012). This stigma often manifests as widespread violations of their human rights, repressive laws and policies, violence, lack of access to appropriate health and social care, and social marginalization (Bodkin, Delahunty-Pike & O'Shea, 2015; King, Maman, Bowling, Moracco & Dudina, 2013).

Similarly, Ella also made note of the relationship between stigma and physical danger. She discussed how she actively conceals her involvement in the sex industry and does not access

support services in fear of judgement; “It’s embarrassing, common sense. The stigma that surrounds selling your body, how dare you?”. In this way, Ella highlights how stigma is socially isolating. It reduces the options for sex workers to turn to for support and is recognized as a critical barrier to accessing health care (Abel & Fitzgerald, 2010). As such, stigma may increase workers’ propensity to encounter physical danger, or intensify its consequences by diminishing their access to support.

When discussing the physical dangers associated with sex work, it is important to draw a distinction between aggressors and clients. All too often, aggressors and clients are conflated in dominant discourse, leaving one with the mistaken impression that sex workers’ clients are invariably violent (Lowman, 2000). However, a client is an individual who pays for the agreed upon sexual services from a sex worker (Bruckert & Chabot, 2010; Jeffrey & MacDonald, 2006). On the other hand, an aggressor is an individual who may present themselves as a client but whose intention is to inflict physical, sexual or financial harm on the sex worker (Jeffrey & MacDonald, 2006). This is an important distinction to make because although sex workers can be subjected to violence at work, it is not the work itself that is violent. This distinction also highlights that not all clients are disrespectful, violent or aggressive (Leventhal, 2015).

Given the risk of the physical dangers associated with sex work, participants cited a number of precautions that they were taking to ensure their safety. These included performing substantial research on safety measures before entering the sex industry, giving friends information on their whereabouts when meeting clients, working in pairs, and concealing their identities (e.g. changing phone numbers, fake names, etc.).

Fear of Being Exposed

In addition to physical danger, the risk of exposure was discussed by all students as a potential consequence to engaging in sex work. Specifically, this risk was raised in the context of the impact that exposure could have on their familial bonds, particularly with parents.

Participants' feared that their parents would not approve, think less of them, force them to stop, or even disown them if their sex worker identities were revealed. Lauren illuminates these fears when asked about her decision to conceal her occupation from her family:

Um I think it would appall them. Yeah my Dad is very conservative I'd say, and I'm not. I'm very liberal. So people wouldn't see it the way I see it, people who are more conservative, they see it as me being a harlot, and um, they would see more danger and the sluttiness of it.

Likewise, Sarah notes that "my Mom is a definite no, like I'm not even going to bring up anything with her because she'll just say no. She doesn't want that for sure". Correspondingly, Rachel states that "It's totally out of my family's, uh, how do you say that? Their way to think? They would not agree with this income, so I didn't want to tell them". Participants' unwillingness to disclose to family speaks to a potential generational disjunction in outlooks on sex and sex work. This is supported by Twenge, Sherman and Wells's (2015) study, which looked at changes in sexual attitudes between 1972 and 2012 using data from the nationally representative General Social Survey of adults in the USA. In this study, the researchers were able to both show how attitudes towards sex have changed, as well as attribute changes primarily to generational shifts (Twenge et al., 2015). For instance, in the early 1970s, premarital sex was accepted by only 29%, and rose to 58% in the period between 2010 and 2012 (Twenge et al., 2015). However, although acceptance rates of different sexual activities may be increasing, generational attitudes remain different over time, suggesting that the new generation is still more accepting than older generations, even as they age (Twenge et al., 2015). While this study did not

mention sex work specifically, it provides a good indication of the generational differences that likely exist regarding attitudes towards sex work.

Furthermore, there is also the tendency of family members to focus solely on the dangers, and potential harms associated with sex work, leading participants to be less inclined to disclose their occupation to their family (Berarovich, 2014). As a result of pervasive understandings of sex work as inherently violent, parents may encourage their children to exit the industry out of fear for their safety and well-being as a whole (Berarovich, 2014).

While these examples highlight the disapproval and judgement that family members may exude if participants were exposed, Grace, for instance, discusses the risk of completely severing familial bonds:

As in my family will kill me, like literally kill me. So, uh, obviously like I was born in Canada but my parents were not, and most of my family was not born in Canada so obviously culturally it just doesn't, doesn't slide. Like there's no way, you know? So it's just, obviously I'd never be able to see my family ever again.

In this quote, Grace highlights not only some of the more severe consequences associated with being exposed, but also the role of culture in perceptions of sex work. Specifically, she alludes to the fact that cultural attitudes towards sex work differ, and she perceives her family's culture as one that would be very unaccepting of her involvement in the sex industry. This can be explained through how the notion of sex work is incongruent with traditional conceptions of feminine virtue, such as being gentle, quiet, passive, and sexually innocent, and sexual practices beyond matrimonial boundaries are often considered immoral and thus, prohibited within many cultures (Sorajjakool & Benitez, 2015). However, while cultures may differ in their acceptance of sex work, sex work is universally understood as a controversial topic, and studies show that cultural understandings of sex workers as defying social norms, conceptions of good sexual

behaviour and accepted roles for women are commonplace (Sanders, 2008; Bullough & Bullough, 1987; Brock, 2000).

While nine participants noted that they would not willingly disclose their occupation to their family, everyone mentioned having friends who knew about their engagement in sex work. That being said, participants were selective about who they told. Alex sums up the sentiments of the majority of participants by stating that:

And so the people who I was talking to this about were people I knew that I could trust with the information basically and who wouldn't shame me or ask me weird invasive questions about what I was doing essentially.

Through this quote it is evident that participants were willing to disclose their involvement in sex work to friends that they perceived to be open-minded, respectful, and who would not breach their privacy. A significant body of research reports that all sex workers are faced with a dilemma of disclosure, which is widely described among sex workers across a variety of settings and personal characteristics (Abel & Fitzgerald, 2010; Basnyat, 2015; Closson et al., 2015; Forsyth & Deshotels, 1998; Ganju & Saggurti, 2017; King et al., 2013; Koken, 2012; Kong, 2006; Lazarus et al., 2012; Tomura, 2009). In some cases, workers attempt complete concealment of their job. However, this type of seclusion poses its own challenges because workers have to create cover stories to hide their work activities from partners, family and friends (Koken, Bimbi, Parsons & Halkitis, 2004). As such, as was reflected in the present study, many sex workers undertake a rational assessment of the risk of stigmatization in the decision to disclose or not on a case-by-case basis (Koken, 2012).

Working Outside of Sex Work

In the context of the challenges faced by student sex workers, several participants expressed their dismay at having to work another job in addition to sex work. However, despite

the profitability of sex work, because of its irregular income and fears of having gaps on their resumes, many participants viewed maintaining another job as necessary.

While working in the sex industry, seven participants mentioned simultaneously managing other jobs as well. This was in part because of the unpredictable income generated through sex work. Specifically, as Sarah puts it:

It's kind of like hit or miss, like you can sometimes get a lot, sometimes you might not get any. And then with this I only work two shifts a week as a steady kind of income 'cause I need money. But yeah. I feel like for me I'd say the sex work part would be an extra side job just to like add more money to it, and then my [other form of employment] and stuff would be the set, like for sure job that I have to pay money.

In a similar manner, Grace notes:

And yeah, then December came and I was doing, uh, I was working at a spa and I wasn't making that much money, so I applied for retail jobs. And, yeah. So I ended up getting a job in retail and I was doing, say working retail three days a week, and I would be at the sex worker job like one day a week at that point. So it was kind of, I had both.

As reflected through these quotes, it was necessary for some participants to have another job in addition to sex work in order to secure a regular source of income. This conclusion is reflected in studies which indicate that while there is always a demand for sex workers, that demand can fluctuate, and is dependent on the legal and political context in which sex workers operate (Palmisano, 2018; Duff et al., 2017). The enactment of Bill C-36 in Canada, for example, resulted in a significant decrease in the number of clients accessing sex work services for several months because of their fears of criminalization (Piat-Sauvé, 2015; Keep, 2016; Galbally, 2016). Likewise, the House bill known as the Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act (FOSTA), and the Senate bill, the Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act (SESTA) in the USA were created in an effort to curb sex trafficking online (Farokhmanesh, 2018). However, these bills were responsible for the closure of a host of advertising and review sites used by sex workers, most prominently Craigslist Personals and Backpage (Romano, 2018). The bill was intended to fight sex

trafficking, but it has had a major impact on the many sex workers who relied on the internet and its tools to access clients and thus make a living (McCombs, 2018). These examples illustrate that the unpredictable climate in which sex workers operate can affect sex workers' income security at any given time, and thus illuminates the reasons for which some students may see it as necessary to maintain a job outside of sex work.

In addition to wanting a consistent source of income, some participants also mentioned having a job outside of sex work in order to build their resume and acquire references for career development opportunities. Participants were particularly concerned about having gaps on their resumes, and how this may affect their ability to secure future employment. As Grace puts it, "In addition to working retail. I find that, I find it's very important to have, for me at least, it's important to have a legitimate job, 'legitimate' job, um in the meantime to avoid gaps in my resume". She goes on say that "But I like to have something, at least so, at least an actual reference I can call if I get a job, I have to have references", thus highlighting the importance of having references as well. In a similar fashion, Ella speaks of the impact that having a gap on her resume, resulting from sex work, had on her ability to secure employment:

My resume has Burger King when I was a kid, chunk missing of nothing, 10 years of nothing, and then Starbucks. Like it's just uh, it's hard and it was a friend that got me that first job and then I started school and placement and volunteer and that kind of just took off. But uh, that 10 years was literally, there's nothing on my resume and I wish I could put that on my resume.

These quotes are a clear indication of the value that participants' place on having a strong resume which will enable them to secure employment in the future. Further, they also speak to the ways in which sex work is frequently conceptualized as an illegitimate form of employment. While sex work researchers and the international sex workers' rights movement have been vocal in their conceptualization that sex work is a type of labour, this understanding has not fully

permeated popular and mainstream discourse (Sanders, 2005b). In fact, despite the invaluable skills and knowledge that workers can obtain through working in the sex industry, that are transferrable to most jobs, conceptualizations of sex work as an illegitimate form of employment tend to dominate much public debate (Raymond, 2013). As such, sex workers are left in a double bind where if they choose not to reveal their past in sex work, they may be left with inexplicable gaps on their resumes (Bell, 2009). However, if they include sex work in their resume, they will likely come up against entrenched stigma and discrimination (Flint, 2017).

Finally, student sex workers' concerns regarding career development highlight that they are thinking about sex work as a temporary means of employment. As Anne states, "Yeah so I'm just like yeah until I get on my feet of course that's going to be my side hustle". Here, Anne alludes to remaining in the sex industry until her economic circumstances enable her to quit. In a similar vein, Amelia notes that "Um, well I graduated from university and then I got a job that was like a full-time salaried position. And I continued doing it [sex work] through that and then um, I just kind of like, didn't need to anymore". Emphasizing Anne's point, Amelia discusses transitioning out of sex work when she no longer needed the extra income to survive. These quotations are a clear indication of how these participants did not consider sex work to be their career, but rather a means to another end.

The finding that student sex workers are combining sex work with other kinds of work is a relatively unique finding. This finding has, to my knowledge, only been discussed in one other study thus far: Sinacore et al.'s (2014) narrative analysis of female university students working in the sex industry. In this study, two of the student sex workers interviewed were working jobs outside of sex work (Sinacore et al., 2014). However, these students attributed their choice to obtain other forms of employment to a desire to build their resumes so as to not compromise

career development (Sinacore et al., 2014). In the current study, several participants raised a unique concern: that sex work did not provide them with a sufficient, or stable enough income to enable them to survive. This finding is significant, and worth further investigation to examine what factors affect students' ability to make a profit in the sex industry.

As seen throughout this Chapter, participants identified several risks and challenges associated with working in the sex industry, all of which could have mental, emotional, social and physical consequences. While the students interviewed for this study appeared to be aware of the potential downfalls of sex work, it is evident that they chose to enter, or remain in the industry because of its benefits, and attractive qualities, as discussed in Chapter 5. This suggests that student sex workers do not embody a 'false consciousness', but rather are making a reflexive negotiation of their options in the current social and economic climate (Nayar, 2016). They are rational actors making economic decisions based on a cost-benefit analysis.

Chapter 7: Students' Access to University Support Services

Moving beyond students' perceptions, motivations and experiences within the sex industry, this chapter explores a different aspect of student sex work: students' use of, and access to university support services. Very few of the students interviewed for this study accessed university support services in relation to their involvement in the sex industry, and this section will seek to highlight some of the reasons for this. In particular, I will be looking at students' general lack of awareness of existing services, their anonymity concerns, the shortfalls of existing services, which work to dissuade students from accessing support, and the reality that many student sex workers do not need or want targeted support services. Further, this chapter will also explore students' use of "informal" support networks, such as friends, co-workers and the digital sphere.

Lack of Awareness of Existing Services

In my research, I use the term 'support services' as a broad term that includes any services that offer general or specialized resources or assistance to student sex workers (e.g. sexual health centres, legal aid, counselling services, etc.). Participants that were interviewed for this study reported having varying levels of awareness of support services on-campus. While four participants indicated that they were very cognizant of the supports available to them, six cited having little to no knowledge of services that they could access if they needed support. Specifically, when asked if they were aware of the support services available on campus, these participants made statements such as: "Um, no" (Amelia), or "I don't really know what's available" (Lauren).

What these quotes highlight is that student awareness of support services on campus is not universal. While there are likely a variety of factors that contribute to students' knowledge,

or lack thereof of support services, several participants pointed to the issue of poor information circulation within the university as one possible explanation. Specifically, participants seemed to recognize that university support service organizations are limited in their outreach capabilities across campus, and thus viewed individual departments as responsible for circulating information to their students. As Anne notes, “Um, I just find like part of support services starts within your department. Like, you can only do so much outreach across campus”. She goes on to say that:

Like in my current department I felt like I had so many supports available even just by like what was posted on our bulletin boards, and they’re not necessarily coming out of the department they’re just like hey [...] here’s a clinic on like trauma work, here’s a clinic on self-care and mindfulness. Like they would actively advertise those things.

Likewise, when Ella expresses her frustration about being unaware of existing services, she attributes it to her department’s failure to effectively circulate important information “A lot of departments can’t circulate their own information, let alone anyone else’s. There’s a lack of communication in our system”.

These quotes allude to the critical role that academic departments play in supporting their students, and providing information about support services. This is relatively unsurprising because for many students, their academic department is often their first, and maybe only point of contact within the university (Dhillon, McGowan & Wang, 2008). Therefore, having departments circulate, or post advertisements for support services to departmental bulletins can provide students with information that they may not otherwise have ready access to. While a significant body of research speaks to the important role that academic departments have in students’ satisfaction within their program, and in university as a whole (Braxton, Bray & Berger, 2000; Kane, Williams & Cappuccini-Ansfield, 2008; Wayment & Dickson, 2008; Umbach & Porter, 2002; Corts, Lounsbury, Saudargas & Tatum, 2000), there appears to be a

dearth of information on the role of academic departments in providing non-academic support to students (Farr, 2018). As such, participants' insight into this subject provides avenues for future research.

Anonymity Concerns

In addition to a general lack of awareness of existing support services, when asked the reasons for which they were not accessing university support services, seven students mentioned their desire to stay anonymous in their work as a factor influencing their decision. Grace summarizes this succinctly by stating that:

I don't want, I don't even walk into the sexual health services at all. [...] I just know too many people on campus, I find that the actual, the, not the clinic, is it a clinic or is it just services? It's at a very very busy hall, like a super busy hall. Like hordes of people are walking through it all the time. So, yeah I don't feel comfortable going there, at all.

Similarly, Amelia reinforces the difficulties with accessing services on campus anonymously by stating that:

I would not have gone somewhere that was specifically labelled for sex workers because I feel like, especially at a university where it's so um, it's so self-contained. [...] If you're seen walking into that office it would constantly be like did somebody see me go in? Did somebody see me come out? And especially like your professors are also there, so if someone sees you coming out they're going to look at you differently and it's just, I think that would be a more, it would be difficult for people to access confidentially.

While these two quotes highlight students' fear of accessing specialized services that could be associated with sex work, students were also concerned with accessing general support services that did not offer sufficient privacy, such as resource centres, health clinics, and student-run organizations on campus. Jasmine notes that she would not access support services in relation to her participation in sex work because "there is potential still for someone else to overhear and tell someone else in my department. And like, there's the end of that". She also

goes on to say that “I definitely did not feel comfortable going to like um any like university clinic or whatnot to chat with people. Too open”.

These quotes are evidence of students’ desire to remain anonymous in sex work, and the effect that this can have on their willingness to access services on-campus. Principally, students do not want to access services that could in one way or another compromise their privacy. As such, if accessing formal support services, this research has shown that students often chose to do so off campus. Grace highlights this by stating her choice to access services off campus is because “I don’t know anyone there. It’s also that it’s more anonymous. At the campus I find there’s a lot of people I know. I go to school there”.

While there are many ways that universities could offer more anonymous, or private services, students indicated that present services have many shortfalls that also factored in to their decisions to not use existing formal support services.

Shortfalls of Existing Services

Even though most universities can give a long list of their student support services, it does not necessarily mean that all the services are actively functioning and benefiting the students effectively. There can be a discrepancy between the provision and the accessibility of support services. This was evidenced throughout participants’ discussions of their experiences with support services in post-secondary institutions. Specifically, participants mentioned feeling as though there was an insufficient number of services to meet the high student demand, and that health and counselling staff were not equipped to deal with disclosures of their engagement in sex work.

Demand for mental and physical health services at Canadian universities has reached an all-time high (Goffin, 2017). While the number of health and counselling appointments available

to students in Canadian universities has increased over time, attitudes expressed among the student body reflect that the demand for health and counselling resources still exceeds capacity (Goffin, 2017). Alex emphasized this point by discussing the insufficiency and irregularity of counselling appointments:

I only saw her [counsellor] 3 or 4 times but just like, I know that there are lots of waitlists and sometimes you only see your counsellor like once every four or five weeks. So arguably, like if you're going through a crisis, it's not enough. So I think that that was frustrating.

This participant goes on to state that their experiences were not limited to counselling:

Um or like, I get that because they are seeing so many students it's like really busy, but you know even seeing my doctor sometimes was like such a struggle. She would go on vacation all the time. I would be like where are you always going? Like I swear every three months she was out of the country. I was like what? But so like that was kind of frustrating. Just like not having a lot of ready access a lot of the time.

Likewise, Amelia states that by the time she entered the sex industry, she had used up her quota of counselling appointments and was told that she was not entitled to more:

Like I knew that there was like counsellors on campus, um I had accessed that in second year and they basically were like okay you've used up your quota of therapy, goodbye. So by the time I was actually in the industry it was long past that.

These quotes are evidence of the shortage of health and counselling services available to students. That students are unable to schedule regular appointments, or are being turned away reflects a serious disjuncture between students' needs and the accessibility of support services within post-secondary institutions (Giamos, Lee, Suleiman, Stuart & Chen, 2017). While this is problematic, it is also not uncommon. In fact, research has indicated that staff at post-secondary institutions in Ontario have begun, more than ever, to refer students off-campus, stating that is a necessary step to handle the volume and complexity of student needs (Jaworska, De Somma, Fonseka, Heck & MacQueen, 2016; Robinson, Jubenville, Renny & Cairns, 2016). However, the transition from on-campus to off-campus health services can leave major gaps in care; it forces

students to navigate a confusing system in a sometimes foreign city, often with the added barriers of long wait times and high financial costs (Goffin, 2017). This can result in students being unwilling or unable to access the care that they need. As such, in order to meet students' needs and ensure their well-being, universities may be forced to re-think the allocation of resources to health and counselling services. While the student sex workers interviewed for this study highlighted the insufficient number of support services on campus, it is of note that it is not solely student sex workers who are being affected by the shortage of health and counselling services. The needs of sex working students are not being met, but in a similar way, neither are the needs of other students.

Furthermore, when discussing whether students were satisfied with the quality of services provided to them, nine participants referred to the existing services as inadequate. Specifically, these students reported feeling as though university counsellors and health care staff were insufficiently equipped to provide support and guidance on topics such as sex work. Morgan emphasizes this during her interview by stating that:

I honestly wouldn't share that [sex work occupation] with counsellors. I honestly feel like not a lot of them would have experience talking about that. Especially people who go into counselling on university campuses. Um, at [Canadian university] anyways, a lot of the counselling department was more focused on academic counselling.

Likewise, Anne also discusses her choice to not access services in the context of counsellors not having the necessary skills to support her by noting that "I honestly don't think there's anyone on campus, to my knowledge, who would specifically meet my needs". Correspondingly, Jasmine notes feeling as though health and counselling staff would not know how to manage disclosures of students' involvement in the sex industry:

But like, I go to health and counselling now for like support and such and I still wouldn't necessarily like, I don't say this completely in a negative way but I don't think I would get the vibe that, they wouldn't understand. Like maybe they wouldn't be judgemental and negative, but I feel like there would be either that kind of sympathy like oh you poor thing that you turned to the sex industry. Um, but it's like no, dude, I chose this. I chose and I

was cool with it. Um or there wouldn't be any understanding. It would be like talking with someone that just didn't really get what you were saying.

Moreover, while Jasmine was not particularly concerned with service providers being judgemental of her participation in sex work, several participants did mention their fear of judgement as a factor affecting their willingness to access sex work-related support. Amelia, in particular, referred to judgement several times throughout their interview as a significant concern, and factor affecting their choice to not disclose their involvement in sex work to counsellors that they were seeing:

I definitely thought that even if I went from like the psychiatrists to one of the therapists at [Canadian university] that they would have a similar oh you need to stop doing that, that's like unhealthy, that's bad behaviour, and um, because I know that that's a lot of services, like a lot of services are like that.

Alex also mentioned judgement in relation to accessing support services on campus, disclosing that:

And so I didn't stay, I stopped seeing that counsellor for a little bit but I didn't mention doing sex work with that counsellor, just because I was worried that she was going to just be judgey and be like this is terrible for your mental health so you should stop and all this stuff.

Alex elaborates on this, relating their concerns of judgement to the stigma that surrounds the sex industry by stating that:

They [counsellors] have all these negative perceptions and like oftentimes they are grounded in reality, that like sex workers are marginalized people who experience a lot of violence, who typically don't have a lot of support, like all these things that we know about like the sex industry, based on understandings of what it is. Um and like I didn't want that extra layer of judgement there. Especially because with like psychiatrists, or my doctors and stuff like that, I already had this issue of feeling like they didn't think that I was trying hard enough or they didn't think I was doing enough self-care so I didn't want to give them more ammunition to be like oh if you really wanted to recover or you really wanted to get better, then you would stop doing this. You know most mainstream mental health services are so basically individual, like your choices that you make, that you choose to do and your behaviour, it's just like. They don't really make it safe for people to disclose that they are in the industry because the judgement that comes with it is so counterintuitive to recovery. So as backwards as it is to react that way, or to react to a disclosure like that, most people

don't get it. And that's why so many of us won't bring up, won't disclose because we know it might result in like shittier care basically.

Students' perceptions of the ways in which health and counselling staff are both unprepared to manage disclosures of their engagement in sex work, and fears of judgement contributes to students' lack of comfort with accessing support services. This creates a challenging situation wherein students may not access services that could otherwise be beneficial. As Grace notes "I wouldn't feel comfortable, if I were ever to be assaulted during work, I wouldn't tell anyone. I wouldn't, um, go to some type of service at school, you know. I wouldn't do that". While counsellors and healthcare providers are supposed to be supportive and caring, they are not always trained in, aware of, or aligned with a rights-based framework, or may not have basic understanding of issues such as consent, safety, harm reduction, being sex-positive or kink-positive, and more (Takeuchi, 2018). While some of these traits would prove to be particularly beneficial to student sex workers, it is of note that many would benefit the student population as a whole. As such, it is crucial for health and counselling staff to curate an environment where they display compassion and acceptance, and be trained on supporting the diverse needs of all students. As will be discussed when looking at support service recommendations, the student sex workers interviewed for this study had several suggestions on how this could be achieved.

Not Needing Support Services

In addition to being deterred by the shortfalls of existing services, five students stated that they had not accessed support services either on or off campus in relation to their sex work because they did not need formal support. Specifically, some students perceived themselves as not having had bad, or harmful experiences that would justify the use of services, and others simply felt as though they had no need for support.

Amelia mentioned feeling as though her experiences did not warrant the use of support services when discussing why she had not accessed any throughout her time in the sex industry.

In particular, she said that:

Um and it seems to be more for people who are in need of assistance, whereas I never felt like I was in danger. I think if I felt um, if I had felt that I, that something bad had happened to me I would've gone there for assistance.

In accordance with Amelia, Jasmine notes, "And I think also because I wasn't like, I had what I would consider some spooky experiences, but I didn't have anything particularly... difficult, or potentially sexually violent occur. So I didn't need services in that sense". Likewise, Grace states that "I don't really need it, actually. I don't need it, really. I haven't had any bad experiences, um, so I don't think it's necessary for me".

These quotes emphasize the fact that students perceive support services as something to be accessed in response to having a bad experience. This makes sense, because limited services exist for those seeking information or support prior to experiencing harm (Palermo, 2018). On the contrary, most services focus on crisis intervention (Palermo, 2018). While a prevention approach has long been promoted in the field of public health, and has more recently become encouraged in many health care sectors, other areas of practice have lagged behind (McCave & Rishel, 2011). This is especially true within the university setting. As a result of a high demand for services, many universities will not even offer health or counselling appointments to students who wish to access services as a preventative measure (Quinn, Wilson, MacIntyre & Tinklin, 2009).

Additionally, other students cited not needing support services because they were generally content in their circumstances. As Morgan puts it "I was fine and I was happy with what I was doing, and I feel like I had reasonable boundaries about it, and yeah. It was not

something that I needed support about”. Likewise, Lauren did not feel as though support services had anything to offer her, “I feel like I’m doing okay on my own right now, and I don’t know, I don’t see what the university could do for my sex work”.

The research available on sex workers typically focuses on the harmful aspects of the sex industry (Burnes, Long & Schept, 2012). Sex work is assumed to be inherently dangerous and sex workers as in dire need of interventions to reduce harm related to STIs, violence, criminal activity, abuse, and drugs (Rekart, 2005). However, as demonstrated through these quotations, this is not always the case. Some students are content, and thriving within their working environment and thus do not require formal support services or intervention of any kind. This is important, and worthy of emphasis because it challenges some of the negative stereotypes and connotations associated with sex work.

Beyond University Support Services

Despite the fact that some participants mentioned not needing formal supports, all participants cited their use of informal supports, such as friends, co-workers and digital mediums, as ways to ensure their well-being and mitigate potential consequences associated with sex work. The information that will be discussed in this section highlights not only the importance of informal support services, but also the reasons for which students may feel as though they do not need formal support services.

Reliance on friends both inside and outside of the sex industry was mentioned by nine participants as a form of support that they utilized regularly throughout their time in sex work. Sarah makes note of this when talking about the role that her friends play in debriefing, “So with my close friends, I tell them because like I like to tell them everything that happens and bounce

things off them and stuff”. Jasmine echoes this statement with regards to her friends outside of the sex industry:

I think my main support frameworks would have been friends. Because I had two friends that during the actual time of me working within it, knew I was doing so. They didn’t know details, but they knew like my location and certain timing, and they knew I was doing it. And so they were like my support people.

While students accessed support from friends outside the industry, they also sought support from fellow sex workers. Anne highlights that:

All this to say my best support is off campus, oh and also just kind of like word of mouth with like fellow sex workers we really do support each other and it’s sad that like, in dealing with our own trauma, and our own just like experiences just with like shitty people doing shitty things to us, we’ve had to become informal social workers and counsellors. And we don’t get the recognition of how like high quality our work is in those like pseudo positions.

In a like manner, Morgan states, “I don’t feel like I needed support services but that was just because I had other friends who I know who I worked with and debriefed with”.

As seen through these quotes, both friends and fellow workers play a critical role in the provision of support for student sex workers. This speaks to research which has continuously highlighted the importance of peer support (Mead, Hilton & Curtis, 2001; Solomon, 2004; Repper & Carter, 2011; Davidson, Chinman, Sells & Rowe, 2006). Peer support can be defined as the process of giving and receiving knowledge, help and support from individuals within similar conditions or circumstances (Tracy & Wallace, 2016). The benefits of peer support are wide-ranging and can include, but are not limited to, the provision of a safe environment to freely express emotions and thoughts about one’s current situation, discussing experiences and learning from others in similar situations, reducing isolation and feelings of loneliness, and sharing knowledge about available community resources and practical support (Mather, 2014; Ellis, Marsh & Craven, 2009). Peer support has been shown to be especially advantageous to

marginalized populations, such as sex workers, who may otherwise be reluctant to seek out support from formal sources in trepidation of experiencing stigma by service providers (Tomura, 2009; Koken, 2012; Jeal & Sulisbury, 2004).

In addition to peer support, all participants in this study noted their use of the digital sphere as both a resource to access support and information. In her interview, Anne discussed her use of the online resources offered by sex worker organizations:

I definitely check out Maggie's website and like POWER stuff. Once a week for POWER and then maybe once or twice a month for Maggie's? And if there's something of note, uh, or something specific I'm researching I'll be on there like very frequently.

Comparably, Grace stated that before entering the sex industry, she did substantial online research, "I was actually doing my own research from January to May. For about five months, basically just watching any video I could find, reading any article I could find. Yeah basically anything I could find online". On top of accessing information, Grace also uses the internet to connect with other sex workers, "So Twitter is a huuuge platform of, it's sex worker Twitter". She elaborates on this by saying that, "they [sex workers] also tweet about like issues, like that they face. Um, you know, a lot of discussion happens. So I've actually found that Twitter is actually one of the best resources".

Apart from research or community-building, participants also used digital mediums to take safety precautions. For example, Alex discusses their use of a mobile application to help ensure their safety:

Like there's this app, it's called BSafe basically. It's like a tracker on your phone so you can like add people like emergency contacts, like your friends, or parents. I obviously wouldn't use my parents but it will let them know what your location is basically and there's a timer basically so you know if you don't check in on the app again in like, within an hour or something then it will like call your friend or something. You know? It's like a safety thing.

As seen through these quotes, the digital sphere is frequently used as a source of informal support for sex workers. That all the sex workers interviewed for this study used digital mediums to access information and support is significant, and highlights a changing landscape in the provision of support services. This is reflected by a growing body of research that looks at the use of online tools in the provision of information and support to individuals seeking non-discriminatory community and resources (Batenburg & Das, 2015; Pfeil & Zaphiris, 2009). The internet can provide student sex workers with a non-judgmental and supportive environment where they can acquire information and interact with others who share common interests, experiences, or concerns (Coulson, 2017). Additionally, with the rise of high speed internet connections and web enabled cell phones, it is easier than ever to find and access information on the internet at all times (Day & Lloyd, 2007). In an increasingly interconnected and technological world, it is inevitable that sex workers are progressively using the digital sphere more frequently to access various types of support.

This chapter has provided a succinct overview of student sex workers' interactions with university support services. Although not many of the participants had accessed university support services related to their involvement in sex work, they were all able to give a clear and concise overview of the factors affecting their willingness to use existing services. While there appeared to be a range of factors dissuading students from accessing support, it was evident that these factors stemmed from both internal (fear of judgement, anonymity concerns) and external (inadequacy of existing services) causes. Moreover, it was also noted that many students did not feel as though they needed support services, despite widespread understandings of sex work as harmful and sex workers themselves as in need of interventions. Additionally, this chapter made it clear that while students may not be accessing formal support services, they have found other

means of acquiring support, such as through friends, co-workers and the digital sphere. Students' discussion of their use of technology as a resource to access support and information is especially pertinent in this digital-age, and highlights an area in need of further exploration.

Chapter 8: Benefiting from the Implementation of Support Services in Post-Secondary Institutions

Following an analysis of student sex workers' interactions with university support services, this Chapter seeks to explore their perspectives regarding the usefulness of support services as a whole. Specifically, whether or not student sex workers view support services as beneficial, and how existing services could be improved to better meet their needs. As will become evident from my findings, the student sex workers interviewed for this study unanimously agreed that support services are essential. However, in the context of the shortfalls of existing services discussed in Chapter 7, many stated that they have not, and would not access existing services in their current state. As such, in order to gain insight into the needs of student sex workers, I asked participants what types of services, if any, they thought would enhance their life, and the lives of student sex workers as a whole. In response to this question, I received an influx of thoughtful answers. Discussed in this chapter are only some of the suggestions that were raised, and those that represent a multitude of student views.

Importance of Support Services

While not all participants said that they needed services, all participants emphasized the importance of having information and supports available. Ella, for instance, stated that, "services are definitely required and definitely needed". In accordance with Ella, Jasmine also emphasized the reasons for which support services are regarded as essential, drawing on how they can positively impact student sex workers by stating:

I think the emotional supports, and not feeling isolated, especially like if this is the only job that you are having as a student, and you do have a bad experience, um, or you're having just general difficulties, not feeling like you have to completely do it on your own [...]. So like having those supports so you're not feeling alone. And also so that you can, if it's something that you can work through, um that maybe you just need that sort of emotional support to help you work through it, I think that would be really good. And I

think not feeling isolated too in the sense of like maybe if there were support groups on campus, people would figure out ways to overcome. So if they were having the consistent issue of clients being overly aggressive or whatnot, being able to talk with someone who is well within the industry to be like this is what I found was a really good way of filtering people in advance, or this is a particular trait that I often pick up on and decide like nope, high risk sort of thing. So I think it would really enhance the safety and just the comfort and security of students doing it.

Similarly, Alex mentioned that:

Being able to have those spaces where you can talk about what your experiences are, or if you're curious, so you can have a safe space to ask questions because there are so many risks associated with the industry it's really important that you have as much information going into it as possible because that's how a lot of people experience a lot of violence.

These quotes highlight both the importance of support services, and their potential to help mitigate some of the risks associated with working in the sex industry. It has been well documented within the literature that sex workers are often confronted with issues such as social marginalization, criminalized work environments, poverty and violence (Bungay, 2013; Phillips & Benoit, 2005; Smye, Brown, Varcoe & Josewki, 2011). These realities create a vital need for tailored support services that meet the multiple and complex needs of sex workers. Additionally, there is a substantial body of research highlighting the importance of targeted and specialized services for sex workers (Ward & Day, 1997; Platt, 2013; Bodkin et al., 2015; Majic, 2014). While it is crucial to recognize the diversity of service users and their support needs, the sex workers interviewed for this study offered suggestions as to what services could positively impact their lives, and the lives of student sex workers as a whole.

Support Service Recommendations

Throughout the ten interviews that took place for this study, participants made numerous support service recommendations. When asked if they were satisfied with the services available to them, a disproportionate number of participants said no. However, they were able to offer insight into how services could be improved to meet their needs. Specifically, students

mentioned having health and counselling staff trained in supporting student sex workers, an increased presence of the red umbrella symbol on campus, a wider circulation of resources for student sex workers, and opportunities for group support as potentially beneficial.

While students recognized that it was unlikely that it would be possible to have a health and counselling staff member solely dedicated to meeting the needs of student sex workers, four participants spoke of the benefits of increasing staff knowledge on how to effectively support sex workers, and manage disclosures. For instance, this could involve training on avoiding the use of offensive, or judgement-laden language about sex work, not making assumptions about workers' needs, wants and history, and increasing staff knowledge of sex work-specific services. Lauren highlighted her desire to have counsellors equipped in discussing topics relating to sex work by stating that "Um, maybe a counsellor or something that was trained for sex workers, I think that would be awesome. Because like there's a huge stigma around it, and people don't understand that it's a job". Similarly, Jasmine said that "So maybe like the way that you might have a specialized counsellor for sexual violence, or you might have for eating disorders and whatnot, it would be a good idea for them to have one [for sex work]". What Lauren and Jasmine appear to be alluding to in these quotes is the ways in which having counsellors trained on supporting sex workers could help workers feel more comfortable accessing services, lessen their fears of judgement by service providers, and increase the quality of care they receive.

Furthermore, three participants also suggested increasing the presence of the red umbrella symbol on campus. When asked what types of services, if any, would enhance their life and the lives of student sex workers as a whole, Amelia answered: "maybe a sign saying sex worker positive areas would have been helpful, like in on-campus organizations". While not stating the use of a red umbrella in particular, in this response, Amelia alludes to the importance of

organizations making it clear that they support sex workers. The red umbrella symbol is the worldwide symbol of the sex workers' rights movement (Mooney, 2018). As such, its presence can play an important role in making sex worker safe areas explicit. Being explicit is crucial, as Jasmine notes:

Like you need to be explicitly like we are a safe space for sex workers, the same way you do with like trans and whatnot. Like you have to specify it because if you don't, I'm going to go with the default of what the majority of society is, which is like oh yeah it's cool that prostitutes exist but like I'm not cool with being one and I'm not cool with chatting with you about being one, or your friends.

In a similar vein, Morgan highlights the way that the red umbrella can play an important role in legitimizing sex worker positive services:

I don't know, if some kind of sex work support service group popped up on campus, knowing the culture at [Canadian university] I would be suspicious and like I would be like, is this some anti-trafficking group that's trying to get women to stop being sex workers? I would be really suspicious at first. But if like it was legit, and had a red umbrella or some shit, yeah, like that's definitely important and I think that there should always be more resources available to people, like specific targeted resources.

Through these quotes, it is evident that the red umbrella symbol, or similar signage, is an important factor in sex workers' decisions to access services. Specifically, the presence of a red umbrella indicates to sex workers that they can access a service, and disclose their involvement in the sex industry without judgement. If no signage is present, workers are likely to assume that the space is not a safe place for them to disclose. As such, by having on-campus organizations use the red umbrella symbol, and increase its circulation on campus, sex workers may feel more comfortable accessing a wider range of services and support.

Additionally, increasing the circulation of information (e.g. resource sheets and sex worker organization pamphlets) on campus for student sex workers was recommended by eight of the participants interviewed for this study. As it stands, participants noted that the sex work-related information available to them on campus was limited, if not nonexistent. Therefore,

having more widespread information about the sex industry would facilitate access to resources and support services. When discussing a suggestion to make sex worker organization pamphlets available on campus, Ella stated that “I really enjoy the pamphlet idea, and I feel like that would help break stigma, and bring understanding and education to those people whether they know about it, or not”. Likewise, Lauren said “I would totally use that. That’s so smart”. These students expressed enthusiasm at the thought of having sex work-related information available on-campus, signifying a clear need for this type of resource. Amelia elaborates on the provision of sex work-related resources on-campus by providing examples as to how this information could be circulated:

Um I think that it would be best to circulate it through um, like more women-accessed elements of [university]. Um like the women’s bathrooms, or even organizations on campus could like shout it out through their Twitter accounts. Um, and like stuff like that just so that people can see it. Everyone sees it and then if you need it you can go so it’s not like I have to go to the centre and request the information, it’s just available. That would be good.

Likewise, Sarah suggests:

I know there’s people that don’t want people to know about it and stuff, but even, you know how in [area on campus] there’s always tables and booths and stuff, even if they had sometimes like a table talking about sex work and the fact that it’s okay and some people do this, and how to stay smart and safe and stuff like that, that could even be helpful because then people will see it and it might like help with the stigma around it. And also if people actually see it and are like oh I do that or I’m interested in it, here get some information.

Through these suggestions, it becomes evident that sex workers view the availability of information as an important element of service provision. This assertion is supported by contemporary social work research, which indicates that service outreach is critical to increasing the level of public knowledge of services and facilitating people’s access to them (Baltar Moreno, 2014). Although numerous definitions and descriptions circulate, a point of commonality in these different definitions and descriptions is that outreach practices ‘reach out’

to target, offer services, engage and bring individuals or groups who are left without care into contact with social support and social services (Olivet, Bassuk, Elstad, Kenney & Jassil, 2010; Szeintuch, 2014). Outreach work embodies an “attempt to take a service to people who may need it and who would otherwise probably not use services” (Pierson & Thomas, 1995, p.371). As such, as supported by the conclusions drawn from this study, outreach is identified as a positive strategy to increase student sex workers’ access to support services (DeChiara, Unruh, Wolff, Rosen & Huppert, 2001).

Finally, several participants suggested having support groups available for student sex workers to discuss their experiences, or learn from others in the industry. As previously mentioned, the majority of participants were already seeking peer support from friends or coworkers. However, not all participants had reliable, ready access to this form of support. As such, an organized group may afford all student sex workers the opportunity to access peer support. This is important, because as Alex succinctly puts it:

I think having social supports would be important. So being able to meet other people who are also in the industry and who are also students. Just to kind of talk about stuff I think would be really really cool.

Correspondingly, Jasmine states that “if there was like some sort of a group in person, like a closed discussion group with those who work in the industry and whatnot, like a support group, um, and it was, like I think I would have liked that and that would have been of interest”.

Likewise, Rachel states that “Yeah, um, like maybe meetings with people also doing the same thing as you, and no one else. Like only people that are doing it. Yeah. Just to like talk through it”.

These quotes highlight the interest that several participants expressed in accessing group support. Numerous studies have demonstrated the benefits of group support, emphasizing that it

has the potential to foster empowerment by building solidarity among participants, as well as with other sex workers in the community (Swendeman, Basu, Das, Jana & Rotheram-Borus, 2009). Further, it allows participants to form positive relationships that can mitigate isolation brought on by stigma, and provides opportunities for knowledge and resource sharing (Benoit et al., 2017).

This section provides not only an overview of the reasons for which support services may be beneficial to student sex workers, but also their usefulness to all students. Furthermore, as seen throughout the support service recommendations that they provided, the student sex workers interviewed for this study offered a comprehensive list of services that would enhance their lives. While there was variation in these recommendations, this highlights the importance of offering a range of flexible services in order to meet the varying needs of this population.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

This thesis contributes to a small body of research that attempts to provide nuanced societal understandings of student sex work in a Canadian context. The principal aim of this study was to explore students' motivations for entering the sex industry, their working experiences, as well as their use of university support services. In order to do so, I conducted qualitative semi-structured interviews with ten Canadian student sex workers in the city of Ottawa, Ontario. While this approach is not without its drawbacks, given the constraints of conducting research on sex work, it was well-suited to drawing out the lived experiences of interviewees.

My findings have revealed that the experiences of student sex workers are complex. While there were many commonalities in their experiences, each student had unique reasons for entering the sex industry and experiences therein. This research represents a snapshot of their lived realities, and highlights common or recurring themes in the way student sex workers presented their experiences of their working situations and conditions.

The current study found that students had various motivations for entering the sex industry. Chief among those mentioned were the economic benefits. The economic benefits of sex work enabled students to pay for the costs associated with post-secondary education, such as tuition, school supplies and student loans. In addition, the high profits accrued through sex work minimized the time that students had to spend working, thus enabling them to focus more time on other tasks and allowing them to achieve a work-life balance that they were satisfied with. Although the economic benefits were a key motivating factor for students' engagement in sex work, this was not the sole explanation that participants gave for working in the sex industry. Contrary to narratives which focus on economic need to the exclusion of other accounts,

participants had diverse reasons for which they viewed sex work as an attractive form of employment. In addition to the profitability of sex work, participants cited various psychological benefits to working in the sex industry, such as increased self-confidence, feelings of desirability and empowerment. These factors were identified as important variables that kept them in the sex industry. Moreover, the findings of this study reveal that the flexibility offered by sex work is very appealing to students. Having flexible employment was cited as crucial for students that needed to make time allowances for schoolwork, such as completing assignments and studying for exams. Additionally, the convenience of being able to schedule meet-ups with clients around existing class schedules is very conducive to the student lifestyle (Sanders & Hardy, 2015; Sinacore et al., 2014; Haeger & Deil-Amen, 2010; Roberts et al., 2010; Betzer et al., 2015). Therefore, it appears as though the flexibility of sex work offers particular benefits to students, who often have a variety of demands on their time.

Although the results of this study indicated that there were many benefits to working in the sex industry, there were also challenges and risks. Consistent with the literature, the students in this study reported that sex work left them vulnerable to violence (Haeger & Deil-Amen, 2010; Raphael & Shapiro, 2004; Shannon et al., 2009; Semple et al., 2015). While participants cited taking numerous precautions to ensure their safety, physical danger was still emphasized as a major perceived and realized risk to working in the sex industry. Participants recounted seeing and hearing about violence against sex workers, as well as experiencing it first-hand. Violence in sex work was noted by participants as a manifestation of the social and legal climate in which sex workers operate wherein sex work is stigmatized and conceptualized as an illegitimate form of work. It is for this reason that many sex work activists emphasize the importance of categorizing sex work as labour, because by being excluded from the class of “worker” they are

exposed to increased stigma, and denied many of the social and legal rights afforded to other workers (Lacombe, 1994; Sanders, 2005b). They are also prevented, through legislative restrictions in Canada, from organizing their work in ways which might increase their safety (Silliker, 2017). The presence of other situational factors, such as aggression, isolation and male clients were also noted by participants as impacting their safety.

Another noteworthy risk identified by student sex workers was the potential to be exposed. Students reported having to keep their work a secret in order to avoid prejudice, as well as feelings of shame and embarrassment that could result from having their sex worker identity revealed to, among others, friends, family, university staff, and future employers. Concealment was a theme that was woven throughout my findings, and through various boundary negotiation techniques, the majority of the student sex workers interviewed for this study sought to keep their personal and work lives fully segmented.

Additionally, identified by participants as a challenging aspect of sex work, a significant finding in this research was that students are working jobs outside the sex industry, in addition to sex work. Other than the current study, one existing small-scale Canadian study (Sinacore et al., 2014) has discussed students working in sex work while maintaining another job to ensure career development. However, no other studies have suggested that students are having to work outside the sex industry because the income that they are receiving through sex work is irregular, and not substantial enough for them to survive. This is significant, as it counters existing research which suggests that financial factors alone make students turn to sex work, as well as remain in the industry (Chapman, 2001; Dolman, 2008; Haeger & Deil-Amen, 2010; Roberts et al., 2010).

Through this study, students' access to university support services was also explored. Here, it became evident that many problems exist in the ways that current support services are

delivered on campus. Participants spoke of their lack of awareness of existing services, anonymity concerns, and the shortfalls of existing services as factors affecting their willingness to access university support services. While these issues were all discussed in relation to sex work, it became clear in this chapter that the issues with current support services can affect all students. As such, while student sex workers do face unique challenges as a result of their participation in sex work, they also encounter the same struggles, and have many of the same support needs as all other students. In some cases, this may mean not needing any support at all. In fact, many participants cited thriving in sex work without the use of formal support services. Whether that be because they simply did not need any, or because they had found other means of accessing support, such as through friends, co-workers and the digital sphere.

Although few students interviewed for this study accessed university support services, almost all of them identified the importance of having support services available. As such, in order to improve the current delivery of services, participants provided thorough recommendations that could be used to increase the well-being of sex workers in post-secondary institutions. While these suggestions were made with sex workers in mind, many have the potential to benefit all students, and other marginalized groups in particular.

Furthermore, this research has also identified several key areas for future research. To date, most of what is known about the experiences of student sex workers comes from anecdotal reports that have been filtered through the media. As is typically the case with accounts of individuals working in the sex trade, such media often focuses on the more sensationalist aspects of student sex work, resulting in the true lived experiences of student sex workers becoming unclear. As a result, there is a need for further research on student sex work. In particular, this phenomenon warrants attention in Canada, where limited research has been conducted thus far.

For the most part, existing studies on student sex work have been conducted in the UK and have focused primarily on the financial reasons for students choosing to enter the sex industry (Roberts et al., 2013; Roberts et al., 2010; Roberts et al., 2007; Sanders & Hardy, 2015; Haeger & Deil-Amen, 2010). Given the differences in the Canadian and UK university systems and fee structures, more Canada-specific studies are needed. While this research sought to make a contribution to filling this gap, and was successful in furthering the knowledge on student sex work in a Canadian context, it is only one representation of the complexity of student sex work and there are a variety of outstanding areas of research that will better help nuance this understanding. Further, this research is bound by its geographic location, and a broader geographic sample is necessary to make claims about other Canadian cities, and help to place Ottawa, Ontario into a wider Canadian context.

Additionally, more research is also needed on students' experiences with support services within post-secondary institutions. While it became evident through this study that many student sex workers do not view themselves as needing support, it is important that university faculty members are aware of students' participation in sex work, and are adequately equipped to assist them if needed. In light of the stigma associated with sex work, faculty members need to examine their own biases about sex workers so that they are prepared to support these students without prejudice and facilitate their ability to access and benefit from university services.

This study also highlighted students' lack of awareness of existing support services in post-secondary institutions. That many students are unaware of the services available to them on campus is troubling, and highlights a need for universities to reconsider the ways in which information about support services is distributed to students. Although students may not need, or access such services, information on what is available could still prove to be useful to those who

may consider accessing services, or recommending them to others at another time. More research in this area is required to gain a clearer understanding of how information should be advertised to students, whether that be through individual departments, as suggested by the participants in this study, or through other means.

In addition, sex workers use of the digital sphere was a recurring theme in this project. Although not originally intended to be a major focus of this thesis, it was repeatedly mentioned in participant interviews. Not only are online platforms being used to access clients, they are also used as a means for sex workers to connect with each other, and access information on the sex industry; including ways to maximize their safety. Given the barriers sex workers encounter when attempting to access conventional in-person social services, such as the stigma enacted through service providers' language and judgmental attitudes, the digital sphere can provide non-discriminatory and enabling environments for sex workers to access information, as well as connect with other sex workers (Lazarus et al., 2012).

Finally, this research did not interrogate the trajectory of student sex workers, and their transition, or lack thereof, out of sex work. While many identified sex work as a temporary form of employment, rather than a long-term career, more research is needed on students' decisions to exit, or remain in the industry once their post-secondary education is complete.

Overall, there is a lot of room for new and innovative research in the field of student sex work, particularly within a Canadian context. However, this study provided valuable information on Canadian student sex workers' motivations for entering the sex industry and the risks and challenges that they encountered while working in sex work. I was also able to provide, based on participants' experiences and suggestions, several indications as to the gaps in existing support services, and how these gaps could be addressed. It is my hope that this research provided

student sex workers with a platform to share their experiences, and that the findings will be used to improve the working conditions of student sex workers and decrease barriers that limit their ability to access services.

Appendices

Appendix A: Participants' Demographic Data

Participant Name	Race	Sexual Orientation	Age	Occupation	Education Level	Relationship Status
Morgan	White	Queer	28	Camming/Selling Underwear	Master's	Single
Alex	Black	Pansexual	22	Camming/Escort	Bachelor's	In a Relationship
Jasmine	White/ Persian	Pansexual	21	Sugar Baby	Bachelor's	Single
Anne	White/South Asian	Queer	26	Exotic Dancer	Master's	Single
Grace	Black	Heterosexual	21	Erotic Masseur/ Escort	Bachelor's	Single
Amelia	White/Native	Bisexual	24	Sugar Baby	Master's	Single
Rachel	White	Heterosexual	19	Escort	Bachelor's	Single
Ella	White	Bisexual	33	Escort/Sugar Baby	Bachelor's	In a Relationship
Sarah	White	Bisexual	19	Selling Underwear	Bachelor's	Single
Lauren	White	Bisexual	20	Selling Underwear/ Camming	Bachelor's	In a Relationship

Appendix B: Letter of Invitation



Carleton
UNIVERSITY

Letter of Invitation

Canada's Capital University

Title: The Labour of Paying for Education: An Exploration of Student Sex Work in Canada

Date of ethics clearance: July 19th, 2018

Ethics Clearance for the Collection of Data Expires: July 31st, 2019

Dear Madam,

My name is Emily Hammond and I am a Master's student in the Pauline Jewett Institute of Women's and Gender Studies at Carleton University. I am under the supervision of Professor Megan Rivers-Moore.

I am writing to you today to invite you to participate in a study on student sex work in Canada. This study aims to explore the characteristics of post-secondary students' engagement in sex work, including motives, personal experiences, and use of support services both on and off campus.

This study involves one 45-60 minute interview that will take place in a mutually convenient, safe location, or via Skype. With your consent, interviews will be audio-recorded. Once the recording has been transcribed, the audio-recording will be destroyed.

This project will ask you about your engagement in sex work. Precautions will be taken to protect your identity (using pseudonyms and changing identifying information). All responses will be confidential and you can request that certain responses be excluded from the final project. Should you experience any distress during the interview, you will be provided with contact information for counselling services available nearby. This information will also be provided at the end of the interview or at any time if requested by you. In addition, participants are not obliged to answer every question, and can choose to end the interview at any time, for any reason.

You may withdraw at any time, up to January 1st, 2019 by letting me or my research supervisor know. If you choose to withdraw, all the information you provided will be destroyed.

As a token of appreciation, I will provide a \$15 amazon.ca gift card which is yours to keep, even if you withdraw from the study.

All research data, including audio-recordings and any notes will be encrypted. Any hard copies of data (including any handwritten notes or USB keys) will be kept in a locked cabinet at Carleton University. Research data will only be accessible by the researcher and the research supervisor.

This ethics protocol for this project was reviewed by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board, which provided clearance to carry out the research (Clearance #109016). Should you have questions or concerns related to your involvement in this research, please contact:

CUREB-A:

If you have any ethical concerns with the study, please contact Dr. Bernadette Campbell, Chair, Carleton University Research Ethics Board-A (by phone at 613-520-2600 ext. 2517 or via email at ethics@carleton.ca).

If you would like to participate in this research project, or have any questions, please contact me at emily.hammond@carleton.ca. My supervisor can be reached at megan.riversmoore@carleton.ca/613-520-2600 ext. 3201.

Sincerely,

Emily Hammond



Do *YOU* want to be part of a study that explores student's participation in sex work in Canada?

To participate in this study, you must:

- ✓ *Be enrolled in a post-secondary institution*
- ✓ *Identify as a woman*
- ✓ *Engage in sex work in Canada*
- ✓ *Be 18+ years old*



This study aims to explore the experiences of post-secondary students' participation in sex work in Canada, including motives, personal experiences, and use of support services both on and off campus.

This study involves one 45-60 minute individual, semi-structured interview. Participants will be compensated with a \$15 amazon.ca gift card for participation in this study.

The ethics protocol for this project was reviewed by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board, which provided clearance to carry out the research (Clearance #109016). If you have any ethical concerns with the study, please contact Dr. Bernadette Campbell, Chair, Carleton University Research Ethics Board-A (by phone at 613-520-2600 ext. 2517 or via email at ethics@carleton.ca).

Please contact the researcher, Emily Hammond, for more details on this study at emily.hammond@carleton.ca.

Appendix D: Interview Questions

Demographic information:

1. What is your gender?
2. What is your sexual orientation?
3. What is your race?
4. What is your age?
5. What is your occupation?
6. What is your education level?
 - a. Are you currently in school?
 - b. Do you have any student debt?
7. Do you mind me asking if you are married, or in a relationship?
 - a. Can you tell me a little more about that?

Q1: Why is sex work an attractive form of employment for women pursuing post-secondary education?

1. How long have you been working in the sex industry?
2. Is your current position the only position that you have occupied within the sex industry?
 - a. If not, what other positions have you occupied within the sex industry?
3. Is sex work your only source of income?
 - a. If not, what are your other sources of income?
4. How did you find out about your current occupation (e.g. online, poster, word of mouth, etc.)?
5. Will you continue to work in the sex industry when you are no longer a student?
6. What are your reasons for joining the sex industry?

Q2: What are the benefits and consequences (financial, psychosocial, etc.) that students have encountered through working in the sex industry?

1. Do you enjoy your current occupation?
 - a. Why or why not?

3. In your experience, are there benefits to working in the sex industry while enrolled as a post-secondary student?
 - a. If yes, what are they?
4. Have you experienced any consequences as a result of working in the sex industry?
 - a. If yes, what were they?
5. What risks, if any, do you feel you take while working in the sex industry?
6. Does anyone know that you are a sex worker?
 - a. Why have you chosen to reveal, or not reveal your occupation to people?
7. To what extent do you believe you have a choice on the agreed upon terms of your occupation (with clients, your employer, etc.)?

Q3: Are students accessing university support services while working in the sex industry (medical care, mental health support, information/resource offices, etc.)?

1. Are you aware of the support services available to you on-campus?
2. Have you accessed any university support services since joining the sex industry?
 - a. Why or why not?
3. Have you accessed any support services off campus?
 - a. Why or why not?

If they have accessed services:

1. What services have you accessed?
2. Were you satisfied with the quality of services provided to you?
3. How many times did you access these services?
 - a. Why?

Q4: Would student sex workers in Canada benefit from the implementation of targeted support services in post-secondary institutions?

1. Are you satisfied with the kinds of university support services available to you?
 - a. Why or why not?
2. Do you think you would benefit from the implementation of targeted support services on-campus?

a. Why or why not?

3. What types of services, if any, do you think would enhance your life, and the lives of student sex workers as a whole?

Is there anything else you would like to share with regards to your sex work experience?

Appendix E: Informed Consent Form



Consent Form

Title: The Labour of Paying for Education: An Exploration of Student Sex Work in Canada

Date of ethics clearance: July 19th, 2018

Ethics Clearance for the Collection of Data Expires: July 31st, 2019

I _____, choose to participate in a study on student sex work in Canada, as part of a Master's thesis project. This study aims to explore the characteristics of post-secondary students' engagement in sex work, including motives, personal experiences, and use of support services both on and off campus. **The researcher for this study is Emily Hammond, MA candidate, in the Pauline Jewett Institute of Women's and Gender Studies at Carleton University.** She is working under the supervision of Professor Megan Rivers-Moore in the Pauline Jewett Institute of Women's and Gender Studies at Carleton University.

This study involves one 45-60 minute interview. With your consent, interviews will be audio-recorded. Once the recording has been transcribed, the audio-recording will be destroyed.

This project will ask you about your engagement in sex work. While risk involved with participation is expected to be minimal, precautions will be taken to protect your identity (using pseudonyms and changing identifying information). All responses will be confidential and you can request that certain responses be excluded from the final project. If any topics come up during the interview that you do not want to discuss, please say so. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer and can choose to end the interview at any time, for any reason. Should you experience any distress during the interview, you will be provided with contact information for counselling services available in Ottawa. This information will also be provided at the end of the interview or at any time if requested by you.

You have the right to end your participation in the study at any time, for any reason, up until January 1st, 2019. You can withdraw by phoning or emailing the

researcher or the research supervisor. If you withdraw from the study, all information you have provided will be immediately destroyed.

As a token of appreciation, you will receive a \$15 amazon.ca gift card which will be given directly to you at the beginning of the interview. This is yours to keep, even if you withdraw from the study.

All research data, including audio-recordings and any notes will be encrypted. As there may be an e-mail communication chain, the researcher will also ensure that their e-mail is password protected, and that the password is confidential. Any hard copies of data (including any handwritten notes or USB keys) will be kept in a locked cabinet at Carleton University. Research data will only be accessible by the researcher and her research supervisor.

Once the project is completed, all research data will be kept for five years and potentially used for other research projects on this same topic. In addition, the completed thesis may be posted online or discussed in online forums. At the end of five years, all research data will be securely destroyed (electronic data will be erased and hard copies will be shredded).

If you would like a copy of the finished research project, you are invited to contact the researcher to request an electronic copy which will be provided to you.

The ethics protocol for this project was reviewed by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board, which provided clearance to carry out the research (Clearance #109016). If you have any ethical concerns with the study, please contact Dr. Bernadette Campbell, Chair, Carleton University Research Ethics Board-A (by phone at 613-520-2600 ext. 2517 or via email at ethics@carleton.ca).

Researcher contact information:

Name: Emily Hammond
Department: Pauline Jewett Institute of Women's and Gender Studies
Carleton University
Email: emily.hammond@carleton.ca

Supervisor contact information:

Name: Professor Megan Rivers-Moore
Department: Pauline Jewett Institute of Women's and Gender Studies
Carleton University
Tel: 613-520-2600 ext. 3201
Email: megan.riversmoore@carleton.ca

Do you agree to participate in the study: ___Yes ___No

Do you agree to be audio-recorded: ___Yes___No

Signature of participant

Date

Signature of researcher

Date

Appendix F: Oral Consent Script

Oral Consent Script

Hello, my name is Emily Hammond and I am a Master's student in the Pauline Jewett Institute of Women's and Gender Studies at Carleton University. I am under the supervision of Professor Megan Rivers-Moore.

I would like you to participate in a study on "The Labour of Paying for Education: An Exploration of Student Sex Work in Canada". This study aims to explore the characteristics of post-secondary students' engagement in sex work, including motives, personal experiences, and use of support services both on and off campus.

This study involves one 45-60 minute interview that will take place on Skype. With your consent, the interview will be audio-recorded. Once transcribed, the audio-recording will be destroyed.

This project will ask you about your engagement in sex work. Precautions will be taken to protect your identity (using pseudonyms and changing identifying information). All responses will be confidential and you can request that certain responses be excluded from the final project. Should you experience any distress during the interview, you will be provided with contact information for counselling services available in Ottawa. This information will also be provided at the end of the interview or at any time if requested by you. In addition, you are not obliged to answer every question, and can choose to end the interview at any time, for any reason.

You may withdraw at any time, up to January 1st, 2019 by letting me or my research supervisor know. If you choose to withdraw, all the information you provided will be destroyed.

As a token of appreciation, I will provide a \$15 amazon.ca gift card at the beginning of the interview which is yours to keep, even if you withdraw from the study.

All research data, including audio-recordings and my notes will be encrypted. As there may be an e-mail communication chain, I will also ensure that my e-mail is password protected, and that the password is confidential. Any hard copies of data (including any handwritten notes or USB keys) will be kept in a locked cabinet at Carleton University. Research data will only be accessible by me and my supervisor.

Once the project is completed, all research data will be kept for five years and I may use it for other research projects on this same topic. In addition, the completed thesis may be posted online or discussed in online forums. At the end of five years, all research data will be destroyed.

If you would like a copy of the finished research project, please let me know. I will then provide you with an electronic copy.

The data collected will be through Skype servers, which are located in the United States and are subject to U.S. laws on data privacy.

The ethics protocol for this project was reviewed by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board, which provided clearance to carry out the research (Clearance #109016). If you have any ethical concerns with the study, please contact Dr. Bernadette Campbell, Chair, Carleton University Research Ethics Board-A (by phone at 613-520-2600 ext. 2517 or via email at ethics@carleton.ca).

You can also reach me at emily.hammond@carleton.ca. My supervisor can be reached at megan.riversmoore@carleton.ca/613-520-2600 ext. 3201. Do you have any questions or need clarification?

Do I have your permission to begin: ___Yes ___No (If no, thank them for their time.)

Do you agree to be audio-recorded: ___Yes ___No

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